HUNTINGTON, W.Va. — A little goes a long way.

This is especially true for the Huntington Area Food Bank (HAFB) and its capability to distribute seven pounds of food to hungry people with only a dollar.

“In terms of feeding a family of four, $5 feeds five families five meals,” said Brooke Ash, assistant director of the HAFB.

Although the HAFB can distribute seven pounds of food with just a dollar, Ash said that overall food donations have decreased from 2008 to 2009.

“Community food donations were down 500,000 pounds,” Ash said. “The trend we are seeing is that people who are willing to donate food has decreased.”

Helping Hungry Hearts (HHH), a student-run public relations agency in the W. Page Pitt School of Journalism and Mass Communications at Marshall University, is organizing the Outrunning Hunger 5K Run/Walk. The proceeds will go directly to the HAFB to be used to feed hungry people.

“We can do a lot with a dollar because we can buy food at wholesale cost,” Ash said. “For example, if someone buys two cans of green beans for $2, we could have distributed 14 pounds of food.”

HAFB appreciates and accepts both food and monetary donations.

“Just to get a little more bang for your buck, the HAFB can stretch your dollar further because of wholesale purchases,” Ash said.

HHH has set goals of raising hunger awareness and raising $10,000 for the HAFB. In November, HHH raised more than $890 by inviting three local elementary schools participate in the Change 4 Change penny drive.

“I was shocked that it raised that much money,” Ash said. “Above all, it gets the word out about hunger issues in our community and how you can give back.”

The Outrunning Hunger 5K Run/Walk is scheduled for 9 a.m. April 10 at Pullman Square. Interested racers can get registration information online at www.marshall.edu/helpinghungryhearts. Pre-registration costs $15, and racers may register for $20 on the day of the race.
Ash said a dollar for seven pounds of food is an equation that adjusts with inflation.

“Our equation used to be a dollar could provide 10 pounds of food,” Ash said. “The cost of fuel for transportation, food costs and the cost of living are all factors that can affect the equation.”

For more information about Helping Hungry Hearts or the Outrunning Hunger 5K Run/Walk, please visit www.marshall.edu/helpinghungryhearts or e-mail the agency at helpinghungryhearts@marshall.edu. For further questions, please call co-director Whitney Parsley at 304-389-0390. To learn more about the HAFB, please contact Ash at 304-523-6029 or brooke@hafb.org.

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The Huntington Area Food Bank (HAFB) is a private, nonprofit organization founded in 1983 and based in Huntington, W.Va. The HAFB is affiliated with Feeding America, the country’s largest hunger-relief organization. The HAFB serves more than 250 agencies in 17 counties in West Virginia, southeastern Ohio and northeastern Kentucky. The HAFB’s main mission is to curb the hunger problem in the Tri-State. The HAFB relies on grants, community donations and the United Way to provide food to its agencies. Agencies include food pantries, soup kitchens, emergency shelters, senior citizen programs, youth programs and residential programs. For more information, please visit www.hafb.org.