

LOCAL CLIENTS HELP ELDERLY NEIGHBORS IN FACE OF PANDEMIC



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ELAINE

Once the pandemic hit, Elaine Simms found herself having to shut down her business. Not long after, she heartbreakingly lost her husband, significantly affecting her income. Once a cosmetologist, she is now providing support to fellow low-income community seniors. She sees the impact firsthand COVID-19 is having not only on herself, but also seniors in her area.

Elaine wakes up early in the mornings to get in line for food from the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank distributions in the Baton Rouge area. However, Elaine isn't getting the food just for herself. Elaine goes house to house after receiving food from these distributions to see what her neighbors may need from a safe distance. Elaine does this in hopes of offsetting the cost of food for her community while limiting their number of trips to the store.

“Some of the older people have a real low income, so it takes the place of what they

can't go out and buy,” said Elaine. “The meats, the vegetables, the fruits, they need it for their health and wellbeing.”

Elaine shared with us that she sometimes takes seniors that are healthy and able with her to be sure they know the process if they ever have to have someone else bring them to a distribution. “That was my new job,” Elaine stated. “I was helping others, not getting paid but I was blessing them in my way.”

Julia Thomas, friend of Elaine for 52 years, is one of the seniors that has ridden along with her to learn the process. Julia is also a client of one of our member agencies, Jewel J. Newman Community Center in East Baton Rouge Parish. Once COVID-19 hit our community, Jewel J. Newman Community Center was forced to change their operations with new hours.

Now, Julia replicates Elaine's process to help her community. When faced with the

question of why she does what she does, Julia states, “I try to do what the Lord told me to do, to share and to be there for others.” Elaine and Julia work together to be sure the seniors and families in their community have what they need to fight hunger during this pandemic.

When asked how she has witnessed the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank help during the evolving COVID-19 situation, Julia Thomas expressed, “I think it is a blessing and an honor that this food is given to help people. We appreciate it from the bottom of our hearts and want to say thank you.”

If you would like to learn more on how you can give to help clients like Elaine and Julia please visit brfoodbank.org. You can also contact the Food Bank at 225-359-9940 or info@brfoodbank.org. Remember \$1 could help provide up to 3 meals to fight hunger.

BEHIND THE SCENES OF THE PANDEMIC IMPACT TO MEMBER AGENCIES



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ROMA

Eelin Golan, the Executive Director of the Zachary Food Pantry, strongly believes her agency has to stay open as long as it can while the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to be felt by our community. When looking back to the beginning Eelin remembers stating, “we are going to stay open because these people will have nowhere else to go.”

Eelin was very quickly tasked with pulling resources together to properly follow all available safety guidelines. For example, she was able to utilize her local resources like the United Cajun Navy who donated hand sanitizers and masks to her volunteers.

At the beginning of the evolving COVID-19 situation, your Food Bank was reduced to operating with less than half of our agencies. These agencies closed down because they are run by mainly senior volunteers that fall in the high-risk category. Consequently, those agencies that were open were now experiencing a greater need but were unable to utilize their normal volunteer numbers due to social distancing guidelines.

Roma Prejean has volunteered at the Zachary Food Pantry for 16 years, and continues to do so through this pandemic. She works with Eelin to handle the challenges these volunteers now face.

“We don’t know how many people are going to show up on Tuesday mornings - it depends,” Roma said. “But the pantry is always looking for volunteers. We train anybody and everybody that wants to come to volunteer.”

Additionally, the volunteers that attend these distributions have experienced a change to their operation as well as an increased need. In the beginning, Eelin Golan worked with her community as well as Kietha Gage, Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank Programs Coordinator, to create a system very similar to the Food Bank’s distribution operation. This was critical as the increased need was something the Zachary Food Pantry had never seen before.

“It sounds easy,” Eelin Golan stated. “But, we were already pushed beyond our capacity.”

With the Zachary Food Pantry only open to clients one day a week, they still see a consistent increase in households. Not only are the pantry’s normal clients in attendance for distributions, clients who recently lost their job or had their local agency close down are now also waiting in line.

