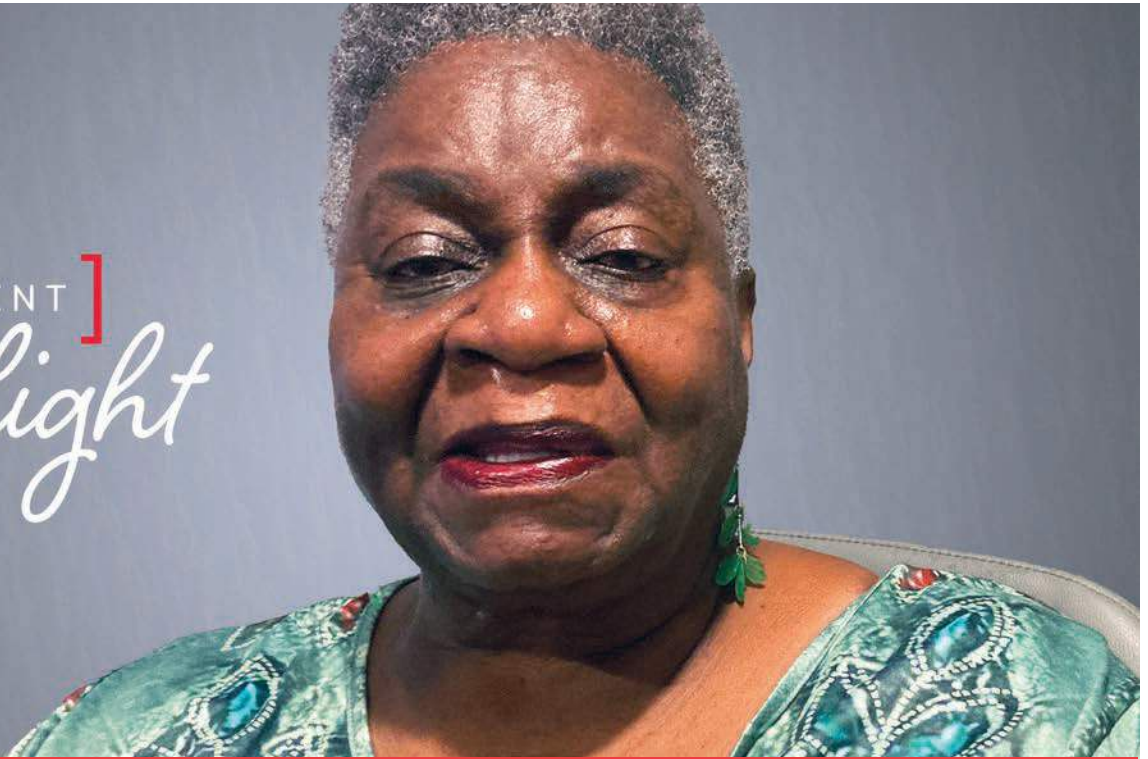


[CLIENT]
Spotlight



“In the summer we see more single moms coming in with kids, and it breaks your heart.”

LYNN

For Lynn Mearidy, life hasn't always been easy, but she's always had her faith to fall back on in tough times. Born and raised in North Baton Rouge, Lynn fell ill after working as an East Baton Rouge Parish Schools bus driver for 22 years. Eventually, she would need to use a wheelchair due to that illness, but she has not let that stop her from continuing to work and finding ways to help others.

Now a part-time security officer for DOTD on a fixed-income, Lynn reflects on her own struggles with food insecurity and how she came to a life of service as a volunteer at the Ever-Present God Ministries Food Pantry.

“I had grandchildren living with me at the time and we came over and received a box of food and everything. When I came in, there weren't too many people working, so I decided that I wanted to give something back. So, I started volunteering to help others,” Lynn recalls.

Seeing the need of others first-hand each week made Lynn want to do more and she has continued to give it everything she has, even catching a CATS bus from her home just to get to the pantry to volunteer on Wednesdays.

