



Rural Hunger Going the Distance to Reach the Need

“We have two children, a girl and a boy. Our children love sports. We live in the country. [This food from the food pantry] makes a difference in helping with meals. We had to go into what savings we had to pay the bills when my husband lost his job due to the pandemic. My family can now sit down together and enjoy a meal—a definite blessing. It felt good that someone cared enough to help.”

Hunger is a prevalent issue throughout our service area, but it is particularly noticeable in our rural counties where nutritious food sources are often located farther away. Many working families are stretched to make ends meet and cannot afford to travel to nearby towns for nutritious food options, forcing them to rely on overpriced and unhealthy food.

To address the unique barriers facing our highly rural communities, Feeding the Gulf Coast has developed new programs to increase food access in the region. This Spring, the food bank aimed to establish new partnerships with community organizations to offer food pantries in places where few or none existed. Citing an unmet need

for homebound food insecure individuals, several of these new partners worked with their volunteers to offer food deliveries to people's homes.

One partner, Lifeline Outreach Ministries, created *Hedges and Highways* as an extension of the food pantry to travel by car and give food bags or boxes to the elderly, disabled, and those with no transportation in the rural areas. Ms. Vickie Moore oversees the pantry at Lifeline Outreach Ministries. “This program has been so helpful to Clarke County, Alabama,” says Ms. Moore. “[The food bank] really gave us assistance to feed more people.”

During this time, the food bank also ran the grant-funded Home Box Delivery Program, which provided nearly 1,500 homebound households with food boxes mailed directly to their homes. The boxes offered critical food support to people who could not reach other food assistance services because of health or mobility issues or other transportation barriers.

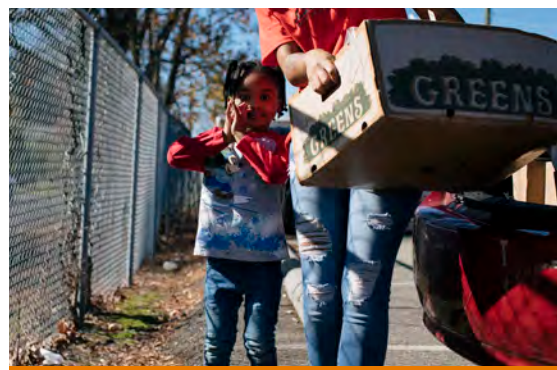
Connecting every community across our service area with food resources remains a vital focus for the food bank as families navigate life post-pandemic. We are grateful for our partners who are aiding us in this work along the way.

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FOOD DESERTS*
CREATE BARRIERS TO
ACCESS HEALTHY FOOD.

*An area in which it is difficult to buy affordable or good-quality fresh food.

LEARN HOW YOU CAN

Visit our website
feedingthegulfcoast.org



FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO

Some say that *change* is the only constant in life, and the past year has certainly been proof of that. Our collective ability to adapt to this change and meet the challenges it presents can provide much inspiration. If we take a brief moment to look at what has been accomplished by so many, inspiration is in great supply.

The Child Nutrition Department accomplished the unprecedented by activating all four programs at once to reach children learning both virtually and in-person at schools across the Gulf Coast. In addition, produce drops were added at child meal sites to offer extra food support to families.

We also expanded our reach in rural and underserved communities by expanding our partner agency network and through the pilot of a home delivery program. Millions of meals were served with the critical help of our partners and volunteers through untried programs such as Farmers to Families food boxes. Anticipating and responding to further change, we have made a significant investment in our facilities, allowing us to continue to adapt and expand as we work to reach those in need.

Of course, none of this is possible without you. Through partnerships, volunteerism and financial support, we continue to strive to be there for those who are facing hunger—together.

Michael Ledger

MICHAEL LEDGER

PRESIDENT & CEO, FEEDING THE GULF COAST

JOIN US AS WE CELEBRATE

40
Years of Hope

1981 - 2021



Let Summer Be Sweet Childhood Hunger Doesn't Take A Break

I have an eight-year-old student who is homeless. She has a four-year-old sister, and they are with both biological parents. They have stayed many nights in their car. The food that [Feeding the Gulf Coast] provides to my school has helped this family eat meals in their car.

The pop-off lids on the cans of food, the milk that needs no refrigeration, the single-serving cereals allow easy access to hungry children who can't help the circumstances they face.

I learned recently that three of our students used the pop-off lid of their ravioli for spoons. They had no electricity and didn't even have a spoon to eat with. The bag of food sent home for the weekend was all they had. Some of my students ask for an extra bag to take home for their siblings to have food. I can't tell you enough of how grateful we are for the Backpack Program to feed our children!"

— School Social Worker from
Rosinton Elementary

Stories such as the one shared with us by a social worker at Rosinton Elementary, a school partner in

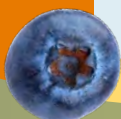
Robertsdale, AL, are hard to fathom. The idea that any child would go without a spoon seems reserved for other places—not our backyard.

Yet, we know this is why the food bank has worked to address the hunger that exists in our community for 40 years. To hear that any child is struggling with an empty stomach compels us to keep working.

