

SPRING 2024



MEMBER OF
FEEDING
AMERICA

PHOTO BY AIRMAN 1ST CLASS ALYSA CALVARESE

Addressing Military Hunger Serving Those That Serve Us

“When you leave the military, life just hits you,” says Jordan Scott, an Army Veteran who served in Afghanistan. Jordan has witnessed fellow Veterans struggle to find footing when returning to civilian life. Veterans and active military members dedicate their lives to serving the United States. Yet the stark reality is no one is immune to food insecurity, not even those who sacrifice everything to protect our country. According to the U.S. Department of Defense¹, in 2020, nearly a quarter (24%) of active-duty service members were food insecure. Among Veteran households, 1 in 9 is food insecure.

Service members often face distinct challenges that make accessing the food they need to thrive difficult. Some of the factors that make it hard for our military members to afford sufficient food for themselves and their families are the low salaries of enlisted members, high rates of unemployment for military spouses due to the transitory nature of

the military, a high cost of living near many military bases across the country and the high cost of child care.

Last year, Feeding the Gulf Coast began the work to develop relationships with the ten military installations across our Gulf Coast service area. The food bank also identified collaborative partner organizations near military bases to support efforts in combating food insecurity for active-duty, retired, and Veteran military personnel. Through these partnerships, the food bank provided more than 80,000 meals to military families and Veterans in our community. A recipient at one of the mobile pantries stated, “As a young service person and a single mom, the food pantry has been so helpful in cutting down on my grocery expense. The food we get gives a variety of healthy options as well.” The food bank is continuing to strengthen these relationships and serve as an ongoing resource for the brave individuals who sacrifice so much for our nation.



Blue Star Families Military Family Lifestyle² survey identified that “some degree of food insecurity was found in all enlisted ranks, beyond junior enlisted families.”



14%

14% (or 1 in 7) of active-duty enlisted family respondents reported low or very low food security



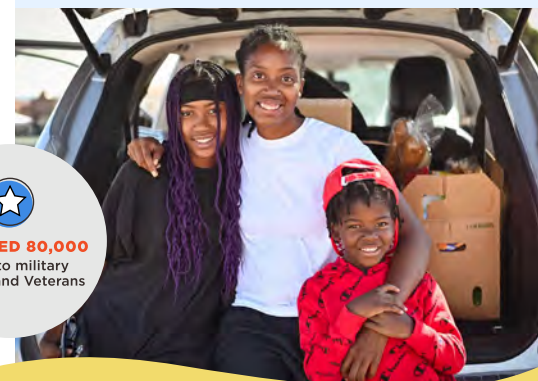
29%

29% of junior enlisted (E1-E4) family respondents reported food insecurity



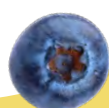
2%

2% of active-duty enlisted family respondents reported utilizing SNAP benefits



PROVIDED 80,000
meals to military
families and Veterans

¹<https://media.defense.gov/2022/jul/14/2003035423/-1/-1/1/STRENGTHENING-FOOD-SECURITY-IN-THE-FORCE-STRATEGY-AND-ROADMAP.PDF>
²https://www.bluestarfam.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/BSF_MFLS_CompReport_FULL.pdf



GET INVOLVED

Visit our website
feedingthegulfcoast.org



FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO

The USDA's latest report on household food insecurity in the United States reveals concerning trends. This report paints a stark picture, as overall food insecurity rates have risen by 31%, reaching the highest levels since 2014. Of particular concern is the disproportionate impact on children, indicated by a staggering 44% increase in hunger rates among children, marking the largest one-year spike since 2008.

The impacts of this data are felt across our community, as seniors, children, and families alike are seeking food assistance at higher levels than ever. Understanding the full scope of these challenges is vital for effective solutions. We prioritize collaboration with partners and neighbors, gathering feedback and insights to inform our efforts and communicate effectively with all stakeholders dedicated to strengthening our community.

As one neighbor expressed, "I ensure my grandchildren have a meal. Without the food bank, I wouldn't be able to do that." It's a testament to one vulnerable population caring for another. This underscores the importance of our work and reaffirms our commitment to sharing our observations and addressing needs with your support.

In 2023, we distributed 30.7 million meals, equivalent to 37 million pounds of food, with the assistance of our dedicated partner network. This monumental effort was made possible by you—our donors, volunteers, and friends. We extend our heartfelt gratitude for your continued partnership and recognize that we are truly stronger together.

MICHAEL LEDGER

PRESIDENT & CEO, FEEDING THE GULF COAST

HARVESTING CONNECTIONS

Stimulating the Local Economy
While Providing Nutritious Food

"You have been so helpful to me this summer moving my produce, and I thank you so much for your support. This did my heart good."

– MS Farmer

Local farming is vital to the success and strength of the food supply chain. It is equally an instrumental piece of the puzzle connecting underserved communities to nutritious and accessible food. Recognizing this, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) conceptualized the Local Food Purchase Assistance (LFPA) program to allow recipients to procure local and domestic foods distinctive to their geographic area and meet the needs of their population. This unique approach invests in family farmers and stimulates rural economies.

Through this initiative, Feeding the Gulf Coast connects local farmers directly with agencies to deliver fresh fruits and vegetables on the day of their food distribution. This partnership has allowed our agencies to receive an abundance of watermelons, shelled peas, and turnips practically grown in their backyard. "The produce the farmer brought was beautiful," remarked one of our agencies. "Our clients love it." In a mutually respectful way, this relationship supports farmers by helping them move crops that might otherwise go to waste.

