

October Runover Triathlon Program, October 12, 1997

OCTOBER RUNOVER BENEFITS FOOD BANK

by Steve Hamlin

In 1982, two women saw that children and elders were going hungry while perfectly good food was going to waste. Those women, Judith Bailie and Catherine D'Amato, decided to do something about it, so they formed the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts. For the past fourteen years, the Food Bank has been committed to "rescuing" food from local and national food companies that would otherwise go to waste and using it to feed the needy. Last year alone, they distributed 3.2 million pounds of rescued food through 320 local programs to more than 100,000 people, of whom about half were children.

The Food Bank supports many local programs that lack the means to collect or store food in sufficient quantities. They maintain a 10,000 square foot warehouse in Hatfield as well as a farm in Hadley, and they make these resources available to any non-profit organization in the region that can show that they are feeding the hungry. The Food Bank goes beyond simply providing nutritional raw materials, too. They run an outreach program to educate staff as well as individuals and families at the local level about preparing well-rounded nutritional meals.

Through enviable volunteer support, the Food Bank supplies its product to the consumer at an average cost of only 28 cents per pound. Of course, that would not be possible without the donations, large and small, of food and money. With the recent passage of the Federal Welfare Reform Package, grassroots support in the form of fundraisers like this race become increasingly important. As welfare benefits become unavailable to the truly needy, the burden will fall, as always, disproportionately on the very young and the elderly. The Food Bank will have to respond to that demand.

For more information, you can contact the Food Bank at (413) 247-9738 or (800) 247-9632.