

PANDEMIC TAKING TOLL ON LOCAL FAMILIES

“I never would have expected something like this to happen to us.”

LISA

Met Lisa Sparks, a client of the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank’s Mobile Pantry Program in Pierre Part, Louisiana. Lisa had never received assistance from the Food Bank or other government programs before the pandemic. Still, she and her family were forced to make some tough choices as the virus affected her household.

“At first I was embarrassed, but then I realized everyone is like this right now, not just us,” expressed Lisa Sparks. With Lisa unable to work due to a disability and her husband having lost his job as a pipe fitter during the pandemic, she and her husband were forced to start receiving SNAP benefits, formerly known as Food Stamps. “I never would have expected something like this to happen to us.”

Lisa was unsure at first about applying for SNAP benefits. She and her husband had some savings but were using that money quickly with little to no income. To add to the stress of paying bills, Lisa and her husband are currently taking care of their 7-year-old granddaughter. “I am 57 years old taking care of a 7-year-old. The stress level is way up, but I wouldn’t put her living with anyone else,” said Lisa. “That’s our granddaughter, we’re going to give her a place to live.”

Lisa says the items she receives at the Mobile Pantry are a great way to make a dinner for multiple people on a tight budget. “The spaghetti sauce can be used in so many ways,” Lisa stated. “My family loves it and I love it, everybody loves a good spaghetti!” Additionally, Lisa is able to get fresh fruits and vegetables with her SNAP benefits.

“Now it doesn’t really bother me to go to the store and slide that card or wait in that long line at your distributions because it really continues to help out while we get back on our feet,” Lisa stated.

With seniors facing high food insecurity rates and Louisiana ranking the highest in the nation for child hunger, the pandemic has made it even harder for unconventional families like Lisa’s to stay food secure. When asked what Lisa would tell other families facing these issues but are afraid of receiving assistance, she stated, “You never know when you may need to ask for help but remember it’s okay to ask for help because it’s not just you.”

To learn more about the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank and our efforts to end hunger during these trying times, visit brfoodbank.org or call 225.359.9940.

NEW DATA SHOWS LOUISIANA #1 IN CHILD HUNGER



“Because of you and your ongoing support, our organization can and will continue to fight hunger in our community.”

MICHAEL

COVID-19 has presented many challenges for our community and your Food Bank. More children are opening bare pantries while their parents struggle to recover from financial hardships caused by the pandemic. Seniors are facing higher electricity bills and prescription costs while having to pay for groceries they can already barely afford. All of this is occurring under the cloud of fear and concern from the latest variant of the pandemic.

New data shows Louisiana holds the highest food insecurity rate among children and third highest food insecurity rate among seniors in the nation. Feeding America's recent study, Map the Meal Gap, additionally indicates there is a “meal gap” of over 19 million meals in our service area. This “meal gap” is the number of meals necessary to ensure that the food insecure in our area receive three meals a day.

While we have risen to face the additional challenges presented by the pandemic, we believe many great things are ahead of us as an organization. Yet, the increased need for our services continues. Kids should not have to rely only on school-provided meals as the

school year begins and seniors should not have to pick between food, prescription medicines and utilities.

It has been inspiring to see so many people step up to help their hungry neighbors during one of the most challenging periods for your Food Bank. Because of you and your ongoing support, our organization can and will continue to fight hunger in our community. I want to thank you for your compassion and encourage you to spread the word about your Food Bank as we continue to fulfill our mission of service to others – ***Together We're Fighting Hunger.***

Sincerely,

Michael G. Manning
President & CEO



NEW PARTNERSHIPS WITH REGIONAL HOSPITALS EXTENDING FOOD BANK SERVICES

Feeding the food insecure is more than providing food, it's providing wellness, nourishment and strength. Here at the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank, our goal is to distribute and promote healthy food to those in need in our community. When people don't have enough food or have to choose inexpensive food with low nutritional value, it can impact their health.

The Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank has been working with hospitals to continue to reach our goal of providing healthy food options. In March of 2021, the Food Bank began their partnership with both Our Lady of the Lake and Woman's Hospital to help find food insecure individuals and provide them with access to resources.

Thanks to our parent organization, Feeding America, the Food Bank received the "Food is Medicine" grant from the philanthropic arm of Anthem, Anthem

Foundation, allowing us to partner with Our Lady of the Lake.

Through Our Lady of the Lake's Geaux Get Healthy program, patients are screened by hospital staff for food insecurity. Once a patient is referred to the Geaux Get Healthy program, they are given a 20-pound box of healthy food choices individually built by the Food Bank's nutrition services team. Additionally, patients are given the contact information to a special extension at the Food Bank which connects them to food sourcing through one of our member agencies.

During the launch of our partnership with Our Lady of the Lake and Anthem Foundation, a similar program began with Woman's Hospital in hopes of exploring a partnership to provide resources to the food insecure they serve. Woman's and Mary Bird Perkins – Our Lady of the Lake Cancer Center's Breast & GYN Cancer

Pavilion staff now screen cancer patients for food insecurity and provide those patients with Food Bank contact information. This flyer is also available in the waiting room of the pavilion in hopes those in need can be directed to a member agency for a steady source of food.

In addition to the pavilion, our Mobile Produce Market that provides fresh fruits and vegetables accompanies the mobile efforts by Woman's Hospital and Mary Bird Perkins to screen for breast and colorectal cancer. Those deemed food insecure during these screenings receive a box of fresh produce and discuss the Food Bank services with our nutrition services team.

