

Hilltown student helps fight hunger

HATFIELD – In an effort to help families and other kids facing hunger in her region, 12-year-old Marina Caputo, of Worthington, recently joined the fight to end hunger and pledged to collect 1 ton of peanut butter for to donate to the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts. She hopes to accomplish her goal by the end of June.

Recently, Marina visited the food bank with her mother, Tanya LeRose, and her mother's boyfriend, Benjamin Webster, to learn more about hunger in the region and the work of the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts. After taking a tour and signing up to become a volunteer, Marina shared her motivation for starting the ambitious, 1-ton drive.

After participating in a fundraiser for the American Cancer Society, Marina came home interested in doing more to help others in need. Webster suggested they look into helping families facing hunger, and Marina settled on collecting 2,000 pounds of peanut



Marina Caputo, 11, of Worthington, is helping to fight hunger.

butter, one of the top items on the food bank's most-needed food list.

Due to its shelf-life, high protein content and popularity among children, peanut butter is one of the items most needed and requested by the

food bank's 300 member agencies throughout Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden, and Hampshire counties.

Marina's timing makes this drive especially valuable to the food bank. Her efforts coincide with a huge increase in

the cost of peanut butter (in one quarter last year, prices increased by 60 percent) as well as the beginning of summer, a time of the year when food insecure children are no longer receiving free school meals, and rely more heavily on emergency food.

"Marina's selflessness, desire to help others, and genuine concern for her neighbors are touching," says Andrew Morehouse, executive director of the food bank. "We're truly inspired by her efforts and encourage the community to rally behind her and help make her drive a success."

Those interested in donating to Marina's peanut butter drive and helping her reach her goal can drop off peanut butter at one of the following locations: Corners Grocery in Worthington, Williamsburg Market in Williamsburg, Whole Foods in Hadley, and Tanya's Salon in Worthington.

For more information about the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts, visit foodbankwma.org.