

## John's Story from THIS IS HUNGER



"I feel bad when my mom tries to buy me some food and I say, 'Mom if you're not getting yourself something then I'm not getting anything.' And she says, 'Yes you are.' And I say, 'No I'm not.' It makes me feel sad that my parents sometimes feed us kids and not themselves. But it makes me feel happy that they care so much about my brother and me.

I'm ten years old, and at about my age, kids want to help care for their family a little bit more. I think the law should let kids work to help with their family's finances. I wish I could get a little paper route so I could bring home a check because sometimes we have a little bit of trouble paying the rent and getting enough food. My mom is really struggling to get a job. She wants that feeling she gets when she comes home with a paycheck and can afford to feed us and get us some things that we want. My dad is disabled and can't work a regular job anymore. To pull together some money, we go out and find some scrap metal and sell it to the junkyard for maybe a hundred bucks a load.

There was a period, before we got food stamps, when I was so hungry that it hurt a little bit in my stomach and kind of made me out of breath. I didn't tell my friends about our situation. It was a private thing. I got really bad grades in school then, and I was used to getting good grades. If I'm hungry in school, I can't focus a lot and I don't understand the lesson. I'm glad that the school I'm in now can provide us breakfast because you need breakfast to get you going in the

morning. The school gives us apple slices, bagels and cheese and those little fruit juices. When I don't eat in the morning, it makes me drowsy, and I stare off in space just thinking about lunch. If I didn't get school lunches, I'd be a little disappointed because I might not have enough to eat.

My life changed when we got on food stamps. We get food in the clearance aisle and don't buy whole price things. The food stamps we get aren't enough to feed four people for a month, so I'm always excited to go to the food bank. Sometimes there are things I really like and sometimes not so much. I combine things to make the taste a little bit better and to fill up a little bit more, like putting cinnamon and sugar on the bread.

I think we are going to have a good life again. When that happens, I'm gonna help hungry people out, like invite them to dinner and give them some food to take home. I will be excited when my mom gets a job. Then we will be good to go and have some extra money to do some of the stuff that we haven't been able to do. Maybe we could go to Cedar Point. I've never been and always wanted to."

**John, at home in the kitchen, Canton, Michigan**

**Mazon** | A Jewish Response  
To Hunger