

Lisa Penterman

COVID-19 Response Service Award—Individual

Lisa Penterman was motivated to serve at Feeding America Eastern Wisconsin through the Be Well Fox Valley AmeriCorps program because she wanted to provide others with self-sufficiency. According to Lisa, “any day I can help someone in need is a good day.” When the needs in communities throughout the state grew dramatically following the spread of COVID-19, she responded to help address the increase in food insecurity caused by the pandemic. Lisa took on numerous efforts to help Feeding America Eastern Wisconsin assist over 600,000 Wisconsin residents throughout the 35 counties they serve.

To help food pantry clients safely receive food during the pandemic, Lisa coordinated drive-thru mobile food pantries, primarily in Brown, Calumet, Fond du Lac, Outagamie, Shawano, Waupaca, and Winnebago counties. Lisa typically helped with at least three to six of these mobile pantries a week, supporting and coordinating volunteers, performing traffic control, providing FoodShare information to participants, and putting food boxes into the participants' vehicles. Additionally, as food pantries experienced unprecedented community need and a drastic demand in food, Lisa stepped up to review order forms to ensure pantries were ordering the correct amount of food. She provided this support for each of the pantries they served, helping to eliminate errors and making sure needed food was not wasted or misdirected.

Lisa also strove to combat food insecurity through substantial efforts to provide outreach and education on FoodShare to community members, organizations, and food pantries. These efforts included connecting with over 300 community assistance organizations and all 160 pantries within their service area, passing out fliers, and talking to individuals during mobile food pantries. Wanting to reach more people, she innovated to share information on FoodShare at locations people were still frequenting, including grocery stores, gas stations, laundromats, and libraries. Lisa conducted outreach and she also provided technical assistance to community members applying for FoodShare benefits through Consortium calls that connect individuals with agencies that can assist them, helping 152 clients apply for FoodShare benefits that totaled 89,528 meals.

Lisa's site supervisor Cassie Faulks shared, “Working in a food bank, you need to be able to adapt to change quickly and in a positive manner. Lisa exhibits these skills daily. Each day brings its own set of challenges, and Lisa faces them head-on. She maintains a positive attitude and it brings up those around her and influences them to act in the same way. Whether it be FoodShare outreach or mobile food pantries, she is always thinking about ways to improve.”

The diligence, passion, and innovation that Lisa Penterman brought to her service, helped thousands of food insecure individuals during the COVID-19 pandemic. Patti Habeck, CEO and President of Feeding America Eastern Wisconsin shared that when demand had dramatically increased and many of those being served had never navigated the hunger relief system in the past, “Lisa learned quickly how to do FoodShare outreach, and became an integral part of the outreach staff. Her patience, empathy, and compassion helped people feel more comfortable during very difficult times. I am quite certain we wouldn't have been able to achieve the level of service we provided during the pandemic without Lisa's help.”

