



CONNECTION

News and information for friends of Freestore Foodbank

FALL 2023



Let's Get Quackin'

Rubber Duck Regatta Kicks September Off in Style

The ducks have taken over our August newsletter because our Rubber Duck Regatta is just around the corner. Here's a great reason to shake your tail feathers: Freestore Foodbank's Rubber Duck Regatta is the biggest in the U.S. and the second largest in the world!

This event isn't just a treasured Cincinnati tradition, it's a game-changer for our neighbors facing hunger. Since the first rubber duck hit the Ohio River in 1995, we've sold more than 3 million ducks, which is enough to provide at least 45 million meals!

When Rubber Duck Regatta founder Bob Edwards first dreamed up the idea in 1995, that year we sold 18,575 ducks, and we knew we had something special. Every year since, our Rubber Duck Regatta has grown exponentially. Last year we sold more than



200,000 rubber ducks!

Remember, every duck purchased provides up to 15 meals for our neighbors facing hunger. If you haven't purchased your duck, it's not too late! Don't miss out on all the action. Buy a duck and feed a child today.

Visit rubberduckregatta.org to buy your ducks!



Inside: Q&A With Quacky

Q&A With Quacky: **A Spokesduck With a Purpose**

It's not every day that you get to sit down and talk with a 5-foot-tall duck about helping children get nutritious food. So when the opportunity arose to interview the tristate area's coolest duck, we jumped at the chance!

Quacky, how long have you been the official mascot of Freestore Foodbank and the Rubber Duck Regatta?

I've been with Freestore Foodbank since 1995, when I was just a young duckling wanting to make a difference. It's been 29 amazing years of making friends and supporting the community.

Tell us a little about the job of being the mascot. What's it like?

It's the best job ever, even though some people mistake me for a chicken. I've learned you have to put your best webfoot and feather forward and bring a happy bill to every job, and the Rubber Duck Regatta makes that easy!

I've seen some pictures of you with Who Dey from the Bengals. That's pretty exciting! Tell us about some other mascots you hang out with and what that's like.

What?! I'm not just a mascot ... I like to see myself more as a spokesduck with a purpose. I love all my mascot friends and every opportunity to meet someone new!

It must really be an honor to be part of this iconic event that helps so many children.



It is a unique way to discuss a serious subject like hunger and open the door to meaningful action in our hometown. By highlighting the issue, we can work together to address the root causes.

What's your favorite part of the regatta?

All the ducks, of course! I love swimming with 200,000 of my closest friends to support the region and getting to see the shock and excitement of the prize winners.

Anything else you'd like to share with us?

I know many of us ducks look alike, but keep an eye out for me — the coolest duck who has sunglasses on and ... Buy a Duck! Feed a Child!

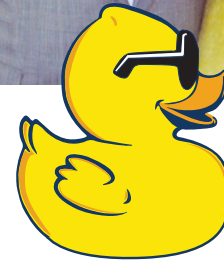
SINCE 1995, WE'VE SOLD 3,084,277 DUCKS!

If you placed the ducks in a row, bill to tail, you could
circle the Bengals' Paycor Stadium 42 TIMES!



Taste of the Bengals is returning on August 30!

Buy your tickets now at tasteofthebengals.org



The Best “Dumb Idea” Ever

Founder’s widow says original proposal almost didn’t fly

When Bob Edwards first had the idea of holding a fundraiser with thousands of rubber ducks, he floated the idea past his fellow board members at Freestore Foodbank.

One had a strong reaction: “That is the craziest thing I’ve ever heard. That really is a dumb idea, Bob.”

Sylvia Edwards laughs as she recounts this story about her late husband, whose “dumb idea” went on to become arguably one of the most famous fundraising events in the nation.

“That was all Bob needed to hear,” says Sylvia, recalling the board member’s reaction. “Bob took it from there. And, of course, it’s gotten bigger and bigger over the years.”

Sylvia, married to Bob for 55 years before his death in 2014, has been involved all along — numbering ducks beforehand, power-washing them after, and everything in between.

“I bailed ducks out of the river the first year, and every single year after until the event went virtual,” she says. “And after Bob was gone, I always bailed out the first batch.”

That “first batch” is vital, because they’re the ones that win prizes. The first duck plucked wins a new car donated by Cincinnati-Northern Kentucky Honda Dealers.

Sylvia recalls one particular year when Duck No. 1 had a familiar name.

“Scott Edwards,” Sylvia says, laughing again. “Bob

said something like, ‘Uh-oh, that’s our son!’ It can’t go to a family member!” By rule, a family member can’t win, so to avoid “fowl” play, Bob quickly called for Duck No. 2.

Sylvia says Bob’s greatest asset was his gift of convincing others to come on board — from major corporate sponsors to individual donors.

“He could talk people into anything,” she says. “Anything. Bob was a force to be reckoned with, in a very unassuming, quiet way. And he worked on this nonstop, year-round.

“Freestore [Foodbank] is a great organization, and there’s a huge need out there.”

That’s why Sylvia encourages you to buy a duck or three for this year’s event. To everyone that buys a duck, she wishes you the best of luck. Because every duck that is purchased helps our community fight hunger.





Volunteer Spotlight:

Dropping Ducks for 29 Years

Longtime Rubber Duck Regatta volunteer Jim Coates and his wife, Joan, moved to Greater Cincinnati in 1970 when P&G recruited him right out of graduate school. They raised their two children here, and it's where Jim first got involved with Freestore Foodbank more than three decades ago.

It all started when Jim worked in corporate distribution at P&G. His section was involved with getting rid of surplus product, and they had two truckloads of laundry detergent. Jim worked with Freestore Foodbank staff to have the supplies delivered, and the staff distributed the detergent to struggling families.

Years later, "Freestore Foodbank called me and had a crazy idea of dropping some rubber ducks into the river," Jim says. "I was happy to help. I've been here since the first rubber duck, and I've been involved every year since."

To say Jim has "been involved" is a HUGE understatement. He's been instrumental in figuring out how to get the ducks into the water, how to make them race, and how to fish them back out again. "I was in charge of making sure the ducks, crane and equipment got onto the bridge, and then I gave the signal to drop them," Jim says.

In his time with the Rubber Duck Regatta, Jim has helped work through all kinds of "ducky drama."

"The first year, the ducks wouldn't float down the river," Jim remembers. "We had to ask the fire department to help move them along with their fire hoses. Another year, we had a thunderstorm roll in and it blew the ducks toward Pittsburgh instead of Louisville."

Through it all, what keeps Jim coming back is knowing the incredible impact the event has for our neighbors facing hunger. "The major thing is raising money for Freestore Foodbank, which feeds people," Jim says. "Rubber Duck Regatta is a long day, but at the end of the day, feeding people keeps me involved."

LAST CHANCE



**BUY A
DUCK
FEED A
CHILD**



Buy your ducks by noon
on Sunday, September 3!
rubberduckregatta.org
513-929-DUCK (3825)

RUBBER DUCK REGATTA