

SUMMER FOOD SHORTAGES NOW CRITICAL



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MIKE

As we think about children heading back to school this month, we know that many will be thankful to get back to receiving free or reduced cost meals through the schools. This summer has been a difficult one for both our operations and the local food pantries we support with food resources because demand has been high, and resources have been scarce.

A confluence of economic impacts and reductions in federal food assistance over the last year is continuing to cause substantial reductions in the amount of food the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank can provide to its member food pantries – directly impacting children, families and individuals who are food insecure. With sweeping changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program on the horizon, demand is expected to increase which will add stress to a hunger relief system already stretched thin.

Over the past year, the Food Bank has faced mounting pressure from all sides: a steady increase in the number of clients seeking help each month, ongoing inflation impacts, rising food costs, and a 40 percent reduction in federal food support since 2024. In addition, cuts to grant funding that once helped the Food Bank purchase food from small local farmers has further limited available resources.

We have reached a point where we have no choice but to once again reduce the amount of food per household we can distribute to our member agencies. The increased costs of acquiring food,

along with less available federal food resources, lead to empty shelves and a rationing of food resources until we can garner additional community support to meet the demands on the front lines of hunger.

Over the last 12 months, we have had to reduce the amount of food in each box for food clients from 25 pounds to 20 pounds. Now, with current inventories down and anticipated federal food allocations trending lower than expected, boxes have been reduced again to 15 pounds which means less food per household.

In short, this is a critical time for our mission because families will continue to need help to make ends meet and many more may be seeking assistance after any new SNAP cuts take effect. The fear is that there will not be enough food resources to meet that need. If there were ever a time where we are really going to need support from our community to help our friends and neighbors – now is that time. We hope that you will answer the call once again and we thank you for your ongoing support of our mission to serve others.

Michael G. Manning

President & CEO of the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank

WATCH VIDEO: 40 YEARS OF SERVING NEIGHBORS



Ed Collins
GBRFB Board Member, Lee Michaels

Celebrating *40* Years

SCAN QR CODE
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Hunger does not discriminate. It impacts people from all walks of life, and many individuals quietly struggle with food insecurity while going completely unnoticed. It could be the child that sits next to your daughter at school, the family who prays with you at your church, or the man who just lost his job and has no choice but to visit a food pantry to feed his family until he can find another job. Bottom line – *Hunger looks like all of us. Hope looks like you.*

To celebrate our 40th Anniversary milestone, we are inviting the community to act during Hunger Action Month in September by participating in our Give 40 for 40 Challenge. You can participate by signing up to volunteer for 40 hours, donating 40 pounds of food, or donating \$40 to the Food Bank.

Every \$40 you donate can provide food equivalent to 120 meals. Your donations in September will also be matched up to \$75,000 – thanks to a generous match from the Price LeBlanc Family.

As we celebrate 40 years of serving our 11-parish service area, the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank is sincerely grateful for the support we have received throughout the decades. We have come a long way from the first days in

1985 operating out of a parking lot at Victoria Baptist Church to distributing over 12.8 million meals to those in need last year – all from our 172,000+ square foot facility. The operation is now quite large, and our mission has been a journey filled with compassion, persistence, consistency, and an unwavering commitment to the cause.

We continue to look ahead to what is possible. We have continued to expand our reach and capabilities through strategic partnerships, dedicated volunteers, and generous donors. We are so thankful that our community of supporters have always been there for us, despite the challenges along the way. From the 2016 flood that damaged our warehouse to the COVID-19 pandemic and hurricane response, we have always been amazed at how you stepped up to help us fulfill our mission.

Today, we continue to operate providing food at no charge to over 140 local pantries who feed those in need on the front lines of hunger. The need continues to grow, and we still need your help. Join us for our Give 40 for 40 Challenge and help fight hunger in our community! Every gift makes a difference in someone's life. Get involved today by visiting brfoodbank.org/40for40 or calling 225-359-9940.



HUNGER DOESN'T TAKE A SUMMER BREAK

The summer is traditionally a time where families are heading to the beach, grilling by the pool, or participating in various summer camp activities. For kids, it can be an exciting time as they enjoy a much-needed break from school. But for 1 in 5 children in our 11-parish service area, the summer means one thing – they will go without food.

Per Feeding America's latest meal gap study released in May, the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank has more than 40,500 food insecure children living in our service area who do not have access to three meals a day. Without access to reduced-cost or free meals through schools, families struggle to adequately feed their children during the summer and have no choice but to visit a local food pantry to help make ends meet.

This is where the ripple effect begins. Increased demand from our network of 140+ member food pantries who are serving families on the front line

puts added strain on the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank inventory allocations, especially during a time when donations are generally slow.

"While planning for the summer demand is a routine practice for our operation, this year has been particularly difficult to proactively manage because it has been tough to assess the amount of support we anticipate receiving from federal feeding programs," said Mike Manning, President and CEO of the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank. "Any reductions in federal assistance means we must find ways to source that food elsewhere which will come at a higher cost per pound for us. In short, we will acquire less food overall."

