School’s Back in Session
A Mixed Approach to Feeding Children

“T
his is the fourth week without a paycheck. I was strategic with my last one and stretched it out as much as possible. After paying for rent and electricity, it was then that I could think about groceries...it’s crazy to say that groceries come last. I’m a single mom and I’ve heard that some people are embarrassed to come get food from a food bank, but I’m not because this is for my kids,” says Adriana as she visits a food distribution amidst the COVID-19 crisis.*

Whether children attend school physically, virtually, or some hybrid of the two, Feeding the Gulf Coast is operating multiple child nutrition programs to address the needs of the 1 in 3 children who face missing meals. As each school district is in a different phase of reopening, the food bank’s child nutrition team is working closely with school systems to identify needs and meet children where they are so that no child has to face hunger during an already uncertain time.

Since March 13, Feeding the Gulf Coast has distributed over 704,360 snacks and meals through our Summer Meals Program.

The food bank will continue to work with community partners to offer grab-and-go style meals for children. In addition to operating our Afterschool Meals Program, the food bank will continue to operate the Backpack Program to provide children with meals for the weekend. You can help by sponsoring a child or hosting a food drive to help us acquire the most needed items for our backpacks.

*Testimony and photo from the Feeding America network.

LEARN HOW YOU CAN HELP
Visit our website feedingthegulfcoast.org
FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

Over the course of our 39 years, Feeding the Gulf Coast has experienced many changes. Through changing leadership, a new name, and disasters, our vision has always been the same: a Hunger-Free Central Gulf Coast. As we look ahead to our 40th year, the Board of Directors of Feeding the Gulf Coast is pleased to announce that Michael Ledger has been named as the new President and Chief Executive Officer of the organization. Ledger has overseen the organization’s Florida Branch as the Florida Branch Manager since June 2019 and has done an incredible job. I look forward to Michael’s leadership as we continue to serve children, families, and seniors in need along the Central Gulf Coast.

I also want to thank Dave Reaney for stepping in as Feeding the Gulf Coast’s Interim President & CEO while the Board of Directors conducted the search for our new President & CEO. Thank you, Dave, for your nearly two decades of service to feeding those in need along the Central Gulf Coast.

The Feeding the Gulf Coast staff and board are deeply committed to our mission and vision across all levels of the organization. Together with your support, I know we will continue to make a difference in the lives of those who need us in 2020 and beyond.

BRAD HICKS
2020 BOARD CHAIR, FEEDING THE GULFCOAST

Building Pathways
More Than Just Food

Feeding the Gulf Coast was chosen by Feeding America to pilot the Household Empowerment Program (HEP). The program focuses on building food security pathways through financial security by connecting clients with more than just food.

“Anita and her family relocated to the Gulf Coast for a job that quickly fell through. Her family faced an immediate crisis of starting over with few resources and three small children. To survive, Anita’s family began using a credit card to pay for necessities. Only able to make the minimum payments, interest compounded their debt. “After bills were paid, there simply wasn’t any money left to get food. I then found out about a local food pantry and decided to go,” said Anita. “When I went that morning to just get some food, I was given something so much better—I was given hope.”

“Name changed to protect anonymity.

Hunger is a complex and systemic issue. We aim to equip our agencies to provide the best support for client empowerment. By addressing the root causes of hunger and providing the client with resources and tools to overcome personal crisis and instability, we can drive our efforts to shorten the line and make real change when it comes to hunger. Our agencies are a critical lifeline that many people rely on to make ends meet during tough seasons of their lives. We strive towards the day when they are no longer needed.

Through the Household Empowerment Program, 86.1% of the clients engaged with a financial coach. *Anita recalls how her life has changed since participating in the program. “They connected us to several resources for needs we had, such as medical clinics and homeschool resources. I was connected to a financial advisor who has an abundance of knowledge on all things finance. He set up a working budget with us and worked us from a deficit every month to a surplus now.”

When a client encounters hunger and needs food assistance for the first time, they may be afraid and uncertain, but we work to provide the hope they need to move from crisis to stability. “I feel empowered to go forward from here. It was an unexpected hiccup in life, and we were blessed to be part of the program,” says Anita. “We are excited for our future and getting back to a place where we can be a blessing to others again.”

