

A NEW SPIRIT CHANGING HEARTS IN BATON ROUGE



"More than once when we come with food, people have cried. They say, Thank you."

PASTOR MARIA

Tucked away amongst the mighty oak trees along Sharp Road in Baton Rouge, sits The New Ruach Church. Its purpose is in its name: "Ruach". A Hebrew word directly from Ezekiel that can mean "spirit", "wind", or "breath". In these verses, God tells Ezekiel that he is going to give us a new "Ruach"; a new spirit to change our hearts of stone to hearts that are attentive.

Pastor Maria Quintero Edwards lends her attentive heart to The New Ruach Church pantry so that it stands ready to provide food for many food-insecure residents who speak English as a second language. The church provides hope for its residents who are in search of their own "Ruach" in the form of food or other means of assistance.

"We have more people coming. Sometimes it's maybe 200", says Pastor Maria. "It depends. We still keep things in the pantry after we do a distribution. New people come, and we continue to give."

With the current economic situation, Pastor Maria is expecting more people to need the pantry. Pastor Maria talks with many of the people who visit The New Ruach Church pantry, and what they report to her is that there were fewer job opportunities in December and in the beginning of January. People were without work. The food received from the pantry helped them make ends meet.

"We have a lot of people come this last time. The food was gone very, very fast," states Pastor Maria. "We have people here who don't have transportation, so we sometimes deliver food to their houses. So, when we go there, more than once when we come with food, people have cried. They say, 'Thank you. This is God sending us something'. I don't have words to say but thanks to the Food Bank, for everything you guys do for so many people."

The New Ruach Church is a Spanish-speaking agency who can assist immigrant families who do not speak English. The food pantry is but one of the services that help them. Pastor Maria and the church have helped many destitute families by finding them resources to become self-sustainable.

"It's being a tool in God's hands because we are not actually doing anything other than distributing what you guys give us. But it's seeing the blessing of the Lord and seeing how God wants to bless those people who are in need, who are really needing that food. The people right now, they are still without a job, but they have food because of the Food Bank, and that's a relief. There are no words. How do we feel being an instrument of God, being a part of his plan? I am grateful and blessed. Praise the Lord."



ECONOMIC CHALLENGES LOOK TO STRAIN FAMILY BUDGETS IN 2023

On behalf of the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank and the people we serve, I would like to extend our deepest appreciation and gratitude for the kindness and compassion you shared with our community in 2022.

On the heels of the pandemic, families trying to recover were hit with a second big blow to their pocketbooks from record-high inflation, rising gasoline prices and rising prices on the majority of the most basic household food items.

Through it all, you were there to support us to make sure families, seniors and most importantly children had access to good food and reliable meals. For that, we are truly thankful.

As we enter 2023, both working and non-working families will face economic challenges that will force them to make difficult decisions in the midst of the ongoing pressures on their finances. While wage increases continue to significantly lag the rate of inflation and interest rates are also climbing, families and seniors are having to prioritize their homes, heating costs and medications over food.

In just the last two months of 2022, we witnessed a 15% rise in local food insecurity. As we all struggle with these economic challenges, we anticipate the need will continue to grow in 2023.

With your help, we will answer the call to serve others and fulfill our mission of feeding those in need.

We have invested in new warehouse management software that will improve our efficiency and allow us to move larger volumes of food through our warehouse more efficiently which means faster deployments to our front-line agencies. We continue purchasing palletized bulk product and packaging it in our Bulk Repacking Room. This allows us to distribute a larger volume of individually packaged food at a lower cost per pound by packaging it ourselves.

There will be much work to be done this year to reach individuals and families in need across our 11-parish service area and, with your help, our team is ready to meet the challenge.

We are thankful for the trust you place in us and your continued support of our mission by volunteering time, collecting food, and donating funds to help us meet these challenges. With your continued support and generosity, we will be there to help feed our neighbors in need once again.

Michael G. Manning

President & CEO, Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank

2022 IMPACT REPORT



OVER
10.4 Million
Meals Distributed



OVER
12.5 Million
Pounds Distributed



47,171
Volunteer Hours



12,112
Volunteers



"With all the prices going up, it is hard when you are trying to make ends meet. So, it is rough, but by the Grace of God and the people here we get through it."

– **Tandy**



"It's hard to go from a place where I volunteered and now, I'm receiving food."

– **Debi**



"I'll never forget the first time the truck came. That's a feeling you never forget, of excitement and knowing that we're going to get this food and be able to feed somebody in need."

– **Gwendolyn**

MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to feed the hungry in Baton Rouge and the surrounding parishes by providing food and educational outreach through faith-based and other community partners.

NUMBER OF USERS ON THE RISE 1 YEAR AFTER LAUNCHING NEW FOOD BANK MOBILE APP



Just over a year ago, you may recall the release of our new Food Bank app that was designed specifically to reach families who may need food assistance through their mobile phones since many low-income families do not have access to a computer at home. So how are we doing?

Since the launch of the mobile app, we have continued to see steady growth with now just over a thousand active users who are able to receive weekly notifications for food distributions in their communities. The growth comes as a direct result of investing in promoting the app at the most critical distribution points for our food clients.