Our partner agencies are already feeling the impact of the rising demand on the front lines.

"We see clients of all ages and ethnicity at our pantry regularly, and the numbers of people are trending up more now than it

has in the past," said Pastor Lauthaught Delaney, Jr. of St. Paul Baptist Church Pantry. "At the same time, we see that the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank isn't receiving the resources that they would normally have, and we are having to pull from other funding to make sure we can meet all of those needs."

With these summer struggles underway for both agencies and children, you may be asking yourself what you can do to help.

"The summer is a great time to volunteer in our warehouse or to host a food drive, and we always encourage people to get involved in the way that fits them best," said Manning. "But the biggest way you can help is by donating funds. Monetary donations are a tremendous help to our operation because we know we are going to have to purchase additional food resources to keep up with the demand coming from our member food pantries."

SUMMER MEALS MEET CHILDREN WHERE THEY ARE



Summer break is usually depicted as a carefree season for children—but for many children living in rural parts of our service area, it's the season when they lose access to one of their most dependable sources of daily nutrition.

While local school systems may offer summer feeding programs, many children in remote areas are unable to reach those sites due to transportation barriers, caregiver work schedules, or long distances. In these rural areas, 50 percent or more of the children qualify for free or reduced-price meals, highlighting how critical consistent access to food is.

One way the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank is bridging this gap is by distributing Sun Meals To-Go directly to rural communities throughout our service area. Thanks in part to funding from the USDA and the dedication of our partnering agencies and volunteers, we're able to provide school-age children, 18 and under, with seven days of breakfast and lunch—14 meals, per week.

Unlike many of the other summer meal programs that require children to eat on-site during limited hours, Sun Meals To-Go is a take-home option. Throughout the summer, caregivers can visit one of the designated 13 pickup locations, weekly, and receive one box of meals, per child, for them to enjoy at home—making the program far more accessible to those with limited time or transportation.

This is the second year the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank has participated in the program. Last year, we served 7,638 children and distributed 76,380 meals across six sites. This year, we have expanded to 13 sites across our 11-parish service area, and we are on track to distribute between 80,000 to 100,000 meals by summer's end.

Most of our distribution sites, 11 of 13, are libraries—making them natural community hubs for both learning and nourishment.

"The Sun Meals program has really impacted this community in many ways," says April Garrett, Children's Services Coordinator at Pointe Coupee Parish Library, "not just for the meals, but for everybody coming in to get library cards, check out books, and attend story times on distribution days."

"People are realizing they don't have library cards, so they're getting them for themselves and their children," Garrett explains. "They're checking out books, joining story time, doing art projects, and reading together. It's more than feeding kids food—it's feeding them literature, and all the great things libraries have to offer."

To learn more about ways you can get involved and help to fight hunger this summer, visit <https://brfoodbank.org/get-involved/>.

HUNGER

can look like anyone.

HOPE

looks like you.



There are many faces of hunger - children, seniors, maybe even the person sitting next to you at church. The simple fact of the matter is that hunger can look like anyone. Hope looks like you.

September is Hunger Action Month and every dollar you give that month will have double the impact in meals for those who are food insecure.

Price LeBlanc Family
dah'lin'!

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CORPORATE PARTNERS STEP UP TO FUND CRITICAL FEEDING PROGRAMS



Nutrien directly supports the Food Bank through financial contributions, volunteer efforts, and food donations, which play a key role in ensuring our neighbors have access to nutritious meals. Nutrien has demonstrated its commitment to fighting food insecurity with a generous \$600,000 contribution to support food programs over the last two years in the parishes where it operates. This donation helps ensure that individuals and families in Ascension, Iberville, and Pointe Coupee parishes have access to nutritious food through our mobile distributions, Farm Fresh Healthy Food Initiative, and Backpack program.



Walmart's "Fight Hunger. Spark Change." campaign directly benefits the Food Bank by raising funds through customer donations and corporate matching. In addition, Walmart's food rescue program enables us to recover nutritious food from local stores that would otherwise go to waste, helping to fight hunger sustainably. Walmart has supported the Food Bank through extensive grant funding, enabling our partner agencies to pick up retail donations and further preserve food items so they reach our neighbors while still fresh.



Mosaic is a supporter of our Backpack Program, which provides children with a bag of nutritious, easy-to-prepare food to take home on weekends and holidays when school meals are not available. Mosaic's support ensures that children facing food insecurity don't have to go hungry when school is out. Their team also spends time volunteering in our warehouse and assisting with local distributions in their community.



Louisiana Blue holds a give-back event on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, a National Day of Service. They host a campaign encouraging individuals to donate money, food, or time during the month leading up to MLK Day. The campaign aims to increase awareness of food insecurity and encourage people to get involved in making a difference. During the National Day of Service, Louisiana Blue brings hundreds of individuals to our warehouse to volunteer and pack meals for families in need.

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