

## ONE YEAR LATER: FLOOD IMPACTED FAMILIES GRATEFUL FOR FOOD BANK



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## LEOTHA

After 76 years of living in Livingston Parish, Leotha’s favorite thing about it is the river. “The Amite River, where we fish, is the best part. Best fish in the world,” she said. Although the river remains her favorite part of Livingston, it brought some unimagined difficulties in August 2016.

“I’ve been where I’m at since the ‘70s and water has never, never gotten close to me, but this time it was unexpected. I really wasn’t expecting that much water.”

Because Leotha and her husband had seen high water and flooding in the area before, they didn’t expect it to become a problem. “We were feeling very casual about it,” she said. After a full weekend of nonstop rain, Leotha, her husband and her grandson, decided they needed to evacuate although they did not anticipate any flooding to their home.

Unfortunately, the water continued to rise in the area and their home took on water. It was three months before they were able to get back to their property to stay in a FEMA Mobile Housing Unit. Leotha’s church, Second Zion Church, also received water. Months later, the church reopened and became a member agency of the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank and many people, including Leotha, were able to receive help.

“I’m seeing the light. It’s a slow process, but eventually we’ll get

there... I’m very, very appreciative [for the food we receive]. Just very grateful.”

In addition to receiving food assistance, Leotha also volunteers at the agency. “You hear a lot of sad stories. Some lost their jobs, some lost cars and don’t have any transportation so having the Food Bank is a blessing to a lot of people. You would be surprised at how many people come through here that need the food.”

“The food comes on a Friday, and my son gets a lot of guys to help unload the truck. Once that’s finished, we help put the food in the boxes,” Leotha said. “Now, a lot of people come. It started off kind of slow, but it’s getting bigger and bigger. More people are coming. The food is good, and a lot of people need it.”

Being able to volunteer and give back has really helped Leotha, “It is a wonderful feeling to help people coming to the agency. Even though I may be in need too, as I don’t have my house, but it’s a joy to help somebody else. It’s just an awesome feeling. A great, great feeling.”

Donations of food, funds and time make all of the Food Bank’s work possible. For Leotha, it makes all the difference. “We certainly thank the people who donate. That is really, really a blessing. A lot of people don’t realize what a blessing it is, but we feel it is a blessing that’s able to help others.”



## LARGEST FOOD DISTRIBUTION TO DATE PART OF GRAND REOPENING

Almost one year after the August flood, the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank celebrated the grand reopening of its administrative offices with a ribbon cutting ceremony, followed by a special mobile pantry food distribution in partnership with Smithfield Foods and the Baton Rouge Police Department.

The ribbon cutting ceremony was held at the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank on Friday, July 28th. Local area dignitaries participated in the ribbon cutting event. Afterward, a small reception was held in the new office space.

The following day, Saturday, July 29th, we held one of our largest distributions to date. This distribution was held at the Baton Rouge Police Department Headquarters. With a donation of nearly 40,000 pounds of protein from Smithfield Foods, combined with a donation from Flowers Bakery and food from the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank, we were able to distribute over 90,000 pounds of food to more than 900 households. Volunteers and officers from the police department worked continuously despite the challenging rainy weather.

“We are so thankful for the generous support we received from so many companies, donors, and individuals during and after the flood” said Michael G. Manning, president and CEO of

the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank. “This grand reopening and special food distribution with Smithfield Foods and the Baton Rouge Police Department symbolizes the resiliency of our entire community and the continued commitment to serve those in need.”

Our recovery since the August flood would not be possible without the continued support of the community and your efforts to help us fight hunger.



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MIKE



# REFLECTING ON A YEAR OF CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

**W**ow! It has already been a year. For some of us at the Food Bank and many of our neighbors in our communities working toward recovery, it seems much longer than a year. As we reflect on the Food Bank's journey of recovery over the past year, we find challenges and blessings.

Our team's ability to get us back up and distributing food in just days, even though displaced, was an inspiration to me and a demonstration of their dedication and resolve to perform our mission despite any challenges presented.

But it goes so much deeper than that. The dedication and commitment of our community to step up and volunteer to help us "muck and gut" our facility or to assist with food distributions in flooded areas demonstrated the true heart of the greater Baton Rouge area. The generosity of donors providing food, funds, time and equipment encouraged our efforts to feed more people and keep going.

We have embraced the opportunities that so many have presented us from completing our move to the cloud, to adopting new and improved systems, to finding ways to work smarter and be even more efficient.

It is our goal as we complete our recovery from the flood to be a better, stronger, higher performing food bank than we were before the flood. We owe that to so many of those who have helped and supported us, but, more importantly we owe it to the people we serve who face much greater challenges than they did one year ago.



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

## HOW OUR MEMBER AGENCIES WORK

Member agencies are the link between the Food Bank and the people facing hunger that we feed. The Food Bank serves as a collection and warehousing center where we procure, purchase, sort and distribute food to our member agencies – completely free of charge. Agencies are organizations such as churches, hot meal sites, soup kitchens, group homes and emergency food centers.

Our agencies are able to interact with each person in need to ensure they receive the necessary support they need to live happy, healthy lives. One of the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank's Agencies, Holy Grill (a program of Interfaith Federation of Greater Baton Rouge), serves hot lunches Monday through Friday. Tonia, the cook and coordinator for the Holy Grill, has served with the Holy Grill for more than 25 years. She knows many of the individuals and families who come through. Not only is Tonia able to offer them a warm meal, but she is able to establish a relationship with them like a friend.