As the past school year shifted to fit various needs to ensure children had a safe yet effective space to learn, so too has the food bank approached the issue of childhood hunger. Since the pandemic began in early March of 2020, the food bank has operated all four Child Nutrition Programs including; the Afterschool Meal Program, the School Pantry Program, the Backpack Program, and the Summer Meals Program in tandem to ensure that children in need were met no matter where they were during the school year.

Feeding the Gulf Coast was able to provide meals and snacks for over 17,000 children last year.

As summer comes, so many children who relied on school meals face the painful reality of hunger instead of





the sweet, carefree days of summer they should be able to enjoy.

After a year of anything but ordinary, children are longing for a normal summer. Yet, nearly 110,000 children across our service area may not know where their meals will come from over the next few months of summer break from school. So many parents experience the hardship of providing extra meals during the summer, leaving them to make tough choices. Children feel the stress this burden creates equally as much.

Childhood hunger doesn't take a break—neither do we. This summer, Feeding the Gulf Coast expects to provide meals to nearly 13,500 children through our Summer Meals Program. More than 180 child meal sites across our service area are equipped to provide children with two meals a day.

Together, because of you, we can ensure more children make sweet summer memories filled with fun instead of facing long hard days with hungry tummies. This summer, we can provide children and their families with the food they need to rest, play and just be kids.

Parents and caregivers seeking meals for children, ages 18 and younger, can visit our website at www.feedingthegulfcoast.org or call our office at (888) 704-FOOD.

40 Years of Hunger-Relief Mission Moments

We are looking for food bank stories from the past 40 years to share on social media and in our various communication channels. If you would like to share your story of how the food bank has impacted your life in any way, please connect with us at communications@feedingthegulfcoast.org.

EXPANSION PROJECT

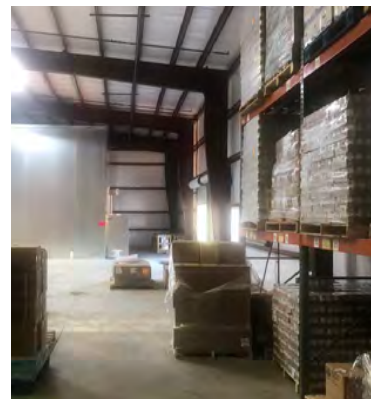
The early 1990s kicked off a season of growth for the food bank. As Feeding the Gulf Coast, then known as Bay Area Food Bank, expanded its services into Northwest Florida, the food bank sought options for a physical location to provide agencies with a closer resource for food.

Following the very active hurricane seasons of 2004 and 2005, and with the decision to add Bay, Washington, and Holmes counties in 2007, the food bank explored options to construct a facility in Santa Rosa County.

Feeding the Gulf Coast moved into its current facility in 2009, built with the expectation of distributing 8-10 million pounds per year. However, as the community's needs have increased, so have our distribution efforts. The lack of functional storage space at our Milton facility has created several operational challenges.

Last year, the food bank undertook an expansion project to increase our usable warehouse space to 20,530 square feet, an increase of 68% of food storage capacity. Included in the plan is expansion of our dry storage area, conversion of our existing cooler into a freezer, and an addition of a cooler.

With food insecurity rates in the Florida Panhandle at higher levels than the national average, this project allows Feeding the Gulf Coast to significantly increase the volume and variety of healthy food it provides to families struggling with hunger.





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 over 33 million meals in 2020 through our network of over 400 partners.

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*This institution is an equal
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VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR FULL STATEMENT



22ND ANNUAL

Chef Challenge

A CHALLENGE TO END HUNGER

SAVE THE DATE for SEPTEMBER 16, 2021



Join us in **ENDING HUNGER** along the Central Gulf Coast.

GET INVOLVED

WHEN SCHOOL ENDS, THE SUMMER MEALS PROGRAM BEGINS!

Children, 18 & younger, can receive free meals this summer. To find sites near you, call our office at (888) 704-FOOD or visit our website and click the orange, Find Food button.

Use the locator tool to enter your zip code and find meal sites near you. Each program has a different process, so we encourage you to call ahead of visiting.

SEPTEMBER 16 22ND ANNUAL CHEF CHALLENGE EVENT

MOBILE CONVENTION CENTER
6:00 PM TO 9:00 PM

Join us for a culinary experience as some of the area's most finest chefs come together to fight hunger in our community, served with a little friendly competition.

To purchase tickets or sponsorship, visit our website or call us at (251) 653-1617, ext. 141.

HOST A FOOD AND FUND DRIVE THIS SUMMER

Summer is a wonderful time to get your business or organization involved with the food bank. To set up your food and fund drive, visit our website or contact Missy Busby at mbusby@feedingthegulfcoast.org

WAREHOUSE HOLIDAYS:

The food bank will be closed on July 5 in observance of Independence Day and September 6 in observance of Labor Day.

visit [FEEDINGTHEGULFCOAST.ORG](https://www.feedingthegulfcoast.org) | (888) 704-FOOD

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☐ I would like to join the Hope Harvesters Monthly Giving Club.

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