

SUMMER 2020



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AMERICA

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

This 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.*

While your family may look a little different from Adriana's, one similarity remains—you would do whatever was needed to care for your children. The past six months have brought mixed concerns for parents, especially as decisions for the upcoming school year have been debated, postponed, and crafted to fit a variety of needs to ensure children have a safe, yet effective space to learn. It has also brought about a mixed approach to ensuring children continue to have nutritious meals.

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.

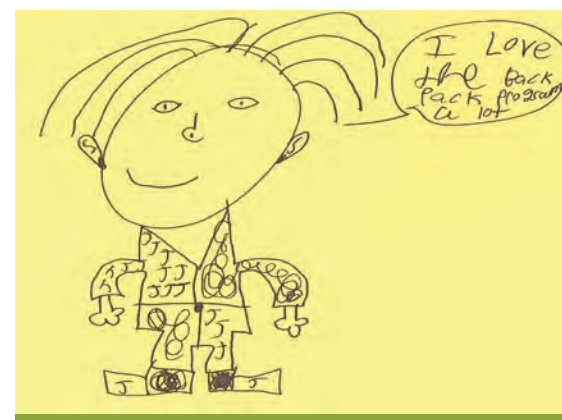
The food bank will continue to work with community partners to offer grab-and-go style meals for children. In addition to operating our Afterschool Meals Program, the food bank will continue to operate the Backpack Program to provide children with meals for the weekend. You can help by sponsoring a child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

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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 GULF COAST

HUNGER PRE-PANDEMIC

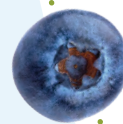
1 in 6 individuals were at risk of hunger

POST COVID-19

1 in 5 individuals now face food insecurity



40% INCREASE



2019 ANNUAL REPORT:
VISIT WWW.FEEDINGTHEGULFCOAST.ORG/LEARN-MORE/FINANCIALS



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.

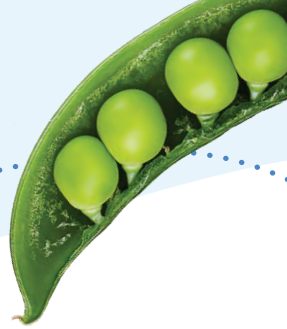
*Anita and her family relocated to the Gulf Coast for a job that quickly fell through. Her family faced an immediate crisis of starting over with few resources and three small children. To survive, Anita's family began using a credit card to pay for necessities. Only able to make the minimum payments, 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."





A Defining Moment

"My 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. My other son is disabled and in a wheelchair from a motorcycle wreck. That was 15 years ago and I do what I can to help him. 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 the Food Bank is Addressing Hunger During the Pandemic

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.

HUNGER ACTION MONTH

This September, Feeding the Gulf Coast joins Feeding America food banks across the country to take part in Hunger Action Month and inspire people to take action and raise awareness of the fact that 40 million Americans, including 12.5 million children and 5.5 million seniors, are food insecure.

Follow along on our website, www.feedingthegulfcoast.org, or through social media to get involved during Hunger Action Month.

You can help at the local level by volunteering, engaging, advocating, and donating—**together we can end hunger one helping at a time.**

#HungerActionMonth



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.



