



Bringing "Healthy Nudges" to IHN's Pantry Network

What does it take to turn a food pantry into a source of life-long health & wellness?

In 2023, IHN welcomed the first cohort of pantries into the Healthy Nudges program, an initiative dedicated to helping small-and mid-sized food pantries become sources of healthy foods and nutrition education. IHN's Healthy Nudges team works with pantry leaders to establish goals and opportunities for growth. Pantries then receive both equipment and technical assistance. By working closely with pantry leaders over the course of a year, the Healthy Nudges (HN) team is able to tailor this assistance to the particular needs of each pantry.

In 2024, the HN team worked with 20 food pantries to implement at least 130 policy, system, and environmental changes that address pantries' nutrition-related goals. According to Angel Calvert, Healthy Nudges Program Coordinator, "From providing education about how to decide which foods are healthy using the Supporting Wellness at Pantries (SWAP) nutrition ranking system to creating enticing produce displays with commercial grade equipment and shelving, we increase the capacity local food pantries have to improve the health and wellness of those they serve, while empowering them to do what they do best... feed people in need."



Through the Healthy Nudges Program, IHN introduced produce display cases and the SWAP system to this pantry. By highlighting nutrition in the food pantry, pantries can become sources of health education in addition to offering free food.

Improvements made by Healthy Nudges pantries include:

- offering healthy recipes that incorporate pantry food
- adding signage and special displays to promote healthy items
- increasing cold and dry storage capacity
- adding needed equipment to source healthy foods in pallet quantities
- providing information to pantry guests on health-related wraparound services
- switching to a shopping model
- creating food drive lists that encourage the donation of healthy items
- increasing sourcing of culturally-appropriate foods
- expanding visibility through outdoor signs & accessibility through translation services
- adjusting pantry layout to make distribution more efficient and focused on nutrition

The Healthy Nudges Program is a partnership between IHN, Community Health Network, and the Marion County Public Health Department's REACH (Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health) program; the City of Indianapolis and the Indiana Department of Health's SNAP ED program provide funding. As Calvert notes, this collaboration has enabled more pantries "to provide fresh foods and healthier options to those families who wish to eat healthfully but are faced with high prices and confusing information. Families who face poverty and need the assistance of a food pantry deserve to have access to fresh and healthy foods on a regular basis."

As pantry clients learn more about nutrition as they visit a Healthy Nudges pantry, they can take these lessons with them as they frequent other pantries or purchase their own groceries. Although these lessons may seem simple -- how unfamiliar produce can be incorporated into healthy recipes or how shelf-stable and processed foods are often high in sodium, fat, and sugar -- they can improve the health and wellness of a client, family, or community. By emphasizing nutrition at every step of a pantry experience, from posters about healthy choices in the lobby to attractive displays of fresh produce, any pantry can become a center of health education. And by joining the Healthy Nudges program, pantry leaders can receive the equipment and technical assistance they need to make this transition from simply offering food to offering insights, advice, and hope.

Pantries throughout Central Indiana -- Marion County and adjacent counties -- are welcome to apply to be a part of the 2025 cohort. Pantry leaders who are interested in becoming a part of the Healthy Nudges program should fill out [**THIS FORM**](#). For questions or more information about the program, email Angel at angel@indyhunger.org. Applications are due April 4.

SUBSCRIBE TO IHN'S QUARTERLY NEWSLETTERS

IHN's 2025 "Manual of Best Practices for Food Pantries"

At this year's Food Pantry Summit, IHN launched the second edition of our "Manual of Best Practices for Food Pantries." Drawing upon insights from food pantries, food banks, plus local and national partners, this manual offers suggestions for making pantries more efficient, accessible, inclusive, and nutritious.

Whatever your level of experience with pantry leadership, make the manual work for you! Start by filling out the "Pantry Self-Assessment," read all the way through, or jump to a chapter that sounds interesting to you. Chapters cover topics from "Intake Processes" and "Food Sourcing" to "Serving Communities with Unique Needs" and "Pantry Leadership and Sustainability."

If you would like to order hardcopies of the manual for \$15 each, please email info@indyhunger.org.



**CHECK OUT THE FOOD
PANTRY MANUAL ONLINE**

"Cooking Matters" Reaches Rural Communities through Satellite Partnerships

Cooking Matters is Indy Hunger Network's longest-running program and part of a national initiative from The Food Trust which strives to improve nutrition education, especially for children and families. Since 2015, IHN's Cooking Matters (IHN CM) team has taught nutrition-based cooking classes at food pantries, schools, and community centers throughout Marion County. Beginning in 2023, Megan Gendig, IHN's Director of Cooking Matters Program, helped launch a Satellite Partners program as a way to offer the benefits of Cooking Matters programming beyond Marion County.

