



# Shopping at a Food Bank

A hunger compassion education story by generationOn

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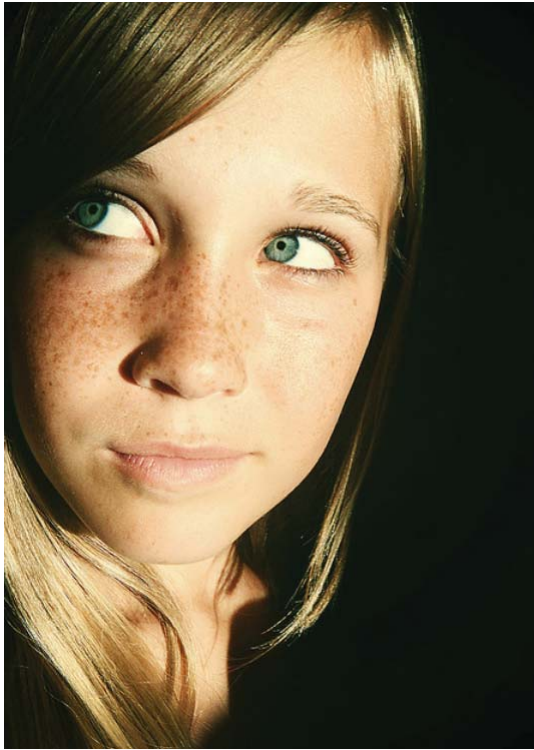


Photo courtesy of Christina Grant

My dad lost his job, but don't tell anyone. He told me not to tell even my best friend. He lost it two years ago and still doesn't have a job. Lots of things have changed at our house, but you really wouldn't know from the outside of our house. We live in a great neighborhood, with lots of other nice houses and lots of trees.

But a few months after lost his job, everything started changing really fast, including my dad's moods. He seems pretty down most of the time and is not into playing ball with me and my friends. He definitely doesn't play tennis with his friends anymore. He spends a lot of time on the computer at the library looking for a job.

You can't believe how my life has changed in two years. First, my mom had to sell her car. That was a real pain because she had to use my dad's car to drive to her new part time job, which meant I could not go to certain activities if she was working because a) my dad wasn't always home and no one could pick me up, or b) I would have to pick up my brother and sister from school and babysit — unpaid, of course! That really messed up my afterschool activities.

Next, I could not go to camp — a disaster! For the first time since 2nd grade I didn't go to summer camp. It was boring hanging around the house when all my friends were away, especially because our cable TV was cut off. I couldn't even invite my friends over to watch a ball game. They would find out that something was weird if our family didn't even have cable TV. Mom started saying "no" a lot more. "No, we can't go out for burgers. No, we can't have this for dinner. No, you can't have new clothes. No you can't get new school supplies." Just forget new video games or any other toys. No, No, No, No!

But the worst thing is, and you are not going to believe it, my mom signed us up with Social Services in town. Do you know what Social Services is? They help families in town that need food from the community food bank and help pay heating bills and things like that. I wish they would pay our cable bill so we get our TV back, but mom said they don't do that. However, she was happy to inform me that they did give her new school supplies for us.

It didn't take a rocket scientist to realize that my family was now eating food from the food bank. In the first bag my mom brought home, I recognized the pasta, tuna fish, beans, and tomato sauce: the same food we used to buy and donate. Some weeks she gets a couple of bags, other weeks because the town's food bank is short she only brings home one bag. Most of the time, we don't even get fresh milk and orange juice. We were



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actually starting to feel hungry at home. This is all so embarrassing. Gosh, I hope none of my friends find out. They won't, though, because I will never invite them over for dinner until we can buy the food we used to eat. When my brother and sister actually started complaining they were hungry, my mom signed us up for free breakfast and lunch at school — it helps a lot. Thank goodness, nobody can tell when I swipe my food card at the register.

Mom told me she has run into some of the other families we know in town at the food bank! She won't tell me who. I still can't believe that our family now depends on a food bank to get most of our groceries. What is happening to people in our town? What is going to happen to our family? We were the family who always gave to people in need — the food drives at school and church, now we are the family receiving the food! I hear my parents arguing about selling our house. I really hope they don't, I would rather eat canned beans everyday for a year than sell our house!

As much as I have hated all the changes that have happened to our family in the last two years, I have to admit, I have learned to appreciate everything that we have a lot more, even the food from the food bank. I made a big promise to myself. When my dad gets a job again, and that food drive comes around, I am going to buy all the great foods that my family likes to eat and donate them to our town's food bank. Then other families who have to "shop" there don't have to go hungry or live on spaghetti every night!



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# Discussion Questions

for *Shopping at a Food Bank* by generationOn

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1. What were some things that changed for this family after the dad lost his job?
2. What were some differences between the food they usually at and the food from the food bank?
3. Did the other families in the town know that this family received food from the food bank?
4. How would you feel if your family couldn't afford the things you buy now?
5. What's something you can do to help hungry families?



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