

Big Hearts Book Club ~ Food Insecurity

Resource List for Parents/Caregivers (scan code for digital version)

Books read at book club:

Maddi's Fridge by Lois Brandt

Lulu and the Hunger Monster by Erik Talkin



Where to go if...

You need help

1. Guilford Social Services (get help with food and connect with other services/agencies for any form of assistance you may need) - 263 Church St. Guilford; (203) 453-8009; https://www.guilfordct.gov/town_departments/social_services/index.php
2. Guilford Food Bank - 45 Stone House Ln. Guilford; (203) 453-8166; <https://www.guilfordfoodbank.org/food-bank-usage.html>
3. List of other food resources for Guilford residents
https://www.guilfordct.gov/Document_Center/Department/Social%20Services/Guilford-Food-Resources-rev.-June-23.docx.pdf
4. Help with other needs (links to social services documents listing other agencies that can help with other needs, such as disability, elder care, clothing, heat, etc.);
https://www.guilfordct.gov/town_departments/social_services/guilford_social_services_referral_information.php
5. Guilford Community Fund Member Agencies (list of non-profits funded by GCF that operate in Guilford to help residents with food, medical care, counseling, etc.);
<https://guilfordcommunityfund.org/member-agencies/>
6. Community Dining Room (located in Branford, serves whole shoreline including Guilford) - 30 Harrison Ave. Branford; (203) 488-9750; <https://www.communitydiningroom.org/learn-more>
7. United Way of Connecticut (runs programs and helps people connect to various state services for food, housing, and other financial needs); <https://www.ctunitedway.org/gethelp/>
8. United Way of Greater New Haven (specifically serving New Haven county, including Guilford; connect to food, financial, educational, & other resources) - 370 James St. Suite 403, New Haven; (203) 772-2010; <https://www.uwgnh.org/community-resources>
9. Connecticut Food Share (a Feeding America partner) - <https://ctfoodshare.org/get-help/>

There is no shame in asking for help, even if your situation is temporary, new, or you feel like others, "have it worse". If you are used to being the one who helps out others but find you are in need of help, there are things you can do to volunteer while also receiving aid, if you are able to. Mutual aid is the concept of people in the community providing assistance that they can provide and receiving assistance that they need at the same time. Mutual aid builds resilient communities and benefits everyone. Nobody chooses to fall on hard times, and asking for help is not a sign of weakness.

Where to go if...

You want to help others

1. Guilford Food Bank - Donate, volunteer, or grow food to share
<https://www.guilfordfoodbank.org/donations.html>
<https://www.guilfordfoodbank.org/volunteer.html>
<https://www.guilfordfoodbank.org/community-garden.html>
2. United Way of Greater New Haven
<https://www.uwgnh.org/volunteer>
3. UR Community Cares Guilford
<https://urcommunitycares.org/home/volunteer>
4. Guilford Community Fund (donate to the fund which is distributed to agencies that serve Guilford residents, or choose a specific organization to contact and volunteer with directly)
<https://guilfordcommunityfund.org/annual-appeal/>
<https://guilfordcommunityfund.org/member-agencies/>
5. Community Dining Room (located in Branford, serves whole shoreline including Guilford) - 30 Harrison Ave. Branford; (203) 488-9750; Donate or volunteer;
<https://www.communitydiningroom.org/copy-of-current-programs>
6. Connecticut Food Share (a Feeding America partner) - Donate or volunteer at food banks that serve New Haven County, including Guilford;
<https://ctfoodshare.org/donate/ways-to-give/>
<https://ctfoodshare.volunteerhub.com/vv2/lp/NewHaven>
7. Guilford Interfaith Volunteers
<https://givct.org/volunteer-2/>

If you volunteer, remember that the folks who you are helping are just like you, and deserve your respect and compassion, not just pity. People suffering from food insecurity did not get there by choice, and needing help is not a moral failing.

