

## CHRIS'S STORY OF FIGHTING HUNGER... AND WINNING.



"Facing hunger at any early age is extremely difficult, but as a child, going hungry and being without food - it changes you."

# CHRIS

By the time he was almost 6 years old, Chris Hand was well acquainted with the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank. His father, who was an architect, suffered from a stroke and was later diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis which meant he could no longer work. Soon thereafter, his parents struggled to keep food on the table for their family.

"We went from being a normal family to being extremely poor," said Chris. "Often times we didn't know what we were going to have for dinner or lunch and sometimes, dinner was lunch."

Chris's parents began to rely on the help of friends, family and the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank. He vividly remembers a time when his family was really struggling and they visited the Food Bank for help.

"He came out with two large fruit boxes full of can goods and dry goods. We got home and had a meal. That was the first full meal we had had in about 3 months."

Chris began working at an extremely young age because he had to make money in order

to buy food. Sometimes he would hunt deer, rabbit or squirrels for food when he needed to provide for the family.

"Facing hunger at any early age is extremely difficult, but as a child, going hungry and being without food - it changes you," he recalled. "The stress and anxiety that comes with that is immeasurable."

For Chris, being a child without food instilled in him a drive to be successful and he has held on to that motivation into and throughout his adulthood.

After working in construction for many years, Chris found himself in an all too familiar situation. In 2009, he was injured on the job and was temporarily disabled. Learning that he couldn't go back into the construction field and fearing that he would not be able to provide for his family, Chris went back to school to pursue a new career path.

"I was tired of struggling," he said. "I wanted a better life for my family and knew I had to reverse the cycle."

Today, Chris is a system administrator at Transformyx, a very successful data center serving many high-profile businesses and organizations in Baton Rouge. While Chris has a family of his own to care for now and he is successfully accomplishing his goals, the memories of where he has been will always drive him to do what he can to help others in need.

Chris holds a food drive every year and with the help of friends and family, he is able to collect canned goods for Thanksgiving and Christmas meals.

"We have to help other people. If you're providing food for people who are struggling just to pay their bills, that is one less thing that they have to worry about," he said.

"Give as much as you can, help as much as you can. If not for giving to others that have less, some wouldn't have anything at all."



## GREATER BATON ROUGE FOOD BANK OUTREACH PROGRAMS

### MEMBER AGENCY NETWORK DISTRIBUTIONS

The Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank acquires, inventories and warehouses donated and purchased food products. We provide food to more than 115 agencies, completely free of charge. These member agencies include food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters and group homes. Clients who face hunger may visit one of these member agencies to receive food assistance. Distributions through our member agencies are our largest distribution channel.

### FARM FRESH HEALTHY FOOD INITIATIVE

Fresh fruit and vegetables are an important part of a healthy diet, but unfortunately they are not always easily accessible to those who need them. Our Farm Fresh Healthy Food Initiative provides fresh produce to our agencies that may not have the capacity to store refrigerated produce consistently. On average, a variety of four items, equaling approximately 25 lbs., of fresh produce is distributed.

### BACKPACK PROGRAM

The Backpack program is designed to help fill the void for children who are at risk of missing meals over the weekend and during holidays, when they are not in school and, as a result, are not receiving free or reduced price lunches through the National School Lunch Program. Backpacks are filled with child-friendly food items and are then distributed to children enrolled in the program in select elementary schools. Backpacks are sent home with children, pre-K through fifth grade, on Friday and returned empty to school on Monday morning.

### SENIOR GROCERY PROGRAM

The Senior Grocery Program, which includes the Food Bank's Adopt-A-Senior Program, provides basic, shelf-stable food once a month to qualified, at-risk seniors. The supplemental food box allows them to stretch their limited budget to cover other expenses for medications, utilities and other necessities. The food box is made up of donated items including breakfast foods, assorted canned and dry shelf-stable fruits, vegetables, proteins and sweets.

### MOBILE PANTRY PROGRAM

Mobile Pantries are distributions funded by donors for special events and holidays. Our truck brings an array of foods for a predetermined number of clients. Food from Mobile Pantries is distributed on a first come, first served basis and all product is free to the public. We work with the donor to select an area where there is a need as well as one of our member agencies to help with food distribution.

### SNAP OUTREACH

The Food Bank offers assistance to clients applying for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. A Food Bank representative can assist with completing applications and redeterminations, reporting changes and printing SNAP budget summaries. The primary goal is to help clients with their responsibility in the application process.

**JUST \$1 CAN PROVIDE FOOD FOR 4 MEALS.**



## GROWTH & INNOVATION WILL BE KEY TO FIGHTING HUNGER

**W**hile it appears 2018 will kickoff riding strong economic performance indicators both locally and nationally, many of our neighbors are still struggling to recover from the flooding of 2016 from both a personal and financial perspective. We hope that 2018 brings recovery and good things for them as we move forward.

Here at the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank, we understand we will continue to face an ever-changing environment in the food industry. As you may know, your Food Bank relies heavily on food donations from local grocers, with whom we partner to distribute food to families in need. Our local grocers have been extremely generous partners in our success and continue to support our mission and our local community.

Still, over the last couple of years they continue to see higher food costs, the emergence of online food purchases, and even consolidation of grocery ownership groups. These changes are affecting the grocery industry in our area and with it brings a direct, unintended consequence for your local Food Bank in the way of pounds of food collected.

This new food industry paradigm is bringing change to your Food Bank's operational strategy as we continue to look for innovative ways to partner with business and industry to raise funds and collect food to help fill the gap.

