



## A \$5.8 Million Campaign to Replace Hunger with Hope



# Fighting Hunger On the Prairie



**The Kansas Food Bank serves:**

**More than 32,000 men, women  
and children each week**



**More than 73,000 square miles**



**86 of 105 counties  
in the state of Kansas**

**F**ounded in 1984 during a severe downturn in the national aviation industry, the Kansas Food Bank saw itself as an organization that could assist families as Mom or Dad worked hard to locate and secure new employment. Today the Kansas Food Bank is a major force in feeding children, women and men suffering from food insecurity and/or hunger throughout the majority of the state.

Food insecurity and hunger are not exclusive to the homeless; one in every 10 households in the state of Kansas is affected by these issues. The majority of families daily living under these circumstances are in urban and rural areas alike, they have at least one full-time worker, and a large number of these households are headed by single mothers.

Based in Wichita, the state's largest city (population of 365,000), the Kansas Food Bank no longer simply helps displaced aviation workers and their families. The organization now is accepting, processing and distributing over 4.5 million pounds of food annually across 75 percent of the state.

"In 1985, we became a member of America's Second Harvest — The Nation's Food Bank Network, an organization committed to fighting food insecurity" said President and CEO Brian Walker. "We had more than 250 local nonprofit organizations in communities across the state needing our help. Literally, from the Missouri border to the Colorado border we were and are delivering food to nonprofit organizations."

The Kansas Food Bank also found itself helping such recognized organizations as American Red Cross, The Salvation Army and Catholic Charities. When tornadoes hit southeast Kansas several years ago, the Food Bank was there to help the American Red Cross respond with food for their mobile canteens.

"We had become good at accepting, processing and distributing large amounts of food," said Walker. "We also had learned that fighting hunger meant securing a wide variety of the right kinds of food and getting it to the right people."

The Kansas Food Bank started programs specifically to feed and educate children and parents: "Kids Kitchen" and "Food 4 Kids." The "Kids Kitchen" program provides nourishing evening meals to underprivileged, at-risk children in a safe environment while they participate in activities like tutoring and recreational programs. The Food Bank provides the food and supplies needed to prepare the meals and funds the chefs' salaries. This program is implemented in concert with Boys & Girls Clubs of Wichita.



The "Food 4 Kids" program was established to provide nutritional kid-friendly foods to students who were not getting sufficient food outside of school on a regular basis. Participating schools receive bags of foods that require no preparation and backpacks at no cost so they can provide food for chronically hungry children. A backpack of food is sent home each Friday to get the children through the weekend and over long holiday stretches when they aren't in school.

"We have a Board member, Patric Rowley, who constantly talks about helping the whole person," said Programs Manager Larry Gunkel. "He says we do more than just feed people, we help them see beyond the next meal and give them hope. He is absolutely right. It's why we use such words as helping fight food insecurity, not just hunger."



Through the years, the effects of poverty, the growing ranks of the working poor, job insecurities and fewer government programs created a growing need among agencies across the state to turn to the Kansas Food Bank for help.

“The Board of Directors understood that helping more people was directly related to having facilities that could accept, process and deliver more food,” said Walker.

“By the time our capital campaign entered its final stage, we were serving more than 32,000 people weekly — that’s more than the entire population of Dodge City,” said Campaign Chairman Don Meiergerd. “It was a reminder to us all that our capital campaign was necessary and needed to be successful.”

## Campaign at Crunch Time

The “Blueprint Against Hunger” campaign was at a crossroad when the Kansas Food Bank called on Hartsook Companies, a national fundraising consulting firm. A \$5.8 million goal would be missed if challenge grant deadlines were not met in six months.

“The Kansas Food Bank faced a number of challenges,” said Robert Swanson, President, Hartsook Companies. “A deadline was looming which, if missed, would cost the Food Bank \$1.4 million in matching funds. We had only six months to pull it together.”

The list of challenges was extensive:

- The campaign had gone on for several years
- Early donors, who had already committed to the cause, were becoming skeptical that the campaign would be successful
- There had been a change in the president and CEO position

- Although the organization had been successful in securing annual operating funds, they had never conducted a multi-million dollar campaign
- This was the Food Bank’s first capital campaign and a small Campaign Leadership Committee had carried the bulk of the campaign on its shoulders
- The Food Bank had a makeshift donor management software system, no systematic cultivation or appreciation programs in place and there was no one staff person dedicated to development

“The organization had several important pieces in place for success,” said Swanson. “They had a handful of die-hard volunteer leaders committed to success. Their new president and CEO understood the organization’s operations and mission and had the right personality and level of commitment for the organization. They also had a highly dedicated executive assistant conducting many of the responsibilities of a development director.”