“The unemployment hit a spectrum of people,” Eelin expressed. “We all have our pride and you can see the shock on their faces that they are here.”

As the Food Bank pushes as much product as we can to the Zachary Food Pantry, the parking lot still fills before volunteers are arriving to the facility. If you would like to donate to help us be able to provide food to agencies like the Zachary Food Pantry, please visit brfoodbank.org or call 225-359-9940 to make your gift over the phone.





MAP THE MEAL GAP 2020 HUNGER STATISTICS

UNDERSTANDING

THE MEAL GAP DATA AND IMPACT PRE-PANDEMIC

Map the Meal Gap 2020 is the latest Feeding America report on food insecurity at the state and parish level from 2018 data. Pre-pandemic data reflects the lowest food insecurity rates seen since before the Great Recession which means we continue to make a difference with your support. However, the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to reverse the improvements that have occurred over the past decade. The data below does not take into account the impact from the COVID-19 pandemic. **Below are key highlights from our 11-parish service area:**



20.1

MILLION MEAL GAP
IN OUR SERVICE AREA

LOUISIANA LEADS
THE COUNTRY WITH

24.6%

OF CHILDREN WHO
ARE FOOD INSECURE



1 IN 5

CHILDREN IN OUR SERVICE
AREA ARE FOOD INSECURE

Federal Nutrition Assistance Programs, such as SNAP, are the first line of defense against hunger; however, not everyone who is food insecure qualifies for these federal programs. As a result, the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank may be a critical source of food for many individuals and families who are food insecure but ineligible for these programs. This has a tremendous impact on children living in a household who don't qualify for federal nutrition programs. **Statistics show this impacts up to 38% in Ascension Parish alone.**

INDIVIDUALS & SENIORS

CONTINUE TO STRUGGLE WITH HUNGER LOCALLY



1 IN 7

INDIVIDUALS IN LOUISIANA
ARE FOOD INSECURE



TOP 3

STATES WITH HIGHEST
RATE OF SENIOR HUNGER



1 IN 9

SENIORS BATTLING
FOOD INSECURITY

Many low-income seniors face spending tradeoffs that can lead to or worsen food insecurity such as utilities, transportation, housing and/or health related costs like medicine. In addition, older adults (ages 50-59) face unique challenges as they may begin to experience the economic and health complications that can be associated with aging while being too young to benefit from support services available to seniors.

PANDEMIC BRINGS NEW VOLUNTEERS AS WELL AS A NEED FOR MORE



“There are some phenomenal people here,” said Bus.
“It’s just a special place.”

BUS

Donna Rogers first visited the Food Bank with her school group on a Saturday during normal operations. Months later, Donna saw a call for volunteers in the newspaper during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a teacher, she found herself with free time after her classes transitioned online, and she knew right away she wanted to help.

Now, Donna volunteers with the Food Bank four days a week. She experiences how the Food Bank operates first hand and sees how the behind-the-scenes work plays a large part in others’ lives. When asked about her comfort of volunteering during the pandemic, Donna stated, “I don’t see any dangers at all with coming here.”

The safety of our volunteers remains a top priority. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak, cleaning and sanitizing the facility has increased. Volunteers have been separated into smaller groups throughout the facility while remaining at least six feet apart from one another. Masks and gloves are required and volunteers get frequent breaks to wash their hands and get fresh gloves. During these breaks, the volunteers have created great relationships with one another and the Food Bank’s staff members.

Another COVID-19 volunteer, Bus Culotta, proud grandfather, encourages everyone to interact with one another. “There are some phenomenal people here,” said Bus. “It’s just a special place.”

His greatest memory was experiencing another volunteer praying over the food boxes before being sent out for distributions. This moment allowed Bus to understand how much of an impact the volunteers have on the Food Bank and on the community.

Bus is a member of the Good Samaritan Foundation. This foundation regularly donates to the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank. When COVID-19 hit our community, the foundation raised \$3,000 to help our operations. Bus delivered the check and realized he could help further by volunteering. Bus retired last year and has been using his free time to volunteer every day, Monday- Friday.

