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Cleveland lawyer pens children's-book series, newest adventure highlights food banks

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Lucas and Emily's Food Bank Adventure



Dave Grunenwald's latest book "Lucas and Emily's Food Bank Adventure" raises awareness about the work of food banks while connecting grandparents with grandchildren. Marc Bona, cleveland.com



By [Marc Bona, cleveland.com](http://MarcBona.cleveland.com)

CLEVELAND, Ohio – A few years ago, a pal told Dave Grunenwald, "I could have made a list of 100 things you'd be doing later in life, and writing children's books would not be on it."

Grunenwald should have bet him, because that's exactly what he is doing. In June, the semi-retired lawyer released his sixth book, "Lucas and Emily's Food Bank Adventure." It's part of an adventure series for a grandpa and his grandkids.

Grunenwald's motivation is pretty organic. He comes from a large family, having 55 great nieces, great nephews, nieces and nephews.

"I knew how to be a dad and brother and uncle, but I didn't know anything about being a grandparent until I became one seven and half years ago," he said. "That inspired me to what I should be doing as a grandparent."

Grunenwald grew up in Youngstown, where he went to high school and college, then Cleveland State for law school. He has lived in Hudson for 45 years.

His first five books are fun jaunts, with one showing a character overcoming his fear of geese with help from his dog. All are illustrated by [Bonnie Lemaire](#).

But his latest book took a more altruistic focus after he crossed paths with someone involved with the food bank.

"I came to learn a lot about the [Greater Cleveland Food Bank](#) and what an amazing job they do," said Grunenwald, who decided to move the series storyline "in the direction of doing good things for other people."

He added the first time he pulled up to the food bank its enormity hit him, and he started asking questions.

"I don't think I knew much about it until I decided to check it out," he said.

What he learned was the food bank provides groceries to more than 1,000 food pantries, hot-meal programs, shelters, mobile pantries, elderly programs and other nonprofit groups annually. The organization served more than 424,000 people in Cuyahoga, Ashtabula, Geauga, Lake, Ashland and Richland counties over fiscal year 2024.

But food-bank outreach programs exist on smaller levels, too. One of the groups featured in the book is the "Sandwich People," a reference to a [Northeast Ohio organization](#) that compiles lunches for homeless people.

The work of food banks and their volunteers "is astonishing," he said.

The book takes a simple approach: Grandpa wants to entertain the grandkids, so he takes them to various food-bank organizations – large, small, regional and local. The inquisitive kids ask questions as they volunteer.

“One of the things that struck me about the food bank is for many of the volunteers it’s a family thing,” Grunenwald said. “Three or four family members go and volunteer together. They do it as a family activity, and they do it pretty regularly. There’s never enough money, there’s never enough volunteers.”

And the challenge of providing assistance for those who need food is mounting: The recent reconciliation legislation in Washington includes a 20% cut to SNAP - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

Grunenwald’s book serves the dual purpose of raising awareness for the mission of the food bank as well as providing a connection between grandparents and grandkids.

He also created [“Grandparent Merit Badges.”](#)

The interactive badges encourage unplugging activities to bring grandparents and grandkids together. It’s a series of 12 activities – one per page. You do the activity, then take a sticker and put it on the page. You can jot how the experience was – maybe include a picture, or note the weather and other details, he said. The badges are printed in English and Spanish.

Grunenwald – whose next adventure for Emily and Lucas will focus on a book bank - has donated a couple hundred books for the food bank to do with as it wishes, he said, and he is working on a plan to donate some royalties to national and local food banks.

“It’s amazing what they do and the people they serve,” he said. “I’m just doing a small part.”

Lucas and Emily’s Food Bank Adventure

By Dave Grunenwald, illustrated by Bonnie Lemaire.

Publisher: [Halo Publishing International](#), 2025, 37 pages.

Prices: Softbound, \$13.95; hard copy, \$20.95.

To buy: The book is available via [Amazon](#). (Grandparent Merit Badges also are on [Amazon](#).)

The series:

- Lucas and Emily's Cooking Adventure
- Lucas and Emily's Animal Adventure
- Lucas and Emily's Outdoor Adventure
- Lucas and Emily's Dog Adventure
- Lucas and Emily's Gardening Adventure

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