“In this area, a lot of people walk to the food pantry, and they really need it here. In the summer we see more single moms coming in with kids, and it breaks your heart. Sometimes people work but they still don't have enough to pay the bills and

put food on the table and so having this food available to fill the gaps is a blessing,” she said. “You can tell they really need the food because they are here at 7 o'clock in the morning waiting for us to start at 11 o'clock.”

Once able to help pack boxes when she was more mobile, Lynn now uses a wheelchair most of the time, she says. Despite the challenges, she still catches the bus so that she can greet people at the pantry, signing them in and giving them their cards to receive their food box.

“It hurts when we still have people coming, and we have to tell them that we are out of boxes. That's a depressing time for me,” Lynn said. “If I think that person is struggling more than me, I will give them my box because I believe God is going to provide for me even if I give mine to someone else who needs it more. I know I have an extra blessing coming if I help someone else.”

Lynn has been truly inspired by her pastor who runs the pantry.

“I thank God that I'm able to help people because I remember a time when I would have to feed my grandchildren and make sure they had enough before I fixed my own food because there just wasn't enough for all of us,” Lynn said. “This is what God wants you to do - help feed the poor and the hungry. The pastor that oversees the program is the type of person who has love for people and wants to help people. She has a lot of love in her heart for all people and that inspires me.”

LOUISIANA #1 IN CHILD & SENIOR HUNGER 121k+ FOOD INSECURE IN OUR AREA

Map the Meal Gap 2024 is the latest Feeding America report on food insecurity at the state and parish level from 2022 data.

With a sluggish economy and inflation on the rise, families in 2022 struggled with higher food and gas prices leading many to turn to food pantries for the first time. Seniors on fixed incomes were hit particularly hard as they had less financial resources for meals with higher household expenses.

In this most recent study, Louisiana leads the country in hunger among both children and seniors in our area.

Below are hunger statistics for our 11-parish service area.

11-PARISH DATA



22.9

MILLION MEAL GAP
IN OUR SERVICE AREA



1 IN 5

CHILDREN IN OUR AREA
ARE FOOD INSECURE



1 IN 7

INDIVIDUALS IN OUR AREA
ARE FOOD INSECURE



121,990

INDIVIDUALS IN OUR
AREA ARE FOOD INSECURE



43,860

CHILDREN IN OUR AREA
ARE FOOD INSECURE

POPULATION IMPACT

13.7%

FOOD INSECURITY
RATE LOCALLY



IS #1

IN THE COUNTRY WITH
THE HIGHEST FOOD
INSECURITY RATES
AMONG CHILDREN
AND SENIORS



Just \$1 can help provide up to to 3 meals. Donate at brfoodbank.org.

FOOD IS MEDICINE PROGRAM - A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO HEALTHCARE



At the intersection of food security and healthcare lies the Food is Medicine program, a collaborative effort that combines the expertise of food banks with the reach of healthcare facilities. The program ensures that individuals not only receive medical care but also the nutrition they need to lead healthier lives.

The Food is Medicine program is a resource embedded within healthcare appointments to meet food insecure individuals where they are. When patients visit a participating healthcare partner, they are assessed for various social determinants of health, including food security. If a patient screens positive for food insecurity, they are given the option to enroll in the Food is Medicine program. This enrollment process is straightforward, beginning with completing a registration form during their healthcare visit.

Before the conclusion of their appointment, patients receive a 15-pound bag of shelf-stable, health-forward foods to address their immediate nutritional needs. This initial assistance is just the beginning. Inside each bag, patients will find a flyer connecting them to our SNAP outreach coordinator, who can assist them in applying for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Additionally, information on how to access one of our local food pantries ensures they will receive regular food assistance.

Since its inception at the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank, Food is Medicine has seen remarkable growth and success. Launched three years ago, the program finished its first year in 2022 with 18 healthcare partners. Today, we are partnered with 54 healthcare facilities across the region, expanding our reach and impact.