Learn more about our hospital partnerships by contacting the Food Bank at 225.359.9940 or info@brfoodbank.org.

NUTRITION RANKING SYSTEM | HEALTHIER OPTIONS



“As this is a huge overhaul, it will take some time, but it is a fantastic step in the right direction to highlighting the importance of nutrition regardless of income level.”

JORDYN

Without access to a healthy diet, those living in food insecure households are vulnerable to diet-related diseases, including obesity, diabetes, hypertension and heart disease. Good nutrition is important for good health and is essential to succeeding in school, complementing medicine and battling disease for populations like children and seniors.

Food insecure children are more likely to be in poor health and struggle in school. Feeding America’s annual Map the Meal Gap study shows Louisiana has the highest child food insecurity rate in the nation. In addition, this study shows the importance of charitable food assistance like the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank, with 37% of food insecure children in Louisiana living in households that are likely ineligible for SNAP and other federal nutrition programs. Healthy bodies and minds require nutritious meals at every age.

In 2019, Healthy Eating Research, a national program of the Robert Johnson Foundation, convened a panel of experts in different fields including, charitable food systems as well as nutrition and food policies, to create recommendations for evidence-based nutrition guidelines. These recommendations were created in order to increase access and promote healthier food choices necessary for an active, healthy lifestyle.

Products are divided into 11 food categories, and within these categories, items are ranked into three tiers labeled “choose often,” “choose sometimes” and “choose rarely.” These tiers are based on saturated fat, sodium, and added sugar nutrient thresholds. The thresholds for each are based on nutrients found in a single serving of food. Our Nutrition Services team is in the process of developing a nutrition ranking system using these guidelines. Each item of food that comes into our warehouse will be ranked based on a nutritional value.

“With Feeding America releasing these guidelines, we are excited at the potential to implement them here at your Food Bank,” stated Jordyn Barlow, Senior Manager of Nutrition Services. “As this is a huge overhaul, it will take some time, but it is a fantastic step in the right direction to highlighting the importance of nutrition regardless of income level.”

Along with implementing a new nutrition ranking system, we currently have programs in place to educate the community on healthy eating habits. Additionally, this summer our Nutrition Services team created Food Bank Fun Bites, a series of videos that show recipes of healthy fun snacks for kids. To view these videos and learn more about our Nutrition Services Initiatives, please visit brfoodbank.org.

FARM FRESH PROGRAM LAUNCHES IN CHANEYVILLE



“I went to school right down the street and I wanted to be able to give back to my neighborhood.”

JANICE

Good nutrition is important for good health and preventing diseases as well as healthy growth and development of children and teens. 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 goal is to introduce healthy foods to vulnerable communities and food deserts with limited access to affordable fruits and vegetables. Our Farm Fresh Healthy Food Initiative provides fresh produce to our agencies that may not have the capacity to store refrigerated produce consistently.

Recently, the Chaneyville Community Center in Zachary, Louisiana became a participant of our Farm Fresh Program. We sat down with Janice Huggins, Director of Chaneyville Community Center, to learn more about how this program is helping her community.

“Fresh produce in the northern part of the parish is something we used to have but we no longer have it,” stated Janice. “There were two fruit stands in the north Baton Rouge area but both of them are now closed despite a lot of people depending on that produce.”

Clients at the Chaneyville Community Center received fresh grapes, lemons, carrots and watermelons during this month’s drop off of produce. This came at a great time for many clients due to their loss of crops from this year’s rain.

“It is much appreciated because it helps so many people and a lot of people are still hurting from the pandemic,” expressed Janice. “You can’t make a better investment to help those that really need it.”

Janice received the position of Community Center Director in April 2021 after working in the education field in Woodville, Mississippi. Janice was pleased to move home to help those she knows having grown up in the Chaneyville area. During her training at the Charles R. Kelly Community Center, Janice learned about the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank’s Farm Fresh program. Janice called KiEtha Gage, Programs Manager at the Food Bank, and began setting up the process to provide this service to her community.

“I went to school right down the street and I wanted to be able to give back to my neighborhood,” Janice recalled. “I knew during my training that this program was really needed for those we help.”

If you would like to learn more about the Farm Fresh Program and how to get involved, contact us at 225.359.9940 or info@brfoodbank.org.

DONOR MATCH OPPORTUNITY IN SEPTEMBER



September is Hunger Action Month – a month where people all over America stand together with Feeding America and the nationwide network of food banks to fight hunger. It's a month to spread the word and take action on the hunger crisis and dedicate ourselves to a solution. Will you join us?

The purpose of Hunger Action Month is to inspire people to act and to raise awareness to the facts: Louisiana has the highest rate of food insecurity among children in the nation as well as the third highest rate among individuals in the nation. In our 11-parish service area, 1 in 5 children are food insecure as well as 1 in 8 individuals.

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. This year's campaign comes at a critical time when Louisiana is breaking records for COVID-19 hospitalizations and many are still living paycheck to paycheck.

Additionally, our friends at Home Bank have graciously agreed to match donations made to the Food Bank during September. Just \$1 can provide up to 6 meals during this campaign for those impacted by food insecurity. Be sure to follow us on social media and/or sign up for emails at the bottom of our website to be kept up to date on all things Hunger Action Month!

If you have any additional questions please contact the Food Bank at 225-359-9940 or email info@brfoodbank.org.

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