On some occasions, the Food Bank is able to partner with member agencies in addition to regular distributions and food pick-ups. Each

November, the Interfaith Federation of Greater Baton Rouge Holy Grill and the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank host the Baton Rouge Community Hunger Walk. The 2-mile walk starts at the Catholic Life Center Campus and winds through neighborhoods nearby.

This year's Hunger Walk will take place on Sunday, November 5th. For more information about our member agencies or the Hunger Walk, visit [brfoodbank.org](http://brfoodbank.org).





## TOP 5 THINGS YOU MAY NOT KNOW ABOUT THE FOOD BANK

### 1 The Food Bank is a food warehousing facility.

We receive food through a variety of ways, including retailers such as grocery stores and restaurants, wholesalers, manufacturers, growers and food drives. As a food bank, we acquire, inventory and warehouse the donated and purchased food product. On average, the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank distributes approximately 250,000 pounds of food and other products (such as cleaning supplies and toiletries) a week.

### 2 Food is primarily distributed through member agencies.

The Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank has three main outreach food programs. Adopt-A-Senior, BackPack and Mobile Pantry. Other than these three programs, all food is distributed to our 11-parish service area through our member agency partners. We provide food to more than 115 agencies, completely free of charge. These agencies include food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters and group homes. Clients who face hunger may visit one of these agencies to receive food assistance.

### 3 Just \$1 can provide 4 meals.

A monetary donation can go a long way when given to the Food Bank. We are able to generate 4 meals from just \$1 because we are able to work directly with the Feeding America Network and local distributors to secure large amounts of product below retail costs.

### 4 Almost 16% of the population we serve does not have reliable access to affordable, nutritious food.

In the 11 parishes we serve, more than 135,000 people (or almost 16% of the population) are food insecure. Food insecurity means that an individual does not know where or when they will find their next meal. Food-insecure households may not always be food insecure, but it may reflect a household's need to decide between basic needs, such as housing or paying bills, and purchasing nutritionally adequate foods.

### 5 Summer is a difficult time of the year.

While donations of food and funds are needed year round, they are especially helpful during the summer. Many children who are food insecure are able to receive free or reduced priced meals through the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs, yet many of these children lose access to these meals when schools close for the summer. Additionally, seniors with fixed incomes face hunger as utility bills may increase due to the heat. Through donations to the Food Bank, our agencies are able to help provide programs to help meet the needs of low-income children, their families and seniors who face hunger.

JUST \$1 CAN PROVIDE FOOD FOR 4 MEALS.



## LONGTIME FARMER SHARES EXPERIENCE RECEIVING FOOD FOR THE FIRST TIME



"I'm just one in the family. Receiving this food just opens up my heart... to know that people care about people down here. This here is a big help to the poor and to those who really need it."

# CHARLES

Born and raised on a farm in Maurepas, Charles remembers spending his childhood picking strawberries, beans and peas. "It's what we had to do to make our living. I didn't get much education because I had to work on the farm a lot," Charles recalls.

Although Charles moved off the property and had a family of his own, he's still in Maurepas decades later. All his life, Charles had been able to provide for himself and didn't need to rely on a Food Pantry like Second Zion Church, a member agency of the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank, until recently.

Life as Charles knew it changed when he received 5 feet of flood water in his home during the August 2016 flood. He evacuated to his son's home in St. Gabriel, but soon after they both had to evacuate to another area due to rising waters. He

wasn't able to get back to see the damage to his home until days later, when the water levels had lowered. Since the flood, things have been difficult for him.

A good friend and cousin of Charles had heard about the Food Pantry at Second Zion Church and told him about it. "The first time I came here, I didn't know what to expect. They said you'd get free groceries so when I saw the box I was excited cause it had everything in it."

Despite his hardships, Charles is grateful for the community who has stepped up to help him and so many others in their time of need. "I'm just one in the family. Receiving this food just opens up my heart... to know that people care about people down here. This here is a big help to the poor and to those who really need it."

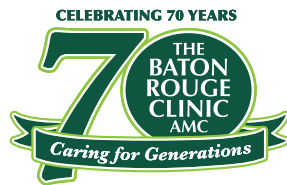
## SEPTEMBER IS HUNGER ACTION MONTH

This September, the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank, together with the Feeding America nationwide network of food banks, will rally in an effort to bring an end to hunger. Hunger Action Month is designed to inspire people to take action and to raise awareness to the fact that 42 million Americans are food insecure. Here in the Food Bank's 11-parish service area, nearly 16% of the population is food insecure.

This annual, month-long campaign brings attention to the reality of food insecurity in the United States and promotes ways for individuals across the U.S. to get involved in the movement to help end hunger.

Hunger Action Day takes place on September 14th. You can help fight hunger with the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank and Feeding America by sharing what you could not do without adequate nutrition. To share, write on an empty plate, "On an empty stomach I can't \_\_\_\_\_." Take a selfie with your plate and post it on social media with #HungerActionMonth, @brfoodbank and @feedingamerica to join the conversation.

You can also join WBRZ for Feed A Family, which will take place all month long in September. Simply look for the Feed A Family donation bins around town and drop your donated nonperishable items inside. For additional ways to get involved, visit [brfoodbank.org](http://brfoodbank.org) for a calendar of simple things you can do every day in recognition of Hunger Action Month.



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

Use hashtags #BRfamily #BRfoodbank



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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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