By the end of 2023, the program had distributed 3,053 boxes of food, a number that has already been surpassed this year, with more growth anticipated as the program continues to evolve. In the first seven months of 2024 alone, the program has served 3,519 clients, averaging 531 individuals monthly.

Looking ahead, the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank Impact department remains committed to staying relevant and responsive to the evolving field of healthcare in an effort to continue to improve Food is Medicine. Research and development efforts are ongoing as the team explores new partnerships and innovative ways to enhance the program's impact.

By addressing food insecurity within the context of healthcare, the program offers a comprehensive solution that empowers individuals to live healthier, more nourished lives.



EXPANDING OUR COLD STORAGE: A COMMITMENT TO HEALTHIER FOOD OPTIONS

In mid-2020, we embarked on a significant expansion of our cold storage capacity, a move that has had a remarkable impact on our operations and the services we provide to the community. The expansion was prompted by a combination of factors, including the increasing volumes of fresh produce we were receiving and our renewed focus on offering healthier food options to our clients.

Before this expansion, our ability to store large quantities of fresh fruits and vegetables was limited, which constrained our efforts to meet the growing demand for nutritious food. Recognizing this, we more than doubled our cooler and freezer capacity, an investment that has transformed how we operate.

With the increased storage space, we now have the flexibility to acquire and receive significantly more fresh produce.

In 2023, we distributed over 2.5 million pounds of fruits and vegetables across our service area.

This has allowed us to diversify the food we offer, providing healthier options to the neighbors we serve. Additionally, the enhanced storage capacity means we can more readily accept large volume donations of produce from local farmers.

Improving our cold storage capacity enhanced our ability to respond to the community's needs. When the COVID-19 pandemic struck, the demand for food assistance surged, and the expansion enabled us to handle the additional volumes of food that were part of the pandemic response efforts.

The cold storage expansion has also opened new opportunities for us. With the ability to store tractor-trailer loads of fresh

produce, we are now better equipped to plan and manage our inventory, ensuring we have a steady supply of healthy food for distribution.

This expansion has strengthened our partnerships with local farmers and other food donors as well. By being able to accept and store larger donations, we have reinforced our role as a reliable partner in the food supply chain, helping to reduce food waste while ensuring that fresh, nutritious food reaches those who need it most.

Looking ahead, we anticipate distributing over 2.8 million pounds of fresh produce by the end of 2024 – an increase of 68% from 2021. Investing in our cold storage capacity enables us to fulfill our mission of nourishing our community with fresh, healthy food.

SEPTEMBER IS
HUNGER ACTION MONTH.

Price LeBlanc Family
dahlin'!

MATCH CHALLENGE

2X DOUBLE YOUR
DONATION

FOR HUNGER ACTION MONTH



1 IN 5

CHILDREN ARE
FOOD INSECURE

SCAN TO DONATE





Do you need guidance on your estate plan? Do you want to learn more about the tax benefits of a Donor Advised Fund or a donation directly from your IRA? Would you like help with planning your financial future and ours?

Did you know that only 32% of Americans have a will? Many Americans think they don't have enough assets, but it's important for all adults to consider making a will – it covers more than leaving financial assets behind.

- A will can distribute your assets.
- A will can control how healthcare decisions are made for you and family members.
- A will can outline who will look after your pets or children when you can no longer care for them.
- A will can provide crucial support to charities like the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank.

The Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank is excited to offer great resources on planning your financial future on our new gift planning website. Please visit this user-friendly giving website designed to inform you of tax-wise options for your charitable plans including Wills, Qualified Charitable Distributions, and Donor Advised Funds.

Visit myimpact.brfoodbank.org to learn more.

DON'T FORGET TO SHARE THE FUN!
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 Use hashtags **#BRfamily #BRfoodbank**



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