Over the last year, your Food Bank continued to promote the app via our social media channels as our followers can tag others about important food distributions or news and events. We also implemented a QR code for the app in some of our most visible channels.

The easily scanned code is now part of our truck wraps which are seen all over town both on the road and at food distribution sites. The code is also part of new signage that is visible to cars while they are in line at our food distributions as well as on promotional flyer pieces that are inserted into the food boxes delivered to our front-line member agencies.

“Early on we recognized the importance of being able to reach people who are in need but don’t know where to turn for help,” said Mike Manning, President and CEO of the Greater Baton

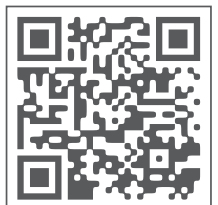
Rouge Food Bank. “This new app is really paving the way to connecting those families and individuals to a timely source for the mobile distributions closest to them. We will continue to find innovative ways to get that message out so that our neighbors are able to get the resources they need.”

One of the goals for 2023 will be to get the 100+ member agencies across our 11 parishes more involved in educating their food clients on the new app. This will ensure they have more timely information on pantry services and special farm fresh distributions where they can source nutritious food items.

The app is not limited to serving just those in need of food. It is also designed for the supporters of the Food Bank including our donors and volunteers. The app provides quick and easy access to details on upcoming Food Bank events, learning about our programs, donating funds, and registering for a volunteer shift.



The Food Bank mobile app is made possible through the generosity of b1BANK and their commitment to helping us fight hunger across our community. Learn more and download the app by scanning the QR code.





NEW WAREHOUSE MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE IMPROVES CAPACITY TO SERVE

In an effort to integrate our financial and operational activities into one platform that improves reporting and data analysis, the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank has migrated to a new cloud-based warehouse management system with custom functions engineered specifically for the food bank industry. This new data management system will allow us to automate processes and realize operational efficiencies that will help us move more food in and out of our warehouse than ever before, thus reaching more families in need across our 11-parish service area.

“The name of the game is efficiency,” said Seth Hatsfelt, Chief Operations Officer of the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank. “Our original warehouse system allowed us to manage products but that was the extent of its capacity. This new software system gives us much more visibility and allows us to manage everything from products, to demand, to forecasting, to managing

restrictions, to measuring pounds per agency, all the way through to front-line distribution to the clients.”

This new AGI software platform integrated with NetSuite, delivers improvements in several key areas of the Food Bank operations including accounting practices, transportation, order processing, warehouse operations, nutrition, and reporting.

When it comes to operational benefits, food orders for agencies can be automated including all USDA restrictions that may need to be part of that agency order. Picked food orders are also more accurate per agency to make sure there is no waste in matching the order to the pounds needed per client for that front-line location. Automated truck schedules allow the team to work weeks out instead of days out which increases visibility to future needs and planning, and on-dock validation against received purchase orders drives down receiving data errors.

“This is a game changer for reducing our overall operational costs,” stated Hatsfelt. “Any cost savings we can gain through efficiencies in turn frees up dollars that we can use to purchase and distribute more food to more people in need. As we become more efficient in operations, we can then grow the number of our front-line member agencies and reach more people. That’s what it’s all about – reducing our costs and feeding more people.”

Another key benefit is that the system also allows for incoming food donations to be ranked by level of nutrition, a key priority for the Food Bank in trying to provide healthy food options for those in need.

“This system provides a ton of real-time data, and it positions our team to be more successful,” said Hatsfelt. “The automation and reporting tools help us significantly reduce waste and provides the needed capacity to serve more of our neighbors in need.”

ANNUAL HOLIDAY FOOD DRIVES A BIG SUCCESS ONCE AGAIN



BREC's Baton Rouge Zoo and the community celebrated the holiday season with ZooLights. Illuminated displays of animals and traditional holiday icons lined the mile-long trail to light the way through the zoo for visitors.

This was the fifth consecutive year the Zoo has partnered with the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank to bring impact and excitement to ZooLights. Every participating guest who brought a non-perishable food item during the hours of ZooLights received a 50% discount from the regular admission price.

In 2022, ZooLights visitors brought in over 4,000 pounds of food which is the equivalent of 3,600 meals! Thank you to everyone who contributed to supporting ZooLights and the impact it has made in fighting hunger locally.



Associated Grocers and Baton Rouge Coca-Cola teamed up with the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank to help feed families over the holiday season through the Red Bags Holiday Food Drive.

From November 21 to December 25, 2022, participating grocery stores offered, red pre-packed Coca-Cola bags filled with non-perishable food that could be purchased for \$10 at checkout. Purchased bags were picked up by the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank to be distributed to families experiencing food insecurity throughout the Food Bank's 11-parish service area to fight hunger in the community.

With your support, the campaign was able to raise just over \$100,000 which will provide the equivalent of more than 300,000 meals. Thank you to all those who purchased a red bag in support of the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank.

**DON'T FORGET TO SHARE THE FUN!
TAG US IN YOUR PHOTOS**

Use hashtags #BRfamily #BRfoodbank



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