

SUMMER 2019



MEMBER OF  
**FEEDING**<sup>®</sup>  
**AMERICA**

## THE HIDDEN FACE OF HUNGER

**D**iane Mayle will proudly show off pictures of her grandsons any chance she gets. This cheerful 77-year-old is the first to admit that she does not mind being the center of attention. After being with her for just a few minutes, anyone can easily see that Diane is a ray of sunshine for all those around her.

What is hard to see is that Diane also struggles with hunger. After retiring from a career in home health care, she lives on a fixed income of \$700 a month.

“After I pay my rent, electricity, and other bills, what’s left?” she said. “You know, not much for food.”

When you picture hunger, what comes to mind? Would you think of a teacher at your local school? The hardworking young family that moved in down the street? The kid playing basketball in their driveway every afternoon? These are the people who are living with hidden hunger. **The truth is, hunger is not always easy to see. More and more, cost of living increases are forcing people to work extra jobs to afford basic necessities such as childcare, rent, and food.**

One in six people, including one in five children, in our community struggles with hunger. They live, unseen, with hunger. What is truly heartbreaking is the effect that hunger has on our children. Many times the stress a family experiences from lack of proper nutrition weighs heavily on a child.

According to Share Our Strength, for the first time in U.S. history, over half of public school students in this country are from low-income families. 85% of those families want to make healthy meals at home for their kids, but only 50% can do so most nights of the week. When children are undernourished, they cannot learn as fast or as well as other children, putting them behind in development and school.

Feeding the Gulf Coast operates multiple hunger-relief programs from the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) that focus on seniors like Diane, to the Backpack and Afterschool Meals programs that help fill the gap our students face from day-to-day. The face of hunger is often hidden. On the outside, it may look like they are doing fine. But if you look closer, you will see your neighbors are struggling. Hunger is devastating, but it is easy to fix. Visit our website to learn how you can help.

### IN THIS ISSUE:

Connecting Clients to More Resources p. 2

A Farewell Letter from Cathy Pope p. 3

Sponsor a Child Through the Backpack Program p. 4



“

**After I pay my rent, electricity and other bills, what’s left? You know, not much for food. I’d be eating much less than I do now if it weren’t for this [Pantry]. It’s a true blessing.**

- Diane

LEARN HOW YOU CAN HELP

Visit our website  
[feedingthegulfcoast.org](http://feedingthegulfcoast.org)



Hunger is a problem in our community, and it affects people of all ages and backgrounds. Feeding the Gulf Coast is doing important work to reduce that hunger, and I am thankful for the opportunity to serve as Board Chair and proud to help the organization achieve its mission.

Over the course of our 38 years, Feeding the Gulf Coast has experienced many changes. Through changing leadership, a new name, and natural disasters, our vision has always been the same: a **hunger-free Central Gulf Coast**. Cathy Pope's departure for a new position brings change but we remain strong and mission-focused. It has been a pleasure working with Cathy during her time at Feeding the Gulf Coast.

I want to thank Dave Reaney for stepping in as Interim President & CEO as we conduct a search for our new President & CEO. I am confident the Board's Search Committee will find the best candidate who will maintain the positive momentum Feeding the Gulf Coast's staff, volunteers, and supporters have worked hard to build. We are thankful for Dave's experience and knowledge and have full faith in his leadership during this time of transition.

As always, thank you all for everything you have done and continue to do to assist those in need along the Central Gulf Coast.

**BRAD HICKS**

2019 BOARD CHAIR, FEEDING THE GULF COAST

OUR GOAL

Connect clients to more resources

FROM CRISIS TO STABILITY

We're working to end the need for the food line.



## MOVING THE NEEDLE FORWARD

**Feeding America's recently released Map the Meal Gap report shows that the food insecurity rate in Feeding the Gulf Coast's service area has declined from the previous year. While there is more to be done, this report means our work and your support are making a difference, and families are being helped.**

**F**eeding the Gulf Coast has many people to thank for helping us achieve this success. Partner agencies and volunteers have selflessly given their time, donors have provided countless resources, and local farmers have shared their bounty. Feeding the Gulf Coast continues to expand partnerships to help connect resources to clients in need so they can move from crisis to stability.

These partnerships and your support change lives for individuals like Keith, who first came to a meal program to receive free lunch at a shelter because he was homeless and did not have enough to eat.

**"I was only homeless for two weeks, but during that time, there were many nights before finding this place that I just went hungry," says Keith. "It's horrible, going hungry. It's something that's hard for people to understand if they've never experienced it. The fear and the pain."**

Keith thankfully found a job as a full-time cook and lives at the men's shelter. "I've been working hard, so I know I'll be out of the shelter soon and get my own place. This place has been a blessing. In addition to food, it gave me

community." Keith plans on returning but as a volunteer. "I'd like to be a blessing to others."