Further Reading for Kids (with notes for grown-ups)

Non-fiction

How I Learned Geography by Uri Shulevitz - A memoir-style picture book from a time in the author's life as a child when he absorbed himself in the fascinating colors and names of far-off places of an oversized world map to distract himself from constant hunger. Talk about some of the things you might do when you'd like to think of something else other than whatever's troubling you (be it hunger, anxiety, sadness, or other unpleasant feelings). If you didn't have enough money for food, how might you be able to get something else to take your mind off of it?

How do they help? Salvation Army by Katie Marsico - A short non-fiction book about the Salvation Army, a widely known international faith-based charitable organization. This book talks about its history and what it does to help people struggling with food insecurity and other issues. Do you know of any local organizations which use a similar model of funding charitable projects through thrift store sales?

How do they help? United Way by Katie Marsico - A short non-fiction book about United Way, a recognized international leader in charitable community improvement projects. This book talks about how it got started and how it helps people find better jobs, secure housing, food, healthcare, and more by getting people and organizations to work together for the same goals. Is there a time you can think of when working together made something easier?

How do they help? Katie's Krops by Melissa Sherman Pearl - A short non-fiction book about Katie's Krops, a charity started by a 9-year-old girl named Katie Stagliano, which encourages kids and schools to grow their own fruits and vegetables and donate extras to soup kitchens and food banks. This book encourages kids to get involved in helping their community and shows that kids can make a difference. What are some steps you and your friends and family could take to make a small difference in the community?

What's Food Insecurity? by Anna Collins - A short non-fiction book that gives facts about food insecurity with a focus on what it looks like in America, how it affects health and wellness of people who experience it (especially children), and what people can do to help solve this complex issue. Ask what are some of the causes of food insecurity, and if each cause needs the same or a different solution. This book is a little longer than some of the others and may require adult assistance for complex words and sentences with younger readers.

Poverty and Hunger by Louise Spilsbury - This short non-fiction book summarizes poverty and hunger in a simple way for children with a focus on what it looks like internationally and in developing countries. It talks about the myriad causes of poverty and stresses that they are generally out of the poor person's control, such as war, famine, drought, systemic issues, and more. The solutions presented in this book focus more on short-term alleviation (give them food) than long-term answers (fix the underlying systemic cause), but still present some actionable items families can do to help others in need. You may want to ask what differences and similarities your children can point out between hunger at home and abroad after reading this book and the previous one. This resource list and the program it goes with does have an at-home focus, but it is good for children to learn that bad luck can happen to anyone and poverty and hunger are a problem everywhere, even if they look a bit different.

Fiction

Hangry by Drew Brockington - A comical tale about a monster that gets huge and starts destroying a whole city when he gets hungry plus angry. A silly and whimsical story on its own, this picture book can be used to talk about how our feelings can be affected by our bodies. Talk about different foods and moods, like how you might feel like the monster in the book and want to destroy things when you're hangry, and what a better course of action might be. Ask how you feel when you know you're going to eat something really delicious soon, how you feel when you're nice and full, and how you feel if you're too full.

Hansel & Gretel by the Brothers Grimm - The tale of the children lost in the woods who find a witch with a house made of gingerbread is so familiar, that the premise of the story is often glossed over in favor of focusing on how the children escape the witch. The children aren't just out for a walk in the woods when they get lost; they are cast out by their parents (sometimes just the wicked stepmother) because their father cannot afford to feed them. There were several famines in medieval times in Europe where this story takes place, where people did abandon their children in the woods (or worse) because they couldn't feed them and social safety nets didn't exist like they do today. Imagine with your child how the entire story could have been avoided if it happened here, today, and what Hansel & Gretel and their parents could do instead if they were hungry.

Jack & the Beanstalk an old English tale - Depending on the version of the tale you read, the reason for Jack going to the market to sell the family cow varies, but in most of them (especially older ones), it is because the cow stopped giving them enough milk to live on, and now she must be sold so that the family can eat. In the story, Jack comes back with magic beans and is able to trick a giant and gain a fortune. However, there are many people who wind up having to sell their possessions, give up their pets, or move their homes because they need the money to buy food. There are no magic beans and giants and gold waiting for them. Discuss as a family what things would

be easiest and hardest to part with if you needed to trade them for food. Talk about how your family might help others avoid having to be in this situation if they fell on hard times, or places you could turn to for help if the need arose.

