

MOBILE PANTRY PROGRAM PILOT SERVES NEW CLIENTS



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KATHY

The Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank is always trying to expand our outreach to serve those in our 11-parish service area. Recently, we began our Mobile Pantry Program with the goal of helping those in need that live in areas that are harder to serve than others. For instance, many food insecure individuals are not signed up to receive food from one of our agencies or do not have transportation to get to one of our agencies.

To begin this process, we have started a pilot of our new Mobile Pantry Program in Assumption Parish. We sat down with Kathy Williams of Pierre Part to learn more about her experience with our pilot.

Williams previously lived in the Baton Rouge area but after retiring, she moved to Pierre Part. For the first time in her life, she found herself unemployed and living solely on Social Security for income. When she heard about the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank bringing a new program to her area she was grateful for the help. “It’s something we needed,” said Williams.

Pierre Part was inundated with flood waters during the spring of 2019. The flood waters coupled with the food insecurity rate of 1 in 7 individuals left the community in need of other supplemental

food sources. Williams saw first-hand the tragedy her community experienced and those that were affected. “After a two-month span of high water, many were flooded or unable to get out of their homes due to road closures,” stated Williams. “You came in the nick of time, like saviors.”

When asked about the items she receives monthly in her box from the Food Bank, she made sure to note the surprise she felt. “I wasn’t expecting apples, meat, real cheese and even protein bars,” Williams explained. “Protein bars are something someone on a limited food budget won’t go out and buy.”

We hope that our Mobile Pantry Program pilot will continue to see success through the end of the year. With the help of donors, we would like to expand the program through 2020. Williams made sure to express that she used to donate to the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank when she was working in Baton Rouge. Before leaving the interview, Williams had a piece of advice for the holiday season. “If you don’t know what to get somebody, make a donation,” stated Williams. “Sometimes it is hard to swallow your pride and admit that you need some help but it needs to be done. But the people who are the most caring and most giving are in South Louisiana.”



COOKING MATTERS CLASS HELPING FOOD INSECURE SENIORS

The Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank is uniquely and effectively fighting to end hunger with our free Cooking Matters classes. Many groups have completed the classes but one of note is the Livingston Council on Aging. The seniors at this location learned valuable cooking skills through this six-week course that relate to their limited food budgets. With Louisiana ranked highest in food insecurity among seniors, this portion of classes is greatly needed.

Our nutrition services team appealed to all participants by asking questions related to the seniors' specific health conditions and recommending alternative ingredients to fit their dietary needs. As seniors, the participants do have previous knowledge for following recipes; however, the course does introduce some new tips and tricks.

For instance, 62-year-old Wanda Crittenden worked in a school cafeteria for

over 20 years but still learned some things of value. "I thoroughly enjoyed the class and found it beneficial even being a diabetic," Crittenden stated. "After 60 years, I didn't know cumin and turmeric could be used in so much stuff."

Other things participants may have already known, but didn't realize the importance. Specifically, the importance of reading the labels of their groceries for ingredients and their nutritional value.

Our nutrition services team allows for creativity in the recipes as well. The seniors will suggest other substitutions or additions to the recipes presented, with feedback from the instructors. The participants learned the pros and cons of those suggestions for their attempts to recreate the recipe at home as each participant received a bag of the ingredients used in each class recipe.

"A lot of us do not have transportation to get fresh fruits and vegetables," 64-year-old Brenda Stelly stated. "It helps not only getting the recipes but having the groceries given to us to use at home."

The seniors that participated in the class at Livingston Council on Aging spoke so highly of the lessons learned, that the location has asked for a second round of classes for the seniors that did not originally participate. We hope the classes continue to bring joy and important educational lessons to seniors in our service area. Cooking Matters is a program open to any adults in Livingston, Pointe Coupee and West Feliciana Parish. The goal of the program is to inspire families to make healthy and affordable food choices.

If you are interested in bringing the Cooking Matters classes to your area, please contact the Food Bank at (225) 359-9940 to learn more.

