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The hunger to help those in need in Pittsburgh

*By Daveen Rae Kurutz
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Some people know about hunger only from infomercials featuring emaciated children from third-world countries.

Jason Cohn knows that isn't hunger's only face. The freelance photojournalist documented it for the Greater Pittsburgh Food Bank for more than a decade.

"The stories you hear are incredibly moving. These people are going through incredible issues in their lives," said Cohn, 38, of Wilkinsburg. "A lot of the things people have preconceived notions about just aren't true. People who access hunger relief are just like you and me."

Because Cohn's photos gave hunger a "face" in Allegheny County, the Food Bank is giving him one of its 2007 Hunger Awareness Day Awards. He will be honored today, along with two people and three corporations, at the Food Bank's annual Hunger Awareness Day luncheon.



Lorenzo Carter, of McKeesport, an 18-year-old volunteer at the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank, helps pack items Monday. The Food Bank is giving its 2007 Hunger Awareness Day Awards today to three people and three corporations at its annual Hunger Awareness Day luncheon. Justin Merriman/Tribune-Review

Honoree Rochelle Price, who works for the county Department of Human Services, makes sure children attending after-school programs receive nutritious snacks and meals.

Price, 38, of Emsworth, acknowledges she distanced herself from the job at first, but realizes now it is more rewarding than she expected.

"These kids, sometimes this is the only meal they get," Price said. "For me, it's worth it just to see the smiles on their faces when they call out, 'Here comes the food lady!' "

Award-winner Scott Lammie, chief financial officer of UPMC Health Plan and chairman of Scouting for Food, said his work with the Food Bank began by accident. Unable to find an Eagle Scout to represent his company, he undertook that role himself -- and won't give it up.

"There's a lot of ways we can support our community," said Lammie, 51, of Pine. "I can't think of a better way than making sure people who are hungry are receiving the nutritious food they need."

That's something most people don't realize, Cohn said. He hopes his role in the fight against hunger will spur more volunteers to sign up with the Food Bank.

"There are tons of people who volunteer their time already that really live, breathe and eat their mission of ending hunger," Cohn said. "Now, people just need to realize how great the need for hunger relief is here in Pittsburgh and get their hands dirty, too."

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