



## He Loves To Help

And thanks to your help, he won't go hungry this summer

Elijah is a thoughtful kid who loves to serve others.



Eleven-year-old Elijah already knows what he wants to be when he grows up: a robotic engineer.

"I want to build robots that help around the house," he says. "So, if you need help, or your car breaks down, it'll get fixed. Helping people makes me feel proud of myself."

Elijah, with his soft smile and bright eyes, knows a lot about helping people. He lives with his grandfather, Robert, and five other siblings. As the oldest of the bunch, Elijah often helps his grandpa with the other kids and with chores.

"If there's a mess, I clean it up," he says.

At school, Elijah is in the robotics club, where the team recently did well at a competition, finishing in second place. "It made me really excited," he says. "I felt like I accomplished something."

During the school year, Elijah gets two free meals a day. But during summer vacation, those meals need to be replaced ... and with six growing kids and a

limited family income, that's not always easy. So Elijah and his family are thankful for our summer feeding programs — initiatives that your support makes possible.

"When I'm hungry, I get tired or I'll get distracted," Elijah says. "But when I'm not, I'm on-task, and I can focus ... and be ready for whatever happens."

Maybe someday he'll build a robot to help feed hungry children!

**Your gifts help to feed kids like Elijah during their summer break. Thank you!**

### Special Section Inside!

#### Growing Beyond Hunger:

- ◆ See our new building
- ◆ Meet our founder
- ◆ A generous benefactor

# Humble Beginnings and a Heart To Help

Our founder wanted to do good for his community

In 1971, Frank Gerson worked at Cincinnati's incinerator and saw far too many usable household goods being thrown away. So, he salvaged them and gave them out to families struggling to make ends meet. Gerson eventually needed a truck to collect items for repair as demand for goods was so high.

He named his practice The Free Store, and our organization began. Before long, people started asking for food, so we started giving that away, too. For free. The operation continued to grow, and today we provide more than 37 million meals a year. And it all started with a man with a heart to help others.

"Frank had a vision of a community that was free from want and need," says Freestore Foodbank CEO Kurt Reiber. "He envisioned a community where children did not have to worry about where their next meal would come from. He saw our organization serving that community, providing food and services to people in

crisis and moving them to self-reliance."

Frank laid the groundwork for Freestore Foodbank 52 years ago. Now, in our new space, we'll continue to build on that foundation, strengthen our partnerships and expand our ability to serve our neighbors.

**Frank Gerson (right) with a volunteer and one of Freestore Foodbank's first trucks.**



## Founder's Legacy Makes a Lasting Impact

Freestore Foodbank's founder, Frank Gerson, and his wife, Conny Wischmann, were partners in life and in serving others. Until the end of their lives, they remained connected to our work.

Fittingly, Frank and Conny's compassionate bequest was the final gift of the Growing Beyond Hunger capital campaign for our new building, marking its successful completion. Now, in their honor, we've named our new location the Frank and Conny Gerson Campus.





**Our new Community Resource & Distribution Center.**

## He Made Way for the New Building

We're grateful to Richard Rosenthal for his extraordinary support

Richard "Dick" Rosenthal and his family are well known in the Cincinnati area for their history of engaged philanthropy. They've always had a heart for their community, as well as a vital interest in serving the long-term needs of the community.



**Dick and daughter Jennie**

"Trying to make a difference is a family passion," says Jennie Rosenthal, Richard's daughter. "I know it sounds like a cliché, but we were raised to believe that we should leave the world a better place."

Dick and his family are longtime supporters of Freestore Foodbank, helping to build a path to self-reliance for those we serve through vital programs like Cincinnati COOKS! culinary training and our Benefits Call Center. Their exceptional giving and insightful guidance helped launch both of these efforts, as well as make our new Community Resource & Distribution Center possible. We've renamed the road that fronts the property as Rosenthal Way in their honor.

Years ago, Dick and Freestore Foodbank's board knew we desperately needed a new facility, having outgrown our distribution center. This year, we began consolidating our buildings on Tennessee Avenue and Central Parkway in Ohio, and in Wilder, Kentucky, to form our new Community Resource & Distribution Center. Our Liberty Street Market remains open with all our current services available.

Located at 3401 Rosenthal Way (3.5 miles from downtown), the new building enables us to serve even more people throughout our 20-county service area. Last year, we provided 37 million meals with our 614 community partners in Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana.

"The new building will go a long way to serve our community and help families to stabilize their lives," says Freestore Foodbank CEO Kurt Reiber.

Dick and his family would agree, having been a lead partner on this journey. For Freestore Foodbank and the neighbors we serve, the Rosenths have made a decided difference.

**For more information, visit:  
[freestorefoodbank.org/moved](https://freestorefoodbank.org/moved)**

## You, too, can make a lasting difference!

Fight against hunger for generations to come. Consider making a gift in your will or trust or designating Freestore Foodbank as a beneficiary of a retirement account. For more information, please contact Maureen Gregory at 513-482-7542 or [Donors@freestorefoodbank.org](mailto:Donors@freestorefoodbank.org). You can also visit [freestorefoodbank.org/other-ways-to-give](https://freestorefoodbank.org/other-ways-to-give). If you already have included us in your plans, please let us know so we may thank you.

## Kurt's Corner



### A Message From Our President & CEO

The images on pages 2 and 3 make me smile, because they show how far we've come.

There's our founder, Frank Gerson, in the early 1970s with his Free Store truck. (Yes, "Free Store" was two words back then!) He's the one who got this whole thing rolling.

And there's our beautiful new Community Resource & Distribution Center, 225,000 square feet, which accomplishes at least two things:

1) It gives us the space we've desperately needed for years. 2) It positions us for the future, giving us the capacity to meet the future needs of the families we serve — with your continued support.

Frank died in 2016, but his legacy lives on — through our work, of course, but especially through supporters like you who share his heart for helping neighbors facing hunger.

And as you've seen in our cover story, the need for healthy meals is even greater in the summer when kids are out of school. As always, every \$1 provides up to 3 meals. Thank you for your compassion.

Robert says the pantry played a role in his recovery.



## "They Never Gave Up on Me"

Meals from a pantry helped Robert turn his life around

Robert has come a long way in the last year or so, and he's only looking up from here.

"About a year ago, I hit rock bottom," he says. "I was using all my money for drugs, so I decided it was time to get help."

Homeless at the time, Robert sought assistance from a local social service agency, which connected him with addiction services — and a food pantry that hosts a weekly meal program.

"The food pantry folks, they never gave up on me," he says. "They made sure I had a meal every day."

Now, Robert is celebrating more than a year of sobriety. He recently got his commercial driver's license and is working on finding stable housing.

And he keeps coming back to the pantry — not just for food, but to be a positive influence on other visitors who may need a little encouragement.

"Unless people see that there's a way out, they can stay stagnant," he says. "I hope to be that example of how there is a way out, so they know there's hope."

**Your support does much more than merely provide food. It also helps give hope and light to people struggling with other issues. Thank you!**

*Robert's story is representative of the people we serve.*

A handwritten signature in blue ink, likely belonging to Kurt, the President &amp; CEO.