Ending hunger requires communities to work together. In 2019, the food bank was awarded a Household Empowerment Pilot grant, in conjunction with Feeding America and two other food banks, to allow us to connect more clients with resources. The goal of the pilot program is to help working families with children achieve food and financial security by providing them with budget relieving resources and financial coaching. Families involved receive enough groceries to cover the majority of household needs, one-on-one financial coaching, benefits enrollment assistance, savings incentives, and connections to other benefit programs. By coordinating our efforts with other community organizations on this pilot, we continue moving the needle forward to create a hunger-free Central Gulf Coast.



**VIEW OUR 2018 ANNUAL REPORT: FULL PLATES ONLINE: FEEDINGTHEGULFCOAST.ORG/LEARN-MORE/FINANCIALS**



2017

### CSFP Program Addition

We began piloting CSFP (senior boxes) out of a few counties in our Florida service area. In 2019, we were able to expand the program into Alabama, the last state in the country to participate. We anticipate serving an additional 500 seniors with this program.

**M**y last three years at Feeding the Gulf Coast have been filled with growth, excitement, and joy as I have been honored to witness communities coming together, children being fed nutritious meals, and families finding hope. All of this happened because of the hard work of Feeding the Gulf Coast's staff and board, and the support of donors and volunteers like you. I have treasured this time and fallen in love with the Gulf Coast. It is with bittersweet emotion, then, that I announce I have accepted a position out of state and will no longer serve as President & CEO of Feeding the Gulf Coast.

I have genuinely cherished my time working with the Feeding the Gulf Coast staff, our Board of Directors, and many terrific volunteers and partners.

The opportunity to serve those in need alongside these dedicated individuals has been transformative, and I am grateful to have been part of the momentum and good work of Feeding the Gulf Coast for the past three years.

These past three years have held too many wonderful moments to count. One moment I will always remember took place this summer at our Summer Meals Program Kickoff at the USS Alabama Battleship Memorial Park. Our Child Nutrition team worked to put on a fun celebration for children who participate in our Summer Meals Program. There were balloon animals, face painting, bounce houses, cheerleaders from the University of South Alabama, snow cones, and more. Above all the

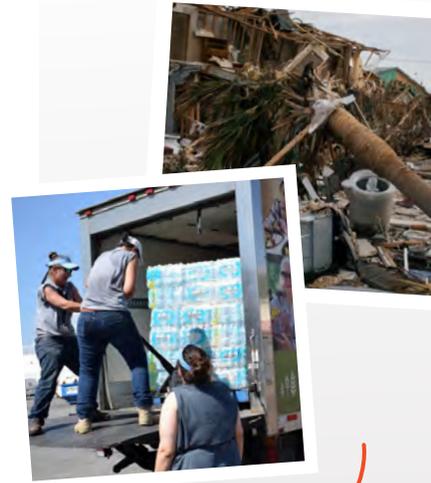
activities, children were smiling and happy, unconcerned about food and knowing only that today was a perfect summer day. I am so glad we could provide that day for them.

As I leave, I am confident the food bank remains in the hands of a stellar staff and board, who are deeply committed to our mission and vision across all levels of the organization. With great enthusiasm, a strong work ethic and talent, the Feeding the Gulf Coast team will ensure that the organization continues to see those in need in our community are fed and nourished. I, too, will remain a strong hunger-relief advocate, and I urge you, please, continue to support the essential work this organization does daily to help end local hunger.

With Best Wishes,

*Cathy Pope*

Cathy Pope



2018

### Hurricane Michael

We were able to immediately begin assisting with relief work after the storm passed. The food bank has worked tirelessly since to provide critical supplies and resources to impacted communities. As of August 2019, we have distributed more than 6.5 million lbs. of food, water, and supplies to Northwest Florida.

## ADVOCACY CORNER | TRADE MITIGATION PROGRAM

In 2018, the U.S. Department of Agriculture funded programs we operate provided 22% of Feeding the Gulf Coast's food inventory—equating to over 6 million meals! In September 2018, the USDA launched the trade mitigation program to assist farmers affected by recent international trade disagreements. As a result, Feeding the Gulf Coast has experienced an increase in the number of products coming in through its federally funded programs.

The food bank, working with our community partners, implements commodity-based mobile pantries to ensure the additional food reaches those struggling with hunger in our community. These distributions are successful in allowing us to move this product into high need areas quickly without overwhelming our community partners in those neighborhoods.



#### HOW YOU CAN HELP:

LET YOUR REPRESENTATIVES KNOW THIS PROGRAM IS HELPING TO FEED PEOPLE IN YOUR COMMUNITY, AND YOU WANT TO SEE IT CONTINUE TO BENEFIT OUR GULF COAST COMMUNITIES.

2019

### Government Shutdown

During the five-week government shutdown, we worked with community partners and agencies to serve several affected governmental agencies by conducting six targeted distributions which helped provide food to more than 850 families.