"You have been so helpful to me this summer moving my produce," said one of the farmers we worked with to procure fruits and vegetables. The farmers we work with are grateful that the extra purchased product can help with their expenses, but they also love that their product is reaching those in need. "This did my heart good."

To date, the food bank has partnered with more than 10 local farmers to source more than 500,000 pounds of fresh product.





Scan to join

Addressing Senior Hunger: Equipping Nutritional Strategies

Eating healthy food on a limited budget can be challenging, especially for seniors with fixed incomes. "What I need in my life to be healthy is to change my eating habits to be healthier," said Carla.

"But I can't do that because healthier food costs more." Across our service area, we heard this concern echoed from individuals, mainly aging seniors mitigating various chronic health issues and the strains of not having the proper food to help.

Feeding the Gulf Coast works through various programs to address the unique needs of aging seniors. The food bank has advocated for a higher CSFP (senior boxes) allotment over the past two years. The organization has successfully expanded the Senior Box program from 1,200 boxes to nearly 4,000 monthly and reached an additional 3,000 seniors through its newly established and privately-funded Healthy Food Box initiative. These boxes supplied seniors with low-sodium vegetables and beans, whole grains, proteins, and fresh produce.

This food as medicine approach will help combat prevalent chronic health conditions prominent in older adults facing food insecurity.



REACHED 6,500+
seniors with tailored
dietary boxes



BECOME A HOPE HARVESTER

Hunger can be a daily burden for families and individuals struggling to make ends meet. To address this, the food bank relies on consistent support to sustain our mission and programs. Thankfully, the food bank is blessed with a strong group of committed donors who sow seeds into the food bank's mission.

Our Hope Harvester Donors give automatically on the date of their choice monthly through our recurring giving program. These donors have shared that they enjoy both the convenience of the program and also the impact they are making. Others have their own experience with food insecurity and know just how vital the food bank's mission is to provide support within their community.

"When I give to Feeding the Gulf Coast, I know I am making a difference in someone else's life. None of us know what the future holds, and we could just as easily be the person asking for help if faced with a crisis or unexpected expense. No one should face a day when they don't know if there will be a meal for their family. When I give monthly, my hope is there will be one less family dealing with the stress of hunger."

To learn more or to join our Hope Harvesters program, please contact Cyndy Baggett, Vice President of Development and Marketing, at (251) 653-1617 x130 to set up your donation today or visit feedingthegulfcoast.org and click 'Donate Now.' Choose 'monthly' under make your gift recurring.



Perks of Joining

Quarterly insider updates and newsletters to keep you informed

Removal from regular mail solicitations

Priority invitations to special events and volunteer opportunities

Annual statements in January for easy tax preparation

Convenient "set it and forget it" automatic monthly donations to support our shared mission year-round

Recognition as a Hope Harvester in Annual Report for gifts over \$500
(unless requested otherwise)

Behind-the-scenes VIP tours available on request

Most of all, the knowledge that every \$1 donated provides 5 meals for families and children facing hunger right in your community

Hope
Harvester
MONTHLY GIVING PROGRAM

Start sowing seeds today!



Feeding the Gulf Coast works towards the vision of a hunger-free Central Gulf Coast for our neighbors in need throughout 24 counties in South Alabama, South Mississippi, and the Florida Panhandle.

In 2023, the food bank distributed more than 30 million meals through our network of more than 800 community partners.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR FULL STATEMENT



24TH ANNUAL

Chef Challenge

A CHALLENGE TO END HUNGER
SAVE THE DATE for MAY 16, 2024



SPONSORSHIPS AVAILABLE

Visit [FEEDINGTHEGULFCOAST.ORG](https://www.feedingthegulfcoast.org) for more information.

GET INVOLVED

HOST A FOOD AND FUND DRIVE THIS SEASON

Now is a wonderful time to get your business or organization involved with the food bank. Help give the gift of hope to those in need by hosting a food and fund drive.

BECOME A CHILD MEAL SITE

The food bank is always looking for more partners to help ensure children in our community have free meals.

To get started, visit our website or call us at (251) 653-1617.



MAY 16, 2024 24TH ANNUAL CHEF CHALLENGE EVENT

MOBILE CONVENTION CENTER

This fun culinary experience serves up a night of friendly competition which brings together a talented group of local chefs and restaurants to fight hunger in our community. Enjoy delectable tastings, complimentary beer and wine, entertainment by Roman Street, and a vast silent auction, all in the name of ending hunger in your community.

To purchase tickets, become a sponsor or chef participant, visit our website or call us at (251) 653-1617 x141.



Last Year's Winners

PEOPLE'S CHOICE
Bay Gourmet Catering

BEST APPETIZER
Islanders Restaurant & Bar

BEST ENTRÉE
Naman's Catering

BEST DESSERT
Cammie's Old Dutch Ice Cream Shoppe

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

MAKE A DIFFERENCE TODAY!

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

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

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

Payment Options

☐ Please charge my credit card:

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

☐ Give online at www.feedingthegulfcoast.org/donate

Donor opt-out policy: If you wish to opt out of having your name listed as a donor in any of our publications, please email communications@feedingthegulfcoast.org.