"A lot of us do not have transportation to get fresh fruits and vegetables. It helps not only getting the recipes but having the groceries given to us to use at home."

BRENDA



BEHIND THE SCENES OF OUR BACKPACK PROGRAM

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MIKE

You may have heard of the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank Backpack Program, but we thought it would be good to share more information with you on just how it works behind the scenes.

Just because school has started back up, that does not guarantee students will no longer be hungry. Our Backpack Program provides pre-K through fifth grade students with healthy meals over the weekends and holidays when free or reduced-priced lunches are not being received through the National School Lunch Program.

Distribution of the backpacks begins the first week of October and continues throughout the remainder of the school year, a total of 33 weeks. First, we give students and their families time to settle into the school routine. This allows the school and parents time to complete the required paperwork as well.

Once it is time for the program to begin, backpacks are filled with nutritious, child friendly food items by individual and group volunteers. They are discreetly sent home on Fridays and returned back to the school empty on Mondays to be refilled for the next Friday. During holiday breaks, students in the program receive a double portion of food to help eliminate the risk of missing meals during longer breaks away from school.

“The backpacks are sent home with students, and we find most students are proud to be in the program. They are not embarrassed or scared to talk about their experience,” said Mike Manning, President and CEO of the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank. “The kids look forward to receiving, what they call their, ‘groceries’ at the end of each week.”

In order to continuously improve the program, we send out a survey to be completed by kids, parents and school staff at the end of the school year.

With current funding, the program currently serves 14 elementary schools located in Ascension, East Baton Rouge and Pointe Coupee Parishes. Still, there are more than 25 schools on the waiting list. The program receives funding from individuals but primarily depends on grants and corporate donations.

Financial donations and volunteering to pack bags are just two ways you can help the Backpack Program expand to serve more schools. Learn more information about these ways you can help by calling 225-359-9940 or emailing info@brfoodbank.org.

TEACHING KIDS TO PICK A BETTER SNACK™

With school back in session, children and caregivers are faced with the important decision of a snack after school. Fruits and vegetables are very important in a child's diet. Still, they seem to be last on a young child's mind when they choose a "snack" for themselves. We have adapted a new program at the food bank called Pick a better snack™ to help with this challenge many face.

This program, funded by the Department of Children and Family Services, is a monthly nutrition education lesson delivered by a staff member from our nutrition services department. Each lesson introduces elementary students to a new fruit or vegetable in an interactive, age-appropriate manner. The fruit or vegetable is then tasted by the children as they give a "thumbs-up" or "thumbs-down" to show if they enjoyed it.



"The goal of our program is to increase daily consumption of fruits and vegetables among elementary age children," said Nutrition Services Manager Jordyn Barlow. "We hope these lessons can allow children the ability to make the right choice when choosing their snacks at home while also giving them a fun and informative lesson during their regular classroom routine."

Currently, our funding allows access to these lessons in Ascension, Livingston and Pointe Coupee Parish. If you would like more information on these classes in the above parishes, please contact 225-359-9940 or email info@brfoodbank.org.

"The goal of our program is to increase daily consumption of fruits and vegetables among elementary age children."

JORDYN



THINKING OF OTHERS AND GIVING TO THE FOOD BANK KNOWS NO AGE LIMITS

Many children yearn for the feeling of tearing into wrapping paper for their birthday, but for Elijah Griffin, he yearned for the end of hunger. Elijah asked his family and friends, through a mailed flyer and pre-stamped return envelope, to give just one dollar to the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank for his sixth birthday. "I don't want to see kids hungry when it's already hard to learn and focus," said Elijah. At time of publishing, Elijah had raised over \$50 which can equate to 150 meals. Elijah's parents have always fostered a giving spirit throughout his life. He and his parents are already making plans on how to bring awareness and support of the Food Bank for his next birthday.

