

York County Food Bank offers volunteer discount

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For two hours of volunteer work, people will be eligible to buy a box of food at up to a 50 percent discount -- despite economic status.

York County Food Bank is the newest host site of the Self Help and Resource Exchange Program, called SHARE. The program offers people of any income level an opportunity to buy food at discounted rates.

SHARE, a nonprofit group based in Philadelphia, purchases the food from growers, brokers and packaging plants. The food is not donated, government surplus or salvage, according to its website.

Instead, goods for the boxes are purchased in bulk and then passed to host sites, such as the York County Food Bank, for anyone to buy. Boxes range from \$6.50 to \$20 each.

"SHARE is not a gimme," said Jonathan Fisher, executive director of the York County Food Bank. "It's not a handout."

There are no qualifying standards or income requirements to be eligible to purchase a box, which Fisher said will attract residents caught in the doughnut hole of not qualifying for government assistance but still strapped for cash.

The county's poorest residents can purchase boxes using EBT or SNAP cards. This program ensures those residents have access to fresh, healthy food they might not get at local corner stores, Fisher said.

"There are 420,000-plus residents in York County, and all are welcome to participate," Fisher said, noting the food bank also will reach out to West Virginia and Maryland residents as well. "We can put all people in the same line no matter what your social status. It allows us to come together and be a community."

The York County Food Bank is the first to bring SHARE to southcentral Pennsylvania. Nationwide, the program served more than 120,200 households last year, according to its website.

Help first: The program's only requirement is to complete two hours of volunteer work

for each desired box. There is no limit to the number of boxes participants can purchase.

The volunteer work can be anything from cooking dinner for a sick neighbor to coaching a youth sport. It will all be done on an honor system, Fisher said.

What's inside? Each box of food will have between \$40 and \$60 worth of food inside and could last up to a week, Fisher said. Boxes will be distributed one Saturday each month.

The \$20 senior package, which features foods low in sodium, contains seasoned chicken breast fillets, center cut pork chops, eggs, fresh vegetables and shelf-staple items.

The \$15 Farm to Families Grande Package includes asparagus, rhubarb, peas, scallions, cabbage, spinach, onions, potatoes, Swiss chard, meat, cheese and honey -- depending on the season.

There are even packages for meat lovers. The ribeye steak and boneless New York strip steak package costs \$17.50 and includes three, eight-ounce pieces of each steak. Ten pounds of chicken leg quarters can be purchased for \$6.50 in the chicken leg quarter package.

Your choice: The boxes allow participants to prepare and cook the food however they please, just as they would if the food were purchased from a grocery store. The boxes change each month and new menus are left in boxes or available on SHARE's website.

Orders must be placed at least one week before the monthly delivery.

An informational community meeting will be held in August to explain details, Fisher said. That meeting has not been set yet, but dates for delivery to York have.

York's first distribution will be Saturday, Aug. 27. Order forms will be due Monday, Aug. 15. Order forms can be filled out at the York County Food Bank at 254 W. Princess St., York City.

For menu information, visit sharefoodprogram.org.

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