Health and Hunger
How the Two Exist Hand-in-Hand

Health and hunger are deeply intertwined. Sustained food insecurity has a measurable impact on an individual’s overall health and quality of life. Feeding America estimates that 58% of the households served by food banks like Feeding the Gulf Coast include someone living with high blood pressure. Food insecurity is also linked to a higher prevalence of chronic health conditions, including diabetes, hypertension, and arthritis. These chronic disease factors lead to increased healthcare costs for those who are already juggling strained budgets. For people facing food insecurity, the challenge of adequate diet and nutrition, doctor visits, and medication is often unmanageable, creating a cycle of tough choices that results in otherwise manageable diseases becoming a health crisis.

Feeding the Gulf Coast recognizes the parallel union proper nutrition has in combating the impact of food insecurity on health. We believe no one should have to sacrifice the food they need for a better life. As part of our work to address this, Feeding the Gulf Coast is working to implement Healthy Eating Research* (HER) nutritional guidelines within our inventory system to provide nutritional resources to our agencies and those we serve. This system looks at food sources through a three-tiered lens. Our goal is to make a concentrated effort to source healthier options so that those we serve will have access to more nutritious foods.

Additionally, the food bank is working to strengthen healthcare partnerships. One example of this is the collaboration with Victory Health Partners, a local nonprofit focused on providing affordable medical services. Through this partnership, patients identified as food insecure are provided prescription meal boxes. By working with healthcare partners in our area in this way, individuals facing chronic diseases can be screened for food insecurity and provided resources for obtaining healthy food to help address health issues.

*HEALTHY EATING RESEARCH (HER)
This system is never meant to place blame or guilt on food choices, but rather to help educate which foods lead to better nutrition. The guidelines focus primarily on these three nutrients to limit; saturated fat, sodium, and added sugar, based on evidence linking increased consumption to increased risk for diet-related chronic diseases.2

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**CHOOSE OFTEN**
Sat. Fat ≤ 2g  Sodium ≤ 230mg  Added Sugars 0g

**CHOOSE SOMETIMES**
Sat. Fat 0g  Sodium 1-140mg  Added Sugars 1-11g

**CHOOSE RARELY**
Sat. Fat ≥ 2.5g  Sodium ≥ 480mg  Added Sugars ≥ 12g

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GET INVOLVED
Visit our website
feedingthegulfcoast.org
Kids Need Meals Help Ensure They Have Access

Bennett Russell Elementary School students were asked what they would buy if given $100. You can imagine the list. There were mentions of kites and an Xbox. One kid had his priorities in order: charity first, then a visit to the zoo, and finally Chick-fil-a. Yet, an overwhelming theme waved most of them together—others. The items they purchased would go to a family member or other kids in need. This act of kindness is not reserved for hypothetical wish lists. It extends into the tangible reality that not every child has the food they need to thrive. “I am so happy, I get a big bag Friday, is it Friday? My sissy gets one too. I share with my baby brother,” a second-grade recipient of the backpack program mentioned to her teacher.

Hunger impacts more than 100,000 children across our service area. Last year, Feeding the Gulf Coast’s child nutrition programs ensured more than 14,000 children had access to nutritious meals throughout the year. However, as families continue to face the challenges of rising inflation, higher gas prices, and ongoing uncertainties—Feeding the Gulf Coast is working to strengthen its programs and reach more children in need. Rural counties often consist of food deserts where nutritious food sources are sparse or located farther away. As a result, many working families are stretched to make ends meet and cannot afford to travel to nearby towns for healthier and fresher food options, forcing them to rely on expensive, convenience-type meals.

Feeding the Gulf Coast is seizing the opportunity to provide critical child nutrition programs to more than 50 schools currently untapped in our rural service area. By expanding our school pantry and backpack programming within our rural counties, we hope to bridge the gap between lack of access to consistent meals and provide kids with a way to connect their families to needed items through school pantries. This is a big lift but we are committed to reaching every child within our service area who is facing hunger. We are prioritizing funding and partnership opportunities to ensure every child within our rural counties, we hope to bridge the gap between lack of access to consistent meals and provide kids with a way to connect their families to needed items through school pantries. This is a big lift but we are committed to reaching every child within our service area who is facing hunger. We are prioritizing funding and partnership opportunities to ensure every child has the food they need to thrive.

