



## Where Miracles Happen The Road to Recovery Through Partnership

**H**ome of Grace, a nationally known faith-based 90-day residential addiction recovery program in Vancleave, Mississippi, has been helping those struggling with addiction for more than 58 years. With two campuses, this organization has assisted more than 35,000 men and women on the road to overcoming some of the darkest moments of their lives. "There are so many men and women who are struggling in their day-to-day lives," says Josh Barton, Home of Grace Executive Director. "You know, since COVID, there have been so many additional anxieties and stresses, job loss, and so many different things that come into play."

The Home of Grace emphasizes the vital role of nutritious, freshly prepared meals as an essential part of the holistic recovery journey. Josh recalls, "Many of the men and women when they come to us, their nutrition has been shot. They've been living on the streets and really just surviving." Home of Grace has partnered with Feeding the Gulf Coast for a decade, participating in the Retail Donation Program, which connects the

agency with access to various products, including fresh produce, dairy, meat, and bread from local grocers such as Greer's Market. Through this partnership, Home of Grace is able to significantly subsidize the program's food costs, thereby increasing the ability to help more people on the road to recovery. "Nutritious food not only heals the body but also supports mental and emotional well-being, which helps individuals overcome addiction. The quality of our meals is a big part of the journey toward their healing."

Josh states that the connection with Feeding the Gulf Coast equips the organization to expand its ministry. "Everything we can do to lower our cost of operations allows us to help that many more people throughout the year. Having a healthy meal on a regular basis drastically reduces stress and anxiety. Ultimately, if someone is going down a dark path and they aren't able to have good healthy meals, it could lead someone down a substance abuse road just because they're trying to numb the issues of life. Home of Grace is here. We'd love to be a lighthouse, a refuge for someone."

**Agency partners are vital in helping us achieve our mission. Our network of more than 800 community partners helps distribute more than 32 million meals a year to those struggling with hunger.**

**When you partner with us, you join a large circle of support, including:**



Access to a variety of food and resources to help empower and expand your services



Connection to a community of local like-minded organizations



Opportunity for training and other best practices



Learn more about becoming an agency partner

**GET INVOLVED**

**Visit our website**  
[feedingthegulfcoast.org](https://feedingthegulfcoast.org)



## FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO

Partnership requires two or more parties to share a common vision and purpose and be committed to working together toward a goal. At Feeding the Gulf Coast, we are fortunate to have more than 800 partners who share the common vision of a hunger-free central Gulf Coast. These partners work tirelessly to ensure the support of those facing hunger in our community.

Because hunger can result from many reasons and exist anywhere, it can be difficult to describe the scope of our mission. Thankfully, we have partners who can meet us where the need exists and make a real difference for thousands of children, seniors, families, and individuals facing some of the most challenging circumstances of their lives.

This newsletter includes great examples of the breadth and depth of this work, such as a recovery program, an affordable healthcare clinic for low-income, uninsured individuals, and a library that helps children have nutritious meals during the summer. To see even more examples, please visit our YouTube channel, social media, and website.

Perhaps the most inspiring part of this work is the recognition that anyone can join with us and make a difference: agencies, volunteers, donors, advocates, farmers, businesses, and more. Thanks to all those who stand alongside us in partnership, our community is made stronger. If you are already part of this mission, thank you... If you are considering getting involved, please reach out and become a partner. Together, we will continue to turn hunger into hope for those in our community who face the challenge of food insecurity.

*Michael Ledger*

MICHAEL LEDGER

PRESIDENT & CEO, FEEDING THE GULF COAST



## ADDRESSING HEALTHCARE HOLISTICALLY

"Sitting in the waiting room, I heard someone talk about the food pantry. So I went to the desk and asked them, and they said, 'Oh yeah, you can go.' So when I went, it was just, wow, it was wonderful. It has saved so much money on our food bill," says Tawana, a patient of Victory Health. "Within a year that I started getting food from the pantry, my husband had a major stroke. So, every month that goes by, we have had to dig into our savings just to pay bills. And groceries, of course, are astronomical." Tawana knows firsthand the devastating impact of unexpected medical bills on a family's budget. Reflecting on her experience with the food pantry hosted at Victory Health Partners, she states, "This food pantry has been a big, big life changer for us." For patients facing the challenge of balancing expenses, having access to free, healthy food is one less stressor amid the healing process.

Understanding the critical connection between nutrition and health, Victory Health

Partners, expanded its services two years ago to partner with Feeding the Gulf Coast and establish a food pantry where clients could access free, nutritious food. "We just saw the need," said Director of Victory Health Partners, Kim Garrett. "With so many of our patients struggling with chronic disease, we knew that if we were going to care for our patients holistically and as excellently as we can, we had to address the nutrition as well."