“The Kansas Food Bank had an undeniable need to share with funders,” said Board Chairman Kenny Doonan. “We had a track record of good deeds that allowed us to talk about our needs. As Swanson likes to say, ‘It’s never about the building or the endowment or the program — it’s about the great deeds in changing people’s lives that matters most.’ The Kansas Food Bank has a compelling story to tell when sitting down with individuals, foundations and companies.”

## Reaching Goal

“I suppose people hire campaign counsel for many reasons,” said Meiergerd. “We needed a set of new eyes, new ideas and some inspiration. The campaign had gone on for a while and we were tired.”

With a deadline looming, monthly Campaign Leadership Committee meetings were set and intense identification, cultivation and solicitation strategy sessions were conducted.

“Knowing that a professional consultant would always be present motivated us,” said Meiergerd. “Robert helped to organize us and brought new ideas to the table.”

A series of management reports were introduced and created for the campaign. New and revised processes and procedures were implemented. In addition to more structure for campaign activity, new strategies and prospects were developed.

“New donor prospects from across the state that related with us were identified,” said Walker. “Hartsook Companies put us in the right locations and pointed us in the right direction. Robert helped us develop individual strategies. He also helped us revisit some current donors to develop arguments for additional gifts.”

The organization went back to its lead donor and asked if they would consider doubling the size of their donation. “Cargill Meat Solutions not only made a leadership gift,” said Meiergerd, “they also provided us with an expert construction engineer in warehouse design. We were very proud to dedicate this facility the ‘Cargill Cares Complex.’”

The organization’s primary challenge, according to Swanson, was the process of cultivation and solicitation. “Like many organizations, sharing their story was a challenge. To their credit, members of the Campaign Leadership Committee and the CEO got themselves in front of different funders and actually made the asks.”

“I know it’s cliché,” said Walker, “but the campaign was about relationships. Too often, we think that if we write the perfect solicitation letter or the perfect grant application, donors will make their gift. Of course, that is not true. To achieve success, organizations must have a sincere desire to present information, share their need and answer prospects’ questions. Funders, foundations, individuals and businesses alike should be considered partners with an organization. They should not simply be thought of as donors.”

## More than a New Building

With more than \$5.8 million in gifts and pledges secured, groundbreaking on the new 44,000 square-foot warehouse and food processing facility occurred in February 2006. One of the organization’s founders, current Lt. Governor of Kansas John Moore, served as the keynote speaker for the event. For Board members and the Campaign Leadership Committee, the event was only the beginning.

“One of the dynamics the Food Bank understood early in the campaign was the campaign itself was about more than money and a



building,” said Swanson. “They had a good sense for looking into the future, identifying old challenges and understanding the financial demands that a new facility would place on their programs and operations.”

Walker, along with the Campaign Leadership Committee and Board of Directors, was committed to enhancing the annual fund and establishing a permanent endowment for the organization. They developed a thoughtful philosophy toward the nonprofit’s endeavors that would ensure low overhead for operations, coupled with a meaningful approach to growth. “We are making important investments in our fundraising operations, but we are also making sure it all fits into our mission,” said Walker.

As part of the campaign process, the organization focused on expanding annual fundraising programs, adding new communication vehicles, enhancing Board development and securing new development tools, such as donor tracking and management software.

“We knew our future demanded that we raise more annual fund dollars, involve more volunteer leaders and increase our profile in the communities we serve,” said Doonan. “We knew that the best gift we could give future Board members and staff was an even stronger organization with the tools to feed more people across 73,000 square miles. The ‘blueprint’ was always about more than a campaign to build a building. It was about replacing hunger with hope.”

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**About the Consultant** – Robert G. Swanson, President, Hartsook Companies, has helped countless nonprofit organizations in social services, higher education, youth services, the arts, museums and healthcare raise funds as they seek to expand and improve services for their clients. In his more than 18 years as a fundraising professional, Robert has helped clients secure more than \$200 million in gifts and grants. Robert can be reached at [robert@hartsookcompanies.com](mailto:robert@hartsookcompanies.com).

**About Hartsook Companies, Inc.** – Hartsook Companies, Inc., has served nonprofits nationwide with capital, endowment and annual campaigns; leadership support; board training; marketing and more since 1987. The firm has conducted more than 1,700 campaigns ranging from \$500,000 to more than \$1 billion. The web site: [www.hartsookcompanies.com](http://www.hartsookcompanies.com).

