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### **Vic's Story: From Skipping Meals to Feeding Others**

I grew up with a father who worked hard every day and a mother who stayed home to care for the family. Like some of the other stories, I too had food on the table at the end of the day. Mom made a lot of bread to fill our bellies so I don't really remember being hungry, per se, but I see now we were food insecure.

When my dad got laid off work, we moved to three different cities in one year so he could find work, and I remember mom fixing spaghetti five nights in a row because that's all there was and it was a decent meal to stretch out over the week. There were similar patterns throughout the years as my sister and I entered high school age. Now that I am an adult with a family of my own that I realize there were many times when my parents ate less food than my sister and I, though I don't think we noticed. As a mother myself, I have repeated that pattern at different intervals through two divorces and five kids—skipping meals, going for days without milk and what-not.

I found myself with breast cancer nine months after getting sober. Five years later, I am more than grateful for being able to attend university and earn my first four-year degree. A coincidence my degree is in Public Health? I think not! Currently I'm the PSU Food Resources Coordinator for our food pantry; we serve close to 5,000 pounds of food to several hundred students a week. We are all ages, genders and of various religious beliefs but we're all there to get an education to hopefully better our lives in some way. When a student parent comes to me and says she hasn't eaten in a week so that her kids can eat, well—I know that place and I am once again grateful the pantry is there.

Nutritious food is so important for our ability to grow and learn. I am particularly focused on feeding our LGBT and transgender communities. I know this place and sometimes, more than others, there are barriers that marginalized populations endure, making it even more difficult to access healthy food. Feeding people and preventing hunger is a passion of mine, which is why I joined the Hunger-Free Leadership Institute. My kids have taken on anti-work too. My daughter will randomly say that she knows someone who is hungry; can we feed them? It's truly a blessing to work serve my community in these ways.