

## FACING HUNGER AT A TIME OF HIGHER FOOD AND GAS PRICES



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**TANDY**

Giving back in whatever way you can is a powerful thing. For Tandy Bennett, it has been a motto she has always tried to live by. A resident of Chinquapin, LA, Tandy began volunteering at the Head of Island Food Pantry over 20 years ago following the passing of her father. Even then, she sought to help others.

“When my dad passed away, I had to find something to do so I started to volunteer at the Head of Island Food Pantry,” Bennett said. “I had a van at the time and mom went to that church. She told me they needed someone to go to the Food Bank to help get groceries over to the church. I said I have a van and can do that, so I offered to go.”

At the onset, Bennett told the staff that she just wanted to volunteer. But after some time, the staff there recognized she was in need and that she qualified for food assistance. They encouraged her to not feel awkward about participating in the program while also volunteering because she was giving her time for others who need help also.

“I told them that I just wanted to volunteer, and they insisted that I should also get a box,” she said. “When the lady that ran Head of Island passed away, the food pantry there closed and so I started to come to Hebron Baptist Church.”

Tandy, along with her high school classmate and neighbor Ronnie, make the drive once a month to Hebron to participate

in the food distribution. On this occasion, Ronnie and Tandy brought two homemade strawberry pies for the volunteers working the distribution that day.

“Ronnie and I usually come together. He insists on driving so I let him,” Bennet said. “The people and the atmosphere here is great. They are family to us now. The people here are so loving and caring and they make sure nobody walks out of here empty handed. We do what we can to give to others also.”

Tandy admits that times have been a bit harder as of late as prices of groceries and gas have continued to climb making it more difficult to acquire what they need.

“With all the prices going up, it is hard when you are trying to make ends meet,” she said. “I have a grown son and boyfriend who live with me, and it is hard to provide enough food for a grown boy. So, it is rough, but by the Grace of God and the people here we get through it.”

Still, in the face of it all, she wishes there were more she could do to help others.

“I would love to be able to donate food to fill all these pantries myself,” she said. “I wish I could do more to help. I’m very thankful that people give to the Food Bank, and they should know that every food donation they make is a blessing to someone here. It makes a big difference.”

## ON THE FRONT LINES OF HUNGER: HEBRON BAPTIST CHURCH



“When your family sees you caring for your brother or sister in need, it impacts so many lives we cannot even count.” **BARBARA**

Within what has long been called the 7th Ward community in Livingston Parish sits Hebron Baptist Church, established more than 180 years ago to minister to the local community. From the very beginning, the church has been about serving the spiritual and physical needs of the community, and that call to help others becomes quite clear when you visit one of their monthly food distributions.

As a member agency of the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank, staff and volunteers from the church gather one Wednesday a month to distribute food to local qualified clients via an assembly line of cars. Barbara Stevenson, Food Pantry Administrator, recalls the height of seeing so many families in need back during the flood of 2016.

“For the 2016 flood, the center became a food distribution location in coordination with the Food Bank to get food to people who were stranded,” Stevenson stated. “The church did not flood. It became an island of service. They had people here that were airlifted; people rescued from army trucks; and many had escaped their homes and come here to the church for refuge. Working with the Food Bank during that time was a beautiful relationship.”

Flash forward to early 2020 and the pantry had to suspend operations due to COVID-19.

“Initially during COVID, we had to stop operating because the people that work here are elderly, immune suppressed, and in some cases extremely vulnerable,” she said. “The National Guard

was able to come in and handle distributions during COVID to continue to get food to the area. They are so efficient at the Food Bank in getting the food to the people who need it.”

Later as COVID began to settle down, the pantry was able to reopen and now they are back to serving their clients once a month in conjunction with Food Bank support and resources.

“The need is so great. COVID has burdened everyone, and it has decreased the stability of so many,” she said. “People lost loved ones, and many were affected by that personally. That affects someone’s stability and any one of us can be just a step away from being in need.”

Stevenson noted that the work of volunteers really makes such a difference when it comes to operating a food pantry. She says it is like a community of neighbors coming together and that even some of their food clients give of their time to make it all work.

“Ronnie and Tandy really help us. They serve more than they receive,” Stevenson said “If I need help getting things done and I call them, they say they are on their way. When your family sees you caring for your brother or sister in need, it impacts so many lives we cannot even count. We do not know how that is going to impact further generations and the desire to give back like Ronnie and Tandy do. They give back in a way they can.”

“When you give, you are blessing others in a way you would never understand unless you were walking in their shoes,” she added. “And we cannot fully understand what that is like. But we know we are touching future generations.”

# 18 MILLION EMPLOYEES WORK FOR COMPANIES WITH MATCHING GIFT PROGRAMS



At the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank, every dollar counts. Corporate employee matching gifts offer the opportunity to turn one dollar by a match-eligible employee into two, three, four, or even five dollars. Our new Double Your Donation feature on the Food Bank website provides a convenient way for you to find out if your company may match your donation.

### Here's how it works:

Employee matching gift programs are a type of corporate philanthropy set up to encourage employees to give back to their communities. These companies encourage community outreach by making donations to the same nonprofits that their employees are supporting via personal donations.

These programs have become quite widespread, but many donors have not heard of them, or they are not aware of their own match-eligibility. The impact of these match programs can be substantial. Did you know that more than 18 million employees work for companies with matching gift programs? You might be one of them!

You can help us feed the hungry in the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank area by searching for your own match-eligibility. Immediately assess your eligibility and gain access to detailed information about your employer's corporate giving program by searching

Double the Donation's database of companies with matching gift programs. <https://brfoodbank.org/double-the-donation/>

Double the Donation is our partner in providing you with as many of the following as possible:

- Up-to-date, company specific program guidelines
- Links to the online matching gift request forms or downloadable PDFs offered by your employer
- Our contact information (Tax ID, address, fundraising contact), which you may need for your matching gift request

If your company is not listed, make sure to check with your company's HR department. It's possible that your employer offers matching gifts. If they do not, you can inquire with your HR department about submitting a form to become an active participant in the program.

