



FEED HOPE, FILL BACKPACKS

End Hungry Weekends

For many children in our community, the first week of school is filled with excitement—new teachers, new friends, and new lessons. However, for one in four students, weekends still carry a familiar worry—**will there be enough food at home?**

Every child deserves the nourishment they need to grow, learn, and thrive—every day, in and out of the classroom. Yet, many teachers in our community see students arriving at school on Monday morning hungry, having had little to no food to eat over the weekend. To help bridge this gap, Feeding the Gulf Coast operates the Backpack and School Pantry Programs, providing children with nutritious food every weekend throughout the school year, ensuring they have the fuel they need when school meals are unavailable. On Fridays, children at risk of hunger discreetly receive a bag of food—six kid-friendly meals and two snacks—to carry them through the weekend. Older students can visit on-site pantries stocked with both food and hygiene items.

Teachers say the difference is unmistakable. “A mother shared with me that she is so grateful for this program because she no longer has to worry about choosing between putting food on the table and paying utility bills,” one middle school teacher explained. “She told me it has brought her family closer because she isn’t constantly stressing about how she will feed them.”

For school counselors, the impact goes beyond food. “Food insecurity is real for many of our families,” one counselor shared. “Providing food helps children stay in school and focus. It shows families that we care beyond the classroom, meeting a basic need that no one should go without.” The programs not only ease family stress but also improve student learning. Teachers often note how children who receive weekend meals return to school on Monday better able to concentrate, participate, and thrive.

With support from donors and partners, Feeding the Gulf Coast is working toward a bold goal: **to reach every child in our community who faces hunger.** The cost to sponsor one child through the Backpack Program for an entire school year is just \$180. Together, we can make weekends hunger-free.

You can help a child start this school year without the worry of hunger. Just \$180 sponsors a child for the entire school year—35 hunger-free weekends.

Give children a chance to succeed. When you sponsor a child, you ensure they are equipped to learn, grow, and thrive.

- Each backpack includes 6 meals + 2 snacks
- Meals are kid-friendly and easy to prepare

To sponsor, scan the QR code or visit bit.ly/FTGCCNP

Enjoy the Weekend!



97,096
Backpacks
Distributed
IN 2024

GET INVOLVED

Visit our website
feedingthegulfcoast.org





FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO

The good news is that we provided over 50% more meals and snacks to children this summer compared to the last three years. This was made possible by our amazing child nutrition team and site partners. It was also possible due to federal waivers approved last year. This enabled us to serve more children in rural areas more efficiently. It takes a committed team, partners, representatives, volunteers, and supporters to make this work possible. Because of these efforts, through summer meal sites, thousands of children had the chance to be kids again—fed, healthy, and free to focus on friendships and fun. The not-so-good news is that there are still many more children and families facing food insecurity.

Through your support, we are answering that question with hope. Our Backpack and School Pantry Programs ensure children return to school on Mondays ready to learn, not distracted by hunger. Our Food Rescue efforts connect millions of pounds of fresh, wholesome food with families who otherwise might go without, while reducing waste and caring for our environment.

As we look ahead, we are challenging ourselves to reach as many children and families as possible in our region facing hunger. That vision will only be realized through sustained support. One meaningful way to join us is by becoming a Hope Harvester—a monthly donor ensuring steady meals for neighbors all year long. Every \$1 provides five meals, and every contribution brings us closer to a community where no one has to go hungry. Thank you for standing with us in this work. Your generosity continues to transform lives, one meal at a time.

Michael Ledger

MICHAEL LEDGER

PRESIDENT & CEO, FEEDING THE GULF COAST



THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIP

Fighting Hunger Through Food Rescue

Food Rescue Programs play an essential role in providing healthy options, such as fruits, vegetables, dairy, and meat, to our neighbors facing hunger. A critical component of this work is the Store Donation Program, which connects our partner agencies with local retail grocery stores to recover wholesome, but unsellable, food and distribute it to the neighbors who need it most. Last year, this program made up more than 35% of all food sourced by the food bank.

