

Indy man will fast for 16 days to protest cuts in funding for food aid

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(Photo: Joseph Molieri)

Dave Miner is starving himself to make a point. The Indianapolis man calls hunger his full-time job, not because he lacks access to food, but because others do.

Miner, who serves on the boards of [Indy Hunger Network](http://www.indyhunger.org/who-we-are) (<http://www.indyhunger.org/who-we-are>), [Pack Away Hunger](http://www.packawayhunger.org/) (<http://www.packawayhunger.org/>), the [Alliance to End Hunger](http://alliancetoendhunger.org/) (<http://alliancetoendhunger.org/>) and the national nonprofit [Bread for the World](http://www.bread.org/) (<http://www.bread.org/>), launched a 16-day hunger strike Thursday to call attention to Congress' proposed cuts to the federal food stamp program.

For more than two weeks, he will forgo solid food, limiting himself to water, electrolytes and vitamins. The 64-year-old husband, father and grandfather who retired from Eli Lilly and Co. 10 years ago, says he can stand to lose a few pounds, but this has nothing to do with dieting and everything to do with feeding those who are truly hungry.

The House passed a budget resolution that proposes \$150 billion in cuts to the [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \(SNAP\)](https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap) (<https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap>) over 10 years. In Indiana alone, that translates into 50 million meals a year taken away from seniors, vets and kids over the next decade, Miner said.

Girl Scout saves mom: [Pacers to honor Girl Scout who helped save mom from car wreck \(/story/news/2017/09/19/9-year-old-indiana-girl-scout-saves-mom-overturnd-car/680681001/\)](/story/news/2017/09/19/9-year-old-indiana-girl-scout-saves-mom-overturnd-car/680681001/)

Joy and heartache: [Mom hears her son's heart beat again for the first time in 11 years \(/story/life/2017/09/16/mom-hears-her-sons-heart-beat-again-first-time-11-years/647349001/\)](/story/life/2017/09/16/mom-hears-her-sons-heart-beat-again-first-time-11-years/647349001/)

SNAP is the largest program in the country's hunger safety net, accounting for two-thirds of food aid. It helps low-income individuals and families with nutrition assistance, giving recipients a monthly stipend to purchase food. Recipients are required to work if able and can use SNAP funds only for food purchases.

"Nobody wants to be on these programs," he said. "SNAP is very carefully controlled to only go to people who need it."

Miner has been studying and tracking hunger as a full-time volunteer for 10 years. Part of his time is devoted to Indy Hunger Network, a coalition of representatives from leading anti-hunger organizations and community volunteers, all committed to addressing food insecurity in Central Indiana. The nonprofit has a near-term objective of building a sustainable system to provide enough healthy food for all who need it.

Distraught over the food aid cuts, Miner decided to do something to get people's attention. To him, a fast offers equal parts sacrifice and opportunity. He did a five-day fast about five years ago.

An avid runner, Miner completed a half-marathon this past weekend in New Jersey. He won't be running during the fast; in fact, he's been advised to make a daily nap part of his routine.

In addition to getting the OK from his doctor, he said he has the support of his wife, Robin, their two children and their grandchildren. A bigger concern for him earlier in the week was breaking the news to his elderly parents, who like all good parents, worry about their children.

But Wednesday, he emailed to say all is well. "(I) talked to my mom and she said she is proud of me and expressed no worries."

Miner will write a blog and post on Facebook throughout his fast, encouraging people to get engaged in the conversation and to contact their senators

and representatives in Washington. Follow the blog at millionmealfast.com (<https://millionmealfast.com/>).

He planned to write personal notes to U.S. Rep. Susan Brooks and Sens. Joe Donnelly and Todd Young and invite them to join him in the fast.

"We can meet the challenge of hunger, but it's so widespread we need both public and private, faith-based and secular, business and nonprofits together," he said.

His message to Central Indiana and beyond as he begins his fast is this:

"We need every person who donates money, food or time to a pantry to keep doing so. But there's no charitable solution for the SNAP cuts being considered in Congress. Public investments like SNAP are essential to any realistic blueprint for ending hunger — as constituents and taxpayers, we must ask our elected representatives to protect these programs and the at-risk families that they help."

Noteworthy

Relief on the way: Eight Wheeler Mission staff and program participants from Indianapolis left for Florida on Tuesday to help St. Matthew's House, a Naples-based homeless shelter caught in the direct path of Hurricane Irma. The team will assist in cleanup, but its bigger purpose is providing staff relief. Many of St. Matthew's House employees and volunteers have been working up to 20 hours a day since the hurricane hit. The Wheeler relief effort will allow the staff at St. Matthew's to be with their families and assess damage to their own homes. Much of Naples was still without power earlier in the week, and the area was experiencing rolling water shut-offs.

"When I told my staff, many had tears in their eyes," St. Matthew's House President and CEO Vann Ellison said. "Having been in this work for more than 30 years, I am constantly amazed to see how the faith community comes together in times of need to help,"

The Wheeler Mission team is being organized by Brandon Andrews, director of the Men's Residential Center on Delaware Street. Andrews, himself a graduate of Wheeler's addiction recovery program, has family ties in the Naples area and is familiar with St. Matthew's House.

"When I heard of the need, I approached our executive leadership expressing my desire to take a team down to help. There was no hesitation on their behalf and literally, within less than one hour, we were selecting the team, arranging for transportation and working out all the details," Andrews said.

Like Wheeler, St. Matthew's House has long-term residential programs focused on addiction recovery for men and women. Currently there are three men in their program who are from Indianapolis.

Crime-fighters: The Indianapolis Foundation, an affiliate of [Central Indiana Community Foundation](https://www.cicf.org/) (<https://www.cicf.org/>), awarded more than \$2 million in grants to 48 not-for-profit organizations this week in Phase II of the [Community Crime Prevention Grant Program](https://www.cicf.org/not-for-profits/community-crime-prevention-grant-program/) (<https://www.cicf.org/not-for-profits/community-crime-prevention-grant-program/>). Grant amounts range from \$5,000 to \$100,000. The grant program is funded from public resources allocated annually by the Indianapolis City-County Council. A full list of grant winners can be found at [cicf.org](https://www.cicf.org/) (<https://www.cicf.org/>).

Help for the kids: The [Children's Museum](https://www.childrensmuseum.org/) (<https://www.childrensmuseum.org/>) joined with the [Children's Museum of Houston](http://www.cmhouston.org/) (<http://www.cmhouston.org/>) to thank Hoosier children and their grownups for donating more than 2,500 pounds of school supplies and school uniforms following Hurricane Harvey. The Indianapolis museum served as a drop-off point for donations, collecting and shipping 122 boxes of school supplies and uniforms to Texas. In addition, the museum assisted IPS School 91 by shipping 21 boxes of uniforms directly to a sister school, Worsham Elementary School in Houston.

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