

A Policy to Address Food Shortages in the Raleigh and Triangle Area

Due to the ongoing struggle to provide food to individuals and families within and throughout the Raleigh and Triangle area, the Beth Meyer Social Action Committee submits the following proposal:

To better address the food shortage and insecurity issue for thousands of our neighbors in the Raleigh and Triangle area, the Beth Meyer Social Action Committee proposes that the Synagogue establish a permanent (year-round) mechanism for the collection of food and critical household items.

Facts:

- There are approximately 131,740 people in Wake County alone, who are categorized as food insecure. This represents about 13.5% off all county residents.*
- There are 44,330 children in Wake County listed as food insecure, representing 33.6% of all children under the age of eighteen.*
- One in four children in North Carolina are food insecure.**
- Eighty-one percent (81%) of all households in North Carolina receiving food assistance don't know where their next meal is coming from.**
- Thirty-six percent (36%) of food pantries in North Carolina have had to turn people away due to their own stock shortages.**

So that the synagogue can better address the issue of food insecurity in our community, and to make it easier and more convenient for members and others in the community to make a difference, the Beth Meyer Social Action Committee recommends that the Synagogue provide a semi-permanent collection area, or areas, for the ongoing collection of non-perishable food and essential household items.

Many congregants have expressed frustration that the current drives are too sporadic. By establishing a semi-permanent presence at the Synagogue, members and others in the community (non-Jewish families of the Beth Meyer Pre-school, local residents, and friends and family of members) can be assured of being able to participate in this important mitzvah of tzedakah.

Understanding that there will be certain times throughout the year when the collection will need to be suspended (Festivals, Shabbat, and other designated dates), the ability to know that food and other essential items can be brought year-round should not only provide more assistance for those in need but help to establish a culture of *tzedakah* within the Beth Meyer community.

The Raleigh/Cary Jewish Federation and the Inter-Faith Food Shuttle have both expressed an interest in creating an ongoing partnership with Beth Meyer to help maintain adequate inventory for their food pantry programs. A year-round collection doesn't have

to be exclusive to any one organization or cause, and it will create a consistent and on-going ability for donations that will provide the Synagogue with more options, opportunities, and the desire to affect a cause with a demonstrative need.

* Data is from the Food Bank of Central and Eastern North Carolina website, accessed April 31, 2018, <http://www.foodbankcenc.org/site/DocServer/Wake.pdf?docID=3791>

** Data is from 2014 Hunger in America Study, by Feeding America and the Food Hardship in America 2015 Report from the Food Research and Action Center.