Children had access to meals this year because of your generous support.

Kids are counting on us.

They are also counting on you.

At the onset of the pandemic, our child nutrition site partners were able to utilize provisions made possible through the nationwide issuance of child nutrition waivers by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The implementation of these flexible policies ensured our child nutrition partners could eliminate barriers for children accessing nutritious meals while maintaining the safety of each site’s staff and volunteers. Through this, our programs have been able to more effectively distribute meals to children and ensure more kids can participate in a way that best meets their needs.

Unfortunately, without the intervention of Congress, those waivers are set to expire on June 30, 2022, which will reverse systems put in place that have helped remove barriers to children accessing critical, nutritious meals. We ask you to join us in asking your elected officials to take action to extend these waivers now, so meals for children are not left on the table.

WHAT A YEAR

Last year we continued to focus on improving lives as families, seniors, and individuals in need rebounded from the challenges of 2020. Yet, in many ways, those same challenges lingered. The disruptions of supply chain issues and waves of variants continued to make life hard for families. With food insecurity rates across the central Gulf Coast higher than the national average, this is especially true for those in our area facing hunger.

In 2021, the food bank distributed more than 22.5 million meals through our network of community partners and outreach programs. This concentrated effort could not be made possible without your generosity and support.

We completed an expansion project at our Florida Facility to increase our usable warehouse space to 20,530 square feet, creating an addition of 68% of food storage capacity. Also, we celebrated 40 years of service to our communities.

As we embark on the next decade of growth, we invite you to join along and help make a difference in your community. Whether through volunteering, donating, or partnering with our mission, you will continue to support the food bank to ensure more families in need have access to the meals around their table.
Feeding the Gulf Coast works towards the vision of establishing a hunger-free Central Gulf Coast for our neighbors in need throughout 24 counties in Alabama, Mississippi, and the Florida Panhandle.

The food bank distributed more than 27.5 million meals in 2021 through our network of more than 400 partners.

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GET INVOLVED

APRIL 11 - APRIL 25
AL LEGAL FOOD FRENZY
Attention all lawyers, law firms, law schools, and legal organizations: Sign up for the 6th Annual Legal Food Frenzy and help end child hunger. To learn more and sign up, visit alabamalegalfoodfrenzy.org

APRIL 23
COAST YOUNG PROFESSIONALS WALKING ON WATER BRIDGE WALK & FOOD DRIVE
BILOXI BAY BRIDGE
Visit mscostachamber.com/events to learn more.

APRIL 28
22ND ANNUAL CHEF CHALLENGE
MOBILE CONVENTION CENTER
Join us for our signature event as we celebrate 40 years of service. Chef Challenge brings together the area’s local chefs to battle for win. Enjoy tastings from local restaurants, complimentary beer and wine, entertainment by Roman Street, and a vast silent auction, all in the name of ending hunger in your community. Tickets can be purchased online at feedingthegulfcoast.org or by calling (251) 653-1617, ext. 141. Don’t delay, this event is almost sold out.

MAY 14
NALC STAMP OUT HUNGER
Set your non-perishable food donations out on Saturday, May 14. Your mail carrier will pick them up during their regular route and deliver them to the food bank.

MAY 15
THE MAX VOLLEYBALL TOURNAMENT
JUANA'S PAGODAS
Registration starts at 9 a.m. The Tournament begins at 10 a.m. Visit maxvolleyball.org to learn more or donate.

PAYMENT OPTIONS

Please charge my credit card:

- Visa
- Mastercard
- Discover
- AMEX

Other:

- $20
- $50
- $100
- $250
- $500
- Other: ______

Name (Please Print)

Address

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Phone #

Email Address

Feeding the Gulf Coast’s federal identification number is 63-0821997.

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