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Reid All About It

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[The Power of Chatty Friends](#)

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Last night I went to the Kids Summer Stock Social Media Mixer at the [Food Bank of Central & Eastern North Carolina](#).

That's a mouthful! What does it all mean?

It means I was in the Food Bank's HUGE Raleigh warehouse full of boxes of all kinds of food — fruit, vegetables, eggs, bread, Mt Olive pickles, peanut butter, water, you name it — on towering shelves that reach up to the ceiling. Imagine Costco without all the junk food. A passionate Food Bank volunteer (thanks David!) led a group of us on a tour of this humongous building into several giant refrigerator and freezer rooms – a pleasant relief to the 90+ degree heat.

It also means I hung out with a bunch of fun and kind folks I first met on Twitter a few years ago but who have become friends whom I don't see often enough. That's the social media part.

However, the real reason we gathered was not to ogle giant boxes of sweet potatoes, but to support the Food Bank's Kids Summer Stock program. I must admit when I first heard "summer stock" I thought of summertime theater – is that just a New England thing? But, no, this is a serious issue.

When school ends, breakfast and lunch programs end too for 270,000 kids in the Food Bank's service area of 34 counties. Kids go hungry. Imagine being hungry all the time and the effects that would have on your mood, attitude, energy level, brain power and self-image. What a crappy way for a kid to live.

[Kids Summer Stock](#) provides the food needed to support these kids and their families during the summer. In the past three summers it's provided more than 4 million meals.



Last night's mixer was not only fun but a way to get the word out to the local social media community about the Kids Summer Stock program. I've written before on the Socialfish blog about the [Food Bank and their social media outreach](#). I like to call their database and website manager, [Jen Newmeyer](#), their social media Champion because she uses social media, especially Twitter, to develop personal relationships within the community.

And what happens when it becomes personal? You care. Of course I've always cared about hunger in my community, even before I met Jen. When I lived in Sacramento CA and Arlington VA I supported food banks with time and money. There are so many other causes I'd like to give to, but with a limited charity budget, how do I decide where to give? How do you?

When it becomes personal, we care and we give. When someone I know and like is an advocate for a cause, I get interested. Think about where you've spent your charity time and money this past year. Some of your decisions may have been based on a deeply personal interest, for example, fighting cancer. But I bet you supported friends or family who walked or ran in charity events or you bought cookies from a Girl Scout. What was your motivation for giving? A personal relationship?

The Movember campaign inspired me to write last fall about the [reasons some causes resonate with us](#) more than others. My top reason: friends are involved.

The [Food Bank](#) understands the power of friends. They also understand the power of friends with influence and a platform. Chatty friends. Friends who write, tweet, share and socialize. Their new [Social Media Ambassadors](#) program gives a lot of their social media “friends” a way to spread the word about the Food Bank and its programs to their friends and network. This type of program appeals to today’s volunteer who prefers ad-hoc involvement: helping when they have the time in a way that fits their lifestyle and appeals to their interests.

Now, I’m going to appeal to you. Do you have \$10 bucks to spare? Come on now, that’s not so much for many of us, that’s two beers at your local pub or a craft brew six-pack.

If you’re from central or eastern North Carolina, visit the [Food Bank’s Kids Summer Stock](#) page and contribute some money or time to the hungry kids. If you’re from elsewhere, you can find your local food bank on the [Feeding America](#) site. I bet you grew up with a full belly and refrigerator, let’s help the kids who have empty tummies and cupboards so their future can be full of happiness and success.

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