The Cat from Hunger Mountain by Ed Young - This fable follows the life of Lord Cat, a wealthy nobleman who lives a lavish lifestyle at the top of a mountain, who has servants to do everything for him and creates waste and doesn't share. Then famine comes and everyone leaves him to fend for himself, and he becomes hungry and poor and must go begging for food. This teaches him the value of appreciating what you have and being grateful and humble, and also helping others. You may talk about some of the things your family has that other families may not have, and what it means to be grateful. You may also talk about how even those with little were willing to help others (the beggars Lord Cat meets in the book give him information about where to get a free meal and took him there even though they didn't have to), and that helping doesn't always mean giving material things.

Saturday at the Food Pantry by Diane O'Neill - Molly and her mom do not always have enough food, and when they visit their local food pantry Molly sees her classmate Caitlin who is embarrassed to be there, so Molly helps Caitlin realize everyone needs help sometimes. You can talk about why Caitlin might feel embarrassed, what other kinds of situations you or your children or their friends have felt embarrassed about, and whether they need to feel that way about those things. You can also talk about gratefulness, another feeling the characters in the book have about visiting the food pantry, and why they feel this way. You can talk about how it's possible to have more than one feeling (like embarrassment and gratefulness) at the same time. Ask what other groups of feelings your children might have when they think about going hungry and/or helping people so that they don't go hungry, for example: grateful for being fortunate enough to not worry about food if this is the case for them, proud to volunteer or donate to a food pantry if they are able, sad that others may not have enough to eat; scared or worried if they are unfortunate or food insecure, grateful for places like food pantries that can help or excitement about getting food; feeling both grateful and sad or helpless if they have enough to eat but not enough to help others.

Empty Fridge by Gaetan Doremus - In this book, neighbors in an apartment building each have very few ingredients in their refrigerators, but when they put them all together they make a quiche that is enough for everyone to share. The book lists benign reasons why the fridges are all empty (mainly variations on "they were busy all day" or "they forgot"), but looking closely at some of the illustrations and talking about what you see can lead to inferring that some of the residents may be busy or working all day but probably don't have enough money to buy a lot of food on their own. Andrew is a busker, or, street musician, earning small tips from passersby for his music and sleeps on a roll-up mat in the basement of the apartment building, Rose is an elderly lady living alone who likely doesn't work, and Claire has been described as having an exhausting day and is shown walking home from a bus stop. There are a few other clues in the illustrations which would suggest to an adult reader the overall economic status of the locale: all the buildings shown are apartment buildings crowded near each other and the apartments themselves are small with humble furnishings. While many books on hunger revolve around getting help from organizations like food pantries or friends who are better off, this one shows multiple people who by themselves do not have much, but when they pool resources and work together they have enough. This ties in with the concept of mutual aid, where everybody pitches in regardless of what they have and everybody benefits. This book is reminiscent of the tale *Stone Soup*, in that each neighbor contributes one ingredient. It differs in that there is no trickery involved. Depending on which version of the tale you read, the villagers contributing to the soup are either selfish and don't want to share with a poor traveler even though they have plenty, or the villagers are poor themselves and don't have enough on their own to feed a poor traveler coming into town. The version of *Stone Soup* by Jon Muth is more in line with the concept of sharing, building community, and mutual aid, and reading these two stories back-to-back and comparing them will be an interesting way to explore themes of community sharing. In both stories, the people are happier when they are eating together, and you can talk about what it means to be part of a community and ways you can get to know your neighbors.

Our Little Kitchen by Jillian Tamaki - This one is very similar in story and theme to the previous two, where a community comes together to make food to have enough for everyone and get to know each other. This one

differs in that the community dinner is overtly a volunteer-organized affair and the food largely comes from the community garden and donations/food pantries. The idea of gardening together in a neighborhood to help provide for yourself and others is a powerful one and can be a great tool for building resilient communities and addressing food insecurity. Ask about helping out at a community garden near you, and what the benefits are for you and for others.