“You don’t realize how big of an operation it is,” Bus said. Donna agrees. “What they do here is tremendous. It feels good to know that you’re helping people in the community.”

When Donna begins to teach again in the fall, her weeks will be full. However, she would like to continue volunteering on Saturdays and during school holidays. She encourages others to “come and see the volunteers, take a tour of the warehouse to meet some of the staff members and see if you are comfortable with volunteering.”

Children will be going back to school, the National Guard’s assistance will be leaving the Food Bank, and the Food Bank will go back to somewhat normal operations soon.

However, the need for food assistance will not decrease. If you are interested in volunteering, please visit volunteer.brfoodbank.org. Masks are required in the facility while volunteering. If you do not have a mask, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator at 225-359-9940.



THREE WAYS TO HELP YOUR FOOD BANK

“What they do here is tremendous. It feels good to know that you’re helping people in the community.”

DONNA

Without the help of our community, the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank’s mission of feeding the hungry would not have been fulfilled once the COVID-19 pandemic struck our organization. To continue serving those in need during the pandemic, we will continue to need the community’s help.

As a nonprofit organization dedicated to fighting hunger, we operate as a three-legged stool: funds, time and food. Without one of these legs, we would not be able to function.

1 Give Funds

The impact of this pandemic is being felt by so many of our neighbors – especially our seniors, children, and low-income families. Just \$1 can provide up to 3 meals. The Food Bank has the ability to purchase products in bulk at low costs which allows a single donated dollar to go much further than the average dollar. Visit brfoodbank.org to donate online. You can also call 225-359-9940 to give your gift over the phone.

2 Give Time

We have seen a significant decrease in volunteers since the beginning of the evolving COVID-19 situation. Fortunately, we received assistance from the Louisiana National Guard (LANG) during COVID-19. However, their assistance will come to an end at the beginning of August. We will need additional volunteers to help fill the gap of time LANG was able to provide

our organization. To read how we are ensuring the safety of our volunteers or to sign up to volunteer, please visit brfoodbank.org.

3 Give Food

With the increased need for food assistance, we are seeking an increase in food donations. Donations can be made right from your pantry at home or an organized food drive can be created. You can drop off your donated food items at our office. If you would like to host a food drive or for more information about giving food, please visit brfoodbank.org.

Thank you for helping us during the COVID-19 pandemic. The effects of this pandemic have impacted our community in several unexpected ways. No gift or effort is too small. If you have any additional questions, please contact the Food Bank at 225-359-9940 or email info@brfoodbank.org.



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE NEW TAX LAW

Learn how the CARES Act (Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economy Security Act), can empower you to support non-profits during COVID-19 with its new, financially beneficial tax laws. The impact of this pandemic is affecting many of our seniors, children and low-income families. Read below our summaries of the CARES Act. As always, please consult your personal tax professional.

► **\$300 Above-the-Line Deduction** (Must Take Standard Deduction)

If you take the standard deduction on your 2020 tax return (the one that you'll file in 2021), you can claim a brand new "above-the-line" deduction of up to \$300 for cash donations to charity you make this year. Donations to donor advised funds and certain organizations that support charities are not deductible. Normally, you have to itemize on Schedule A to get a tax break for charitable donations. However, in this case it's the other way around—if you itemize, you can't take this new deduction.

► **60% of AGI Limit Waived** (Must Itemize)

If you itemize on Schedule A of your tax return, you can claim a deduction for your charitable donations. However, the amount you can deduct for cash contributions is generally limited to 60% of your adjusted gross income (AGI). Any cash donations over that amount can be carried over for up to five years and deducted later.

The CARES Act lifts the 60% of AGI limit for cash donations made in 2020 (although there's still a 100% of AGI limit on all charitable contributions). That means itemizers can deduct more of their charitable cash contributions this year, which will hopefully boost charitable giving. As with the new above-the-line deduction, donations to donor advised funds and supporting organizations don't count.

Remember to consult your personal tax professional. For additional information, please contact the Food Bank at 225-359-9940 or email info@brfoodbank.org.

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 PIN WITH US

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