HUNGER PRE-PANDEMIC
1 in 6 individuals were at risk of hunger

POST COVID-19
1 in 5 individuals now face food insecurity

40% INCREASE

FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

2019 ANNUAL REPORT:
VISIT WWW.FEEDINGTHEGULFCOAST.ORG/LEARN-MORE/FINANCIALS
“M y son lost his job because of the Coronavirus and his family moved in with us. It has been rough on them. They have a 13-month-old baby and a nine-year old. I am 66 years old and on disability. Having them move in is stressful, but you have to take it one day at a time. Family—you either love them and do what you can, or you don’t. We are hoping his job comes back. He is doing odd jobs and anything they can do. His wife can’t work because they can’t afford a babysitter. I can’t watch both of the kids while they work, but my grandson is happy to have me around right now. Life was once much better.”

I came out here for the Feeding the Gulf Coast food distribution. Every little bit helps.” —Client

While hunger was once a hidden narrative, the implications of the ongoing pandemic have created a national spotlight on the issue of food insecurity.

Prior to COVID-19, one in six individuals along the Central Gulf Coast struggled with hunger. That number has now increased by 40%, meaning that nearly 480,000 individuals will be food insecure by the end of 2020.

In response to the need, the food bank has distributed over 14.5 million meals, a 49% increase in meals for this time of year. Through minimal contact mobile food pantries, we have helped over 76,000 families, just like the one above. This year is a defining moment for how we address hunger in our communities.

As part of our progress, Feeding the Gulf Coast welcomed Michael Ledger as the new President and CEO of the food bank in July. Since June 2019, Michael Ledger has served as the Florida Branch Manager. Under Michael's leadership, the Florida Facility has distributed nearly 15 million pounds of food throughout the Florida Panhandle. Michael has consistently implemented strategies to serve those in need in the communities while overcoming logistical challenges presented by limited facility space.

The board and staff of the organization look forward to Michael's leadership in this new role as we continue to work through the challenges of COVID-19 while producing record levels of food support for people in need.

JOIN US AT THE TABLE
As part of our upcoming Hunger Action Month, we are hosting a series of virtual calls to connect our community stakeholders with our new President & CEO, Michael Ledger. Save your seat at The Table, sign up for our emails to register or follow us on Facebook, @FeedingtheGulfCoast.
MAKE AN IMPACT

Hungry Kids Struggle to Learn
School is back in session, and so is our Backpack Program. Many teachers report that students come to school having not eaten anything over the weekend. This program aims to help fill the gap by providing bags of food for children to take home on weekends.

Sponsor a Child
You can help today by sponsoring a child for the school year for $135 or making a donation. Visit www.feedingthegulfcoast.org/learn-more/our-programs/child-nutrition-programs to begin.

UPCOMING EVENTS

SEPTEMBER IS HUNGER ACTION MONTH
Follow our social media throughout the month of September to learn how you can raise awareness about hunger.

ANNUAL CHEF CHALLENGE
Due to social distancing concerns and the safety of our partners and guests, we regretfully decided to cancel our event for 2020. However, in the spirit of Chef Challenge, we encourage you to support the culinary community by getting take-out or dining in at your favorite restaurants during September.

SEPTEMBER 7
CLOSED FOR LABOR DAY

NOVEMBER 7
SCOUTING FOR FOOD
GREER’S MARKETS
Join the Boy Scouts in their annual food drive. Residents can donate at their nearest Greer’s Market, CashSaver or Food Tiger.

NOVEMBER 11
CLOSED FOR VETERANS DAY

NOVEMBER 26 & 27
CLOSED FOR THANKSGIVING

RALLY YOUR NETWORK TO SUPPORT THE FOOD BANK
Feeding the Gulf Coast has experienced a significant decrease in food drives during this time due to COVID-19 restricting public functions and businesses.

It takes funds for us to do what we do and get food to those who need it most. To set up your food and fund drive, visit our website or contact Missy Busby at mbusby@feedingthegulfcoast.org

MAKE A DIFFERENCE TODAY!

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/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

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

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

 waged to 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 24 million meals in 2019 through our network of over 400 partners.

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