

Press Release

For Immediate Release

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Feeding the Gulf Coast Reflects On COVID-19 Relief One Year Later

March 12, 2021 – One year after the World Health Organization declared a global state of emergency, Feeding the Gulf Coast reflects on its response to the pandemic. The food bank distributed over 33 million meals last year to those in need along the Central Gulf Coast. This includes over 38 million pounds of food and water through over 400 community partners, nonprofits, churches, and child nutrition site partners.

“When schools and businesses began to close mid-March last year, the food bank quickly assessed a critical situation: how do we proceed safely and effectively to ensure no one caught in the crosshairs of COVID-19 goes without the necessity of food,” says Michael Ledger, President and CEO of Feeding the Gulf Coast. “Many of our agencies began to conduct Mobile Food Distributions in a drive-thru style. Our child nutrition team worked tirelessly to set up sites with the capacity to serve grab and go meals, at one point, serving 5,000 meals per day to children across our service area.”

COVID-19 presented the perfect storm of increased demand, declines in donations of food, reduction in volunteer support, and disruptions to the charitable food assistance system’s operating model, creating an economic crisis unlike anything since the Great Depression. We continue to see elevated need now, and for some, the recovery will take years. 1 In 5 of our neighbors, including 1 in 3 children here along the Gulf Coast faces hunger this year. Many of our neighbors hit hardest by the crisis are working to get back on their feet but are struggling to afford rent, utilities, and food. The food bank is here to help throughout the long road to recovery.

“We know that the hardships faced by many in the area have only grown as COVID-19 continues to present problems in 2021,” says Ledger. “These moments can be some of the most difficult to endure but without fail we are encouraged and enabled by those who stand alongside us as we work to ease their burden and set them on a course to recovery. We are truly grateful for all who stepped up to join us in serving the increase in need. Our mission is only possible because of the donors, volunteers, and supporters who give of their time and resources to make a difference for others.”

Feeding the Gulf Coast remains committed to serving those in need. The "Find Help" feature available at www.feedingthegulfcoast.org is the best source of information for families and individuals seeking assistance. Individuals can also call (888) 704-FOOD. Parents can also text 'FOOD' to 877-877 for child meal sites near them.

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About Feeding the Gulf Coast

Feeding the Gulf Coast, formerly Bay Area Food Bank, serves a 24-county area spanning the Florida panhandle, south Alabama, and south Mississippi. In 2020, the food bank distributed over 33 million meals to over 400 church pantries, soup kitchens, and other nonprofit organizations throughout its service area. The food bank also operates multiple hunger-relief and nutrition programs, including Summer Meals, Afterschool Meal, Backpack, Disaster Relief, Mobile Pantry and Produce Drop Distributions and Nutrition Education. Feeding the Gulf Coast is a United Way member agency and a member of Feeding America. For more information, visit www.feedingthegulfcoast.org.