Feeding the Gulf Coast has prioritized building partnerships with local healthcare organizations such as Victory Health Partners to improve consistent access to nutritious food that meets dietary needs and manages diet-related diseases.

This collaboration impacts health outcomes for patients where food insecurity is a social determinant of health, thereby promoting healthy, thriving communities. Kim stresses, "Life is expensive. Many patients are struggling with the increased cost, and their margins are getting even tighter. So just being able to give someone a bag of groceries, to help a little bit to take some things off their budget, provides hope."

Learn more



**"It's been a big life changer for us."**

### FOOD AS MEDICINE

Scan the QR Code to watch this story and learn more about other initiatives.







## Partners Create a Safe Place for Children to Learn and Eat

“This helps a ton, especially even with grocery costs. It really does because you can come here and get lunch,” says Kaci, a mom who has brought her daughter to one of the West Florida Public Libraries, a site partner for Feeding the Gulf Coast’s Summer Meal Program. “It gives them something to do that’s out of the heat.”

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 often far from fun.

Thanks to the partnership of more than 165 sites, kids are having a brighter and more carefree summer across our community. More than 8,000 meals are served daily in an environment where children can make memories, learn, and spend time with friends. As summer break transitions back into school, these sites continue providing free meals for children throughout the school year.

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

**8,000  
MEALS**  
served  
daily



## FOOD AS MEDICINE

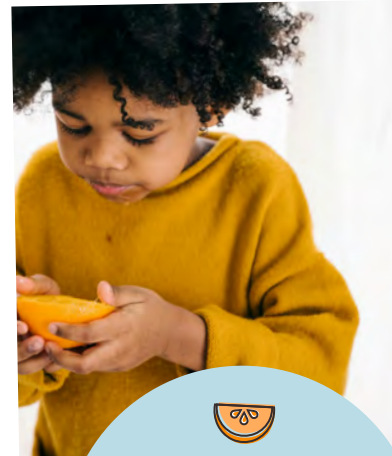
# GUT HEALTH: Tips for helping the Second Brain

**There is a powerful connection between our brain and the digestive system. The gut—sometimes called the Second Brain, is home to trillions of microorganisms—including bacteria, fungi, and viruses; that influence our digestion, immune system, and other factors of our overall health.**

**Keeping our gut healthy helps us eat and digest food comfortably and fight infection. Research also suggests that gut health may affect brain function, mental health, weight, and risk for diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, and digestive issues.**

**The following tips are great practices to put into place to balance your gut microbiome:**

- **Deep breathing before eating and managing stress helps us reach the “rest and digest” state more easily.**
- **Prebiotics, such as oats, nuts, beans, apples, and onions, are foods that feed and grow the beneficial microorganisms in our gut.**
- **Drinking water to stay hydrated can aid digestion and quickly move waste products out of the body.**
- **Maintaining a diverse diet can increase the microbial richness in the gut.**



Scan for gut healthy recipes



SUMMER 2024



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 32 million meals through our network of more than 800 community partners.

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*This institution is an equal opportunity provider.*

VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR FULL STATEMENT



## DISASTER PREPAREDNESS



The Atlantic hurricane season for the central Gulf Coast runs June 1 through November 30.

Take active steps now to prepare your family and home for a disaster. Scan the QR Code for more tips.



Make a plan and review it with your family members.



Build a kit with items needed to shelter in place or for evacuation.



Secure your home and loose items around your yard.



Sign up for local weather alerts from county agencies.

## GET INVOLVED

### UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY FOR MISSISSIPPI BUSINESSES HOUSE BILL 1723

Mississippi House Bill 1723 provides eligible businesses that support Feeding the Gulf Coast to receive tax credits equivalent to their donation. These credits offset Mississippi state income tax liabilities dollar for dollar, providing a valuable incentive to support our essential work.

For guidance on utilizing these tax credits and understanding your business's benefits, visit our [website](#) or call us at (251) 653-1617 x130.

### SEPTEMBER 10, 2024 HUNGER ACTION DAY

Go orange to help raise awareness about hunger in your community. Share a photo on your social media and tag us @FeedingtheGulfCoast.

### SEPTEMBER 12, 2024 BUSINESS AFTER HOURS 4 - 6 PM

Get a behind the scenes look at our daily operations by joining us for this networking event with the Mobile Chamber at our Theodore Warehouse.

### ITEMS NEEDED FOR THE 25<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL CHEF CHALLENGE

Plans are underway for the silver anniversary of our annual fundraiser, Chef Challenge. Whether you have a one-of-a-kind experience, unique product or an intriguing service, we ask you to join us in supporting this event by donating to our silent auction. Your gift will showcase your business and help us raise vital funds to feed people in need in our community.

Visit our [website](#) or call (251) 653-1617 x141.



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

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

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