Q&A

WITH BOARD MEMBER
EM LEBLANC COOPER



In part of an ongoing series, we will be sharing thoughts and ideas on the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank in a Q&A format so that you can get to know our board members better and also learn how we are working to better serve those in need. We recently sat down with board member Em Leblanc Cooper, Executive Director of Academic Strategy at Louisiana Department of Education.

Q: What are some of your hobbies?

A: Cooking, traveling, going to new restaurants or food festivals, reading, volunteering.

Q: What's one thing people may not know about you?

A: At the beginning of this year I had the opportunity to swim with my favorite animal, the manatee, in Cozumel.

Q: Why did you decide to join the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank's Board?

A: It is unacceptable that 1 in 5 kids in this area are food insecure and that we have a gap of 22 million meals. As a former principal I was able to see the significant impact the Food Bank made in the lives of my students and their families. I wanted to contribute to the impact this organization makes because we have a moral obligation as citizens to help our community grow and thrive, and the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank is doing just that.

Q: Why do you think the work of the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank is important to the community?

A: All of Baton Rouge must work together to move our city forward for everyone. The services the Food Bank provides to our families are an essential piece to making that happen.

Q: What excites you most about the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank's future?

A: There is a lot of innovation in outreach and impact forthcoming, and I am excited to be a part of those initiatives that will help more of our families.

Q: What can the community do to fight hunger?

A: Remove negative assumptions and look for opportunities to contribute. Everything impacts families. Two easy ways to be a part of the impact are:

1. Grab some friends and sign up on the website to volunteer at the Food Bank.
2. Setup a recurring monthly donation online. For just \$1 a month you can help provide 3 meals. You won't even notice it from your bank account.

PLANNING AHEAD: DIFFERENT WAYS TO GIVE BEFORE THE END OF YEAR

While we always accept gifts of food and funds throughout the year, there are some unique ways you can donate to the Food Bank that will help support our mission. Read on to learn more about how you can invest in the Greater Baton Rouge community to help those in need. For more information, contact us at (225) 359-9940. As always, please consult your personal tax professional before making gifts such as these.

Gift of Cash: You can deduct cash gifts up to 50 percent of adjusted gross income. On a \$10,000 cash gift in a 28 percent tax bracket, you save \$2,800 in taxes.

Appreciated Stock: Appreciated stock makes an excellent gift. You avoid all capital gain taxes, will receive a tax deduction, and can deduct it up to 30 percent of your adjusted gross income.

Bonds, Mutual Funds: Similar to cash in their tax treatment, these make excellent gifts. State, Municipal, and Government bonds are welcome gifts.

Bequest Through Will: One of the simplest ways is to give of your estate. You can make a gift bequest, after others have been provided for, of a dollar amount, specific property, a percentage of the estate, or what is left (remainder) to the organization.

Gift of Life Insurance: A simple way to make a significant future gift is to name the organization beneficiary to receive all, or a portion of the proceeds of an existing life insurance policy. You will receive a tax deduction for the cash surrender value, thus reducing your tax liability in the year of the gift.

Retirement Accounts: Retirement Account Funds (IRA's or company plans) beyond the comfortable support of yourself or loved ones may be given (like life insurance proceeds) to the organization by proper beneficiary designation.

HUNTERS FOR THE HUNGRY DONATES OVER 3,500 POUNDS TO FOOD BANK

In case you missed it, Hunters for the Hungry recently hosted "Clean Out Your Freezer Day" to benefit the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank. The event collected a total of 3,685 pounds of frozen meats for those we serve. That's over 500 pounds more than last year. We would like to send a big "Thank You" to all who made this possible.

AG FOOD SHOW DELIVERS OVER 28,000 POUNDS TO HELP STOCK SHELVES

Associated Grocers, Inc. recently held their Fall Food Show to feature new items to its retailers while giving back to the community. At the close of the event, Associated Grocers made its recurring donation of bulk food, product and floral arrangements but at double the volume as previous events. A donation of 28,724 pounds of food which could equate to 23,936 meals was made to the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank, the size of which will be a great help as we prepare for the holiday season.

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

Use hashtags #BRfamily #BRfoodbank



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