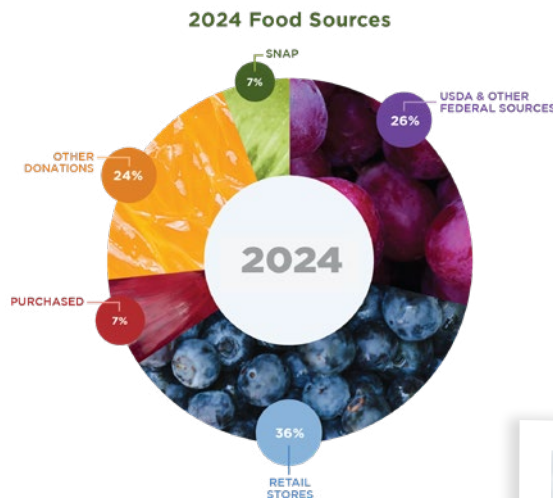
This program provides access to more fresh and nutritious food for people like Daniel, an older adult who visited a partner agency's pantry because rising inflation had stretched his fixed retirement income too thin. After working in construction for 40 years, physical injuries and arthritis left him unable to pick up part-time work to fill the gap. With fresh food from the pantry, Daniel can better manage his limited budget while maintaining access to the nourishment his body needs to stay healthy.

In 2024, nearly 280 retail store partners donated more than 14 million pounds of food—an incredible 83% of which was fresh product.

To ensure this food reaches families efficiently, Feeding the Gulf Coast trains and certifies partner agencies to pick up directly from retail stores, connecting retail partners with the neighbors and communities they support. This approach also enhances efficiency by freeing up valuable resources, such as trucks, staff, and warehouse space, which can then be redirected toward other hunger relief programs, ensuring every bit of support makes the greatest possible impact.

Our Food Rescue Programs not only fight hunger today, but they also ensure we're caring for tomorrow. Through our Store Donation Program last year, we provided more than 11.6 million meals to neighbors in need. At the same time, these efforts had a powerful environmental impact, saving enough energy to power more than 3,000 homes for a year and conserving enough water to fill nearly 1,400 Olympic-sized swimming pools.

Our retail partners make this possible. Through their continued commitment and generosity, this food recovery solution is both successful and impactful, ensuring millions more nourishing meals reach families facing hunger every year.





Scan to join

Partners Create a Safe Place for Children to Learn and Eat

"This is such a need in our area," said site volunteer Felicia Ortiz. "There are so many children who don't have food, and with this program, we're providing them with seven days' worth of breakfast and lunch. So it's a really good thing for families that can't afford it, and at least the children get food. And when they go back to school, they are all fed and healthy."

Summer has always been a time of rejuvenation for children as they turn their attention away from the daily grind of learning and focus on having fun, letting their imaginations run free. For kids facing the uncertainty of whether they will eat each day, summer is far from fun.

Through the partnership of more than 160 sites, nearly 11,000 kids enjoyed a brighter and more carefree summer across our community. Meals were served daily in welcoming spaces where children could make memories, learn, and spend time with friends. As the school year begins, many of these sites continue providing free meals for children, helping families all year long.

Feeding the Gulf Coast is now onboarding new sites. To become a partner, scan the QR code or visit bit.ly/FTGCCNP to learn more.



BECOME A HOPE HARVESTER

For many individuals and families in our community, hunger is a daily reality. The food bank depends on ongoing support to provide nourishing meals, and our Hope Harvesters make that possible.

Hope Harvesters are a special group of donors who have chosen to give a recurring monthly gift. Some appreciate the convenience and the lasting impact of their gifts. Others give because of personal experiences with food insecurity or a desire to stand with neighbors in need. Whatever the reason, each Hope Harvester plays a vital role in ensuring families have access to nourishing meals year-round.

