

# How a Pittsburgh food bank is attracting new donors & securing larger gifts



## THE OPPORTUNITY

Founded over forty years ago, Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank is on a mission to eliminate hunger in southwestern Pennsylvania. They work with a large network of local partners under the Feeding America umbrella to source and distribute food to thousands of people across eleven different counties.

Like many food banks, they saw a huge increase in need during the pandemic, followed by transformational fundraising growth as their community responded to help. The food bank was able to go from distributing 35 million meals a year to more than 45 million, an increase of 28%.

To capitalize on this momentum and their reputation for impact in their community, the food bank began investing in resources that would help them attract new donors and increase their current donors long-term value.



FreeWill is one of a few tools we've brought on in the last year to get donors to give in different ways, engage them, and increase their long-term value. We really needed to facilitate the act of making a bequest or stock gift, so I value FreeWill as a tool because it makes giving these gifts as easy as filling out a donation form. Donors can make a gift whenever it's convenient for them.



**Megan Bailey**  
Director of  
Individual Giving

## THE SOLUTION

Prior to the pandemic, the food bank's fundraising team didn't have the capacity to be proactive about planned and major giving. So after the increase in support, they brought on more gift officers, and signed up for a FreeWill Regional Feature in May 2021 to boost their giving programs.

With the Regional Feature, their organization's name is placed front and center each day as thousands of people in their community go to [freewill.com](https://freewill.com) to make their estate plans and leave gifts to charity.

As a well-recognized name in their region, the network effect of the feature was powerful for them. They secured new legacy donors from [freewill.com](https://freewill.com), as well as from the custom FreeWill bequest sites of other organizations, where they were suggested as an option for an additional gift to Pennsylvania nonprofits.

They also use FreeWill to integrate custom links into their website, which make it easy for supporters to start a will and create a gift, donate stock, or give from their IRAs (gifts called Qualified Charitable Distributions).

With 20% of their donations coming from online sources and a large audience of self-sufficient, digitally-savvy donors, they felt that the FreeWill tools were a natural fit.

Beyond their website, the team has also included links to their FreeWill tools in emails, mailers, donation confirmation pages, and more to increase awareness of non-cash ways to give.

Through these custom links and their Regional Feature, they've been able to attract new donors and retain current donors, raising more than \$475,000 in bequest commitments.

Furthermore, the fundraising team uses FreeWill's Partner Portal to easily track donations, see where gifts are coming from, and act on donor information, so that they can steward their donors for years to come.



The Regional Feature is totally worth it. We got so many planned gifts from our neighboring charities that did their own FreeWill outreach. We had someone commit a \$70,000 gift to us who wasn't in our donor base at all. I can't see how any of the other planned giving tools we had considered would have been able to do anything like that.

Plus, we have major gift donors who give online, or monthly donations set up that are huge gifts. The tools naturally fit within what we're sending out anyways, as well as with how our donors make gifts. From my perspective, it's a clean, easy way to answer someone. They say "I want to make a stock gift, how do I do it?" Boom, here's the link. Same with QCDs, it's just easy. That's my favorite part. It's clean, user-friendly, and integrates on our website so seamlessly.



Liz McFarlin-Marciak  
Director of Major &  
Planned Giving

## RESULTS IN 6 MONTHS

**\$345K**

raised via the Regional Feature

**\$131K**

raised from their custom will site

**18**

new legacy donors