We wish we could submit the required form for you, but unfortunately the employees must submit that matching gift request to their employer directly. We appreciate you taking a few minutes to double your donation.

If you have questions about Double Your Donation or matching gifts at the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank, please reach out to Sandy Colvin, Chief Development Officer at (225) 359-9940 or [sandy@brfoodbank.org](mailto:sandy@brfoodbank.org)



## THANK YOU TO THE LOUISIANA NATIONAL GUARD FOR MAKING A TREMENDOUS IMPACT

In response to the COVID-19 shutdown back in March of 2020, the Louisiana National Guard was deployed to the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank to temporarily assist with preparation and distribution of emergency food boxes for families in need. What was thought to be a temporary assignment quickly turned into a two-year operation as multiple strands of COVID-19 continued to evolve and spread through the country.

Now with the threat of COVID-19 appearing to decline to its lowest number of cases to date, the Louisiana National Guard is moving on from its deployment with the Food Bank. We are very thankful for each member of the guard who has worked so diligently over the last 24 months to make sure food reached those in need, especially during a time when

recruiting new volunteers was a challenge due to the constraints of the virus.

In their two years of service, it is important to note not only the impact of boxes and meals distributed by the LANG to those who are food insecure but also the relationships made along the way.

Since March of 2020, the LANG has distributed more than 6.8 million pounds of food, providing more than 5.6 million meals across our 11-parish service area. In addition, two members of the guard have since joined our team at the Food Bank in full-time positions.

SFC Ruben Mullins joined the Food Bank team since his initial deployment but also remains active in his role with the Louisiana National Guard. Mullins now serves as the Operations Manager for the warehouse.

“Throughout the two years we were here, we helped thousands of families during the pandemic. That is why we do what we do,” said Mullins. “It is an unbelievable feeling to continue to serve the community by having the opportunity to have a career here at GBRFB. I cannot wait to see what the future holds for this outstanding organization.”

We would like to extend a sincere thank you to the Louisiana National Guard for their passion and inspirational work ethic in helping us fulfill our mission at a time that was most difficult for everyone in our community. We appreciate their efforts and hope to be able to fill their boots by recruiting new volunteers into the fold as we grow and move forward.

# HOPE BUILDERS: LEADING THE WAY FOR VOLUNTEERS



Behind the scenes at the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank is a group of 18 incredibly special volunteers who assist nearly 11,000 other volunteers throughout each year. Each of these volunteers averages over 1,000 hours annually in our warehouse sorting and repacking food which we then distribute to more than 100-member agencies throughout our 11-parish service area.

These 18 men and women serve as volunteer leaders and are part of our “Hope Builders” team, a meaningful designation for those who give 1,000 hours or more of their time to help us to “build hope” for our neighbors in need. No matter what challenges we face, be it hurricanes or a pandemic, they continue to serve and support our mission with fierce determination and huge hearts. Our Hope Builders show up, for us and our community, day in and day out.

This vital support team not only works consistent 4-hour shifts but also assists the staff Repack Captain who supervises the operations of packing boxes by volunteers, takes the lead in answering questions, and ensures food is packaged for the needs of member agencies. They inspire others to return by making the volunteer experience a positive one for all.

Hope Builders serve alongside individuals of all abilities with patience, kindness, and gentleness, helping all valued volunteers’ success in the tasks assigned to them. This provides an amazing opportunity for young people to learn new employment skills that will help lead to a successful future!

Recently, Hope Builders were recognized at the state level by Lieutenant Governor Bill Nungesser and Volunteer Louisiana with the 2022 Service of Champions Award. This annual award recognizes and celebrates outstanding volunteers from across the state of Louisiana.

Our Hope Builders have become an integral and well-loved part of the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank family. Their passion and commitment for our mission drive us all to be better for the entire community that we serve. We thank these leaders and all the volunteers who have given of their time to support our mission.

## HOPE BUILDERS TEAM

Bus Culotta, Paul Foretich, Mannie Henderson, Donna Patterson, Dawn Escott, Terry Cormier, Daniel Martin, Julius Mullins, Bill Gros, Michelle Louis, Darryl Louis, Wendy Parish, Jenny Ferrell, Helene Tucker, Richard Tucker, Jerry Normand, John Langlois, Charlotte Langlois.



## POUNDS AND MEALS DISTRIBUTED ON A WEEKLY BASIS

Have you ever thought about how food banks receive food or how much food a food bank moves in a year, month, or week? A food bank acts as food storage and distribution hub for smaller frontline agencies such as food pantries, faith-based organizations, and more. Food banks like the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank collect, source, warehouse, transport, and distribute a variety of donated and purchased food items, produce, and other grocery products.

Food that has been donated and purchased is transported to our warehouse. Once it has arrived, it is inventoried. Then the food is sorted and packed by volunteers. Food Bank staff pull orders and prepare the food for delivery by truck to nearly 100 member agencies throughout our 11-parish service area.

Our partner agencies distribute food directly to clients they serve. Clients bring home food to make and prepare meals for themselves and their family members.

Already in 2022, the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank with the help of volunteers and partner agencies has moved nearly 4 million pounds of food to help feed children, seniors, families, and adults. That is more than 223,000 pounds of food—or nearly 186,000 meals that are distributed each week through our network of agencies.

The Food Bank is thankful for our community's unprecedented amount of continued support that allows us to meet the needs of those experiencing food insecurity in our local area.

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