One donor shared, "I choose to give monthly to Feeding the Gulf Coast because it allows me to be part of the solution every single day. Knowing that my gift provides steady meals for others gives me peace of mind and a deep sense of purpose. Monthly giving makes it simple for me, and I'm proud to support a nonprofit that can stretch my every dollar to give five meals and make my impact mean even more."

To learn more or to join our Hope Harvesters program, contact Cyndy Baggett (information below) or visit feedingthegulfcoast.org and click **Donate Now. Select **monthly** and choose a set amount.**

Cyndy Baggett

(251) 653-1617 x130

cbaggett@feedingthegulfcoast.org



Perks of Joining

Stay connected with quarterly insider updates and newsletters

Receive fewer mail solicitations

Access priority invitations to special events and volunteer opportunities

Simplify tax season with an annual giving statement every January

Enjoy the ease of "set it and forget it" monthly donations on the date of your choice

Be recognized in our Annual Report for gifts over \$500
(unless you prefer to give anonymously)

Request behind-the-scenes VIP tours to see your impact firsthand

Most importantly, know that every \$1 you give provides 5 meals for families and children in our local community.

Hope Harvester
MONTHLY GIVING PROGRAM
Start sowing seeds today!



Feeding the Gulf Coast serves 24 counties spanning South Alabama, South Mississippi, and the Florida Panhandle. Annually, the food bank distributes more than 35 million meals through our network of more than 800 community partners.

Feeding the Gulf Coast has earned a four-star rating from Charity Navigator for its commitment to excellence and efficiency.

With over 98% of all donations directly supporting its mission, it ranks among the most efficient nonprofits in the nation.

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MARK
YOUR
CALENDAR!



26TH ANNUAL Chef Challenge

A CHALLENGE TO END HUNGER

APRIL 9, 2026



SPONSORSHIPS AVAILABLE
Visit **FEEDINGTHEGULFCOAST.ORG** for more information.

GET INVOLVED

NOVEMBER 1, 2025: SCOUTING FOR FOOD

Join the Boy Scouts of America for their Annual Scouting for Food Drive this November.

DECEMBER 2, 2025: GIVING TUESDAY

This GivingTuesday, your generosity can help us provide nourishing meals to families facing hunger across our community. Save the date for this global day of giving.

OPPORTUNITY FOR MISSISSIPPI BUSINESSES HOUSE BILL 1723

Mississippi House Bill 1723 provides eligible businesses that donate to Feeding the Gulf Coast with dollar-for-dollar state income tax credits equal to their contribution. This opportunity offers a valuable incentive to support hunger relief in our local communities while directly reducing your business's Mississippi state tax liability.

To learn how your business can benefit, **visit our website or call (251) 653-1617 x130.**



Voted Best Annual Fundraising Event

APRIL 9, 2026:
26TH ANNUAL CHEF CHALLENGE
VIP EVENT: 5 - 6 PM
MAIN EVENT: 6 - 9 PM

MOBILE CONVENTION CENTER

Chef Challenge is Feeding the Gulf Coast's award-winning event that brings together some of the area's most talented chefs and restaurants for an evening of delectable food and drink, live entertainment by Roman Street, and a featured silent auction, all in support of ending hunger along the central Gulf Coast.

To learn more or sponsor, **visit our website or call (251) 653-1617 x141.**

visit **FEEDINGTHEGULFCOAST.ORG** | (888) 704-FOOD

This institution is an equal opportunity provider. VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR FULL STATEMENT

MAKE A DIFFERENCE TODAY!

☐ \$20 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$250 ☐ \$500 ☐ Other: _____

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

Name (Please Print)

Address

City

State

Zip

Phone #

Email Address

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

Payment Options

☐ Please charge my credit card:

☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard ☐ Discover ☐ AMEX

Card Number

Name on Account

Exp. Date

CVV

Zip

Signature

☐ Please make check payable to: **Feeding the Gulf Coast**

☐ Give online at **www.feedingthegulfcoast.org**