A strengthening economy in 2018 will allow us opportunities for greater innovation to improve our effectiveness, quality of food nutrition, and impact on our neighbors dealing with hunger and food insecurity. As an organization, we are extremely fortunate to have always enjoyed generous support from our local community and we feel certain that many businesses and families will once again answer the call to help us serve our mission across our 11-parish service area.



Michael G. Manning  
President/CEO,  
Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank





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## GENEROUS SUPPORT FROM BASF FUELS BACKPACK PROGRAM IN ASCENSION SCHOOLS

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The Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank Backpack program, a critical outreach project aimed at fighting child hunger, recently received a generous financial gift just in time for the holidays. BASF, a longtime supporter and partner of the program, donated \$25,000 to support the program's efforts towards helping children in need in Ascension Parish schools.

The Backpack program is a donor-funded program designed to help fill the void for low-income children. These children receive free or reduced-price lunches through the National School Lunch Program, but are at risk of missing meals over the weekend or during holidays when they are not in school.

Backpacks are filled with a selection of nutritious, child friendly food items and then distributed to at-risk children enrolled in the program in select

elementary schools. The backpacks are then discreetly sent home with children as young as pre-K and as old as fifth grade on Friday and returned empty on Monday morning. While the program does receive some funding from individuals, the program is in large part made possible through grants and corporate donations. BASF has supported the program for many years both in funding and through volunteer efforts.

“Through our partnership with the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank, BASF is committed to supporting Ascension parish's youngest minds by ensuring at-risk children have meals when they are not in school,” said Tom Yura, BASF's Senior Vice President and General Manager in Geismar, Louisiana.

The Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank Backpack program reaches children in

need across several schools in the 11-parish service area, and having been able to help more children during the holidays was a special gift.

“While many students were looking forward to the holiday break, we know that some students would struggle with hunger during that time while not receiving free or reduced-price meals through the school lunch program,” said Mike Manning, President and CEO of the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank. “Hunger is very real for these children during the holidays. We are very grateful to have been able to make a difference during that time and going forward in the months ahead by providing food assistance to these children through partners like BASF, who continue to help us make this Backpack program possible.”



“BASF is committed to supporting Ascension parish's youngest minds by ensuring at-risk children have meals when they are not in school.”

TOM

## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: MEET DAWN ESCOTT



After years of working as an accountant at Our Lady of the Lake Hospital in Baton Rouge, Dawn Escott decided to stay home when her daughter started first grade. In her spare time, she enjoyed playing tennis and doing volunteer work throughout the Baton Rouge community.

It wasn't until many years later when her daughter was working on a thesis project for school based on homelessness in Baton Rouge, that Dawn really gained an interest in the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank.

"The one thing that the homeless in Baton Rouge could count on was food, and that's because of the efforts of the Food Bank and all the agencies that this Food Bank supports," Dawn said.

Not long after learning about how big of an impact the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank has on the community, Dawn needed knee surgery and could no longer play tennis. She needed to find other ways to fill her day, which is how her journey as a volunteer at the Food Bank began. She did a lot of research beforehand on the Food Bank to be sure her time, as a volunteer would be going to a great organization.

"You want to put your time and your effort into something that you know is helping people and so I know that when we come here, everything we touch goes to a child, or an adult, or a senior that needs help that doesn't have food to eat," said Dawn.

Every Wednesday morning, a group of volunteers comes in

to build boxes for the Adopt A Senior Program or Backpack Program, which was Dawn's first project at the Food Bank. She recalls her first Wednesday as a volunteer.

"You could just tell everybody enjoyed what they were doing. Some of us were here because we wanted to be here and some because they had to be here, but everybody enjoyed what they were doing and we had a good time."

Dawn volunteers at the Food Bank two to three times each week now to help in any way she can. The majority of volunteers help sort and pack food donations that come in daily, but volunteers can be used in so many different ways.

"There is always something to do. Sort and pack or even sweep the floors - there is always something to do. The more hands that we have in there volunteering, the more food we can sort and the more food we can send out to those who need it", explained Dawn.

There are many different opportunities available for people to volunteer at the Food Bank. Monday through Friday there are morning and afternoon shifts. On Saturday morning there are also shifts, and Family Night is once a month.

"Come volunteer, but if not, go ahead and pull that checkbook out...Donate a little money. Every dollar donated can generate 4 meals. Either way, you just know that you're doing something good. And it feels good."

"I know that when we come here, everything we touch goes to a child, or an adult, or a senior that needs help that doesn't have food to eat."

**DAWN**



# VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES NOW AVAILABLE ONLINE

## 2017 VOLUNTEER SUPPORT

There are a number of ways that individuals, families, religious organizations or corporate groups can volunteer their time to help us fulfill our mission at the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank.

From helping us sort donated food so that it can be categorized and boxed for distribution to agencies, to helping us with warehouse cleaning, organizing supplies or packing bags for critical outreach programs – we are ready to hear from you.

We've made it even easier now to get involved. You can learn more about current opportunities near you and sign up online at [volunteer.brfoodbank.org](http://volunteer.brfoodbank.org). When you visit us online, you will be able to schedule the date and time that works best for you and your team while also sorting through the different kind of volunteer jobs you like most.

Volunteering is a great way to give back while enjoying time with friends and colleagues. We'd love to hear from you soon. Visit us online or give us a call at 225-359-9940.



Nearly 7,000 Volunteers



Over 34,000 Hours



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*In an effort to go green and reduce costs, the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank encourages you to sign up for our e-newsletter and newflashes. Visit [www.brfoodbank.org](http://www.brfoodbank.org) to sign up and start receiving news in your inbox.*

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