IHN CM's Satellite Partners program is built on a "train the trainer model"; each Satellite Partner commits to identifying existing staff members as potential educators who are then trained by the IHN CM team. Satellite Partner sites also receive all the resources necessary for a robust schedule of Cooking Matters classes, including recipe books, waivers, mobile kitchens outfitted with kid-friendly supplies, and data pulled from participant surveys. As part of the Satellite Partners cost-share agreement, some partners also elect to have the IHN CM team purchase the groceries that instructors use during class and that participants receive so they can recreate the recipes at home.

Any site can become a Satellite Partner, as long as they have funding to contribute to the cost-share agreement, a staff person who can be trained, and an available space outfitted with electricity, tables, and sinks (even if a site has a full kitchen, all IHN CM classes use mobile kitchens). Satellite Partners include food pantries, schools, summer learning programs, hospital education centers, churches, community centers, and homeless shelters. Franciscan Health Network has embraced the flexibility of the Satellite Partners program, offering classes within their hospitals, through the PACE program (in addition to their fruit and veggie boxes), at numerous rural libraries, and even at the summer fairgrounds.

Through the Satellite Partner program, IHN CM is able to reach the rural communities that have experienced higher levels of food insecurity in recent years. The IHN CM team has also found these communities to be full of high levels of both interest in health education and gratitude for IHN's concern for their wellbeing. Megan Betz, CEO of Mother Hubbard's Cupboard Food Pantry outside of Bloomington, notes that Cooking Matters classes have become a cornerstone of their monthly rotation of workshops. In fact, Cooking Matters is so popular, it has "opened the door to community members' attendance at other programs. Individuals we met through these workshops have become recurring participants, building relationships with our facilitators and their fellow students."

In addition to the insights, skills, and groceries that participants receive, Satellite Partners have noted other benefits from working with IHN CM. Many of the educators do not have a background in food service or nutrition, so they are learning alongside participants, improving the health and nutrition of even more families in these communities. Satellite Partner site coordinators appreciate seeing their staff grow beyond their usual positions and develop new ways of serving their neighbors.

In 2024 alone, Satellite Partners across Delaware, Hamilton, Henry, Lake, Laporte, Monroe, Morgan, and Tippecanoe counties hosted 28 one-time courses, 6 series of courses, and reached at least 245 adults and children. If you are interested in learning more about Cooking Matters or the Satellite Partners program, please contact Megan Gendig at megan@indyhunger.org.



Participants in the CM classes offered through Second Harvest Food Bank's partnership with the Youth Opportunity Center prepare ingredients a healthy and teen-approved recipe!

March 2025

Thank you to everyone who joined us on 3/12 for Indy Hunger Network's 2025 Food Pantry Summit!



Summit plenary sessions addressed IHN's Food Pantry Network and Serving Underserved Communities. Breakout sessions covered technology in the pantry, food sourcing, fundraising, conflict de-escalation, and much more!

A huge thank you to the sponsors of the Food Pantry Summit: City of Indianapolis, Corteva Agriscience, Gleaners, Herron School of Art + Design & Second Helpings!

Upcoming Events & Opportunities

April 4 – Join the 2025 Healthy Nudges Cohort

Is your food pantry interested in becoming a source of intentionally healthy, nutritious foods for the community you serve? IHN provides technical assistance and equipment to food pantries that want to distribute more healthy foods through the "Healthy Nudges" program. Pantries in Central Indiana are eligible to participate, and the 2025 program is currently open! If you're interested in participating, email angel@indyhunger.org or fill out [THIS FORM](#). Applications due April 4.

April 14 – FREE Cooking Matters Class at IHN's Office

Monday, April 14th, from 1:00 to 2:00pm, Cooking Matters is hosting a free cooking class at the IHN office (32 E 32nd St., Indianapolis, IN 46205). This class is open to anyone interested in learning more about nutritious recipes, essential cooking skills, saving time in the kitchen, saving money on groceries, and helping picky eaters make healthy choices! Please register [HERE](#) by Friday, April 4th. Registration is required for this class.

Post Special & Seasonal Events on Community Compass

Pantry leaders, please make sure that your pantry's location & days/hours of operation are listed on [Community Compass](#), the efficient and easily-accessible resource for Hoosiers seeking free food and food assistance.

You can even promote special events, like cooking and nutrition classes, one-off food distributions, health fairs, or other food related events. Email communitycompass@indyhunger.org to add an event!

Happy One-Year Anniversary to the FRSH program!

This February, IHN's newest program, FRSH, celebrated one year of offering personalized, one-to-one assistance for those seeking food resources. FRSH (Food Resource Services Hub) Navigators meet with clients online, over the phone, and in-person at the IHN Office, Mid-North Food Pantry, Old Bethel Food Pantry, Castleton UMC, and other sites across Greater Indianapolis. **Looking for food resources near you? Make an appointment [HERE](#).**

WORKING TOGETHER TO END HUNGER

Our mission is to address systemic hunger issues and eliminate disparities in the Greater Indianapolis hunger relief system through collaboration on programs, advocacy, and research.

Help further Indy Hunger Network's mission to ensure that anyone who is hungry can access the food they need by donating [HERE](#).