

NOVEMBER 2021

food for thought



A time of
THANKS

 **SECOND
HARVEST
FOOD BANK**
FEEDING SOUTH LOUISIANA

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AMERICA



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Second Harvest's President and CEO, Natalie Jayroe, and Claire Babineaux-Fontenot, Feeding America CEO and Louisiana native, serve meals at the Matthew 25:35 food pantry in Destrehan.

A Message from Natalie

Once Again, You Make Our Disaster Response Possible

Hurricane Ida landed as the second-strongest storm ever to hit Louisiana. Across our service area, more than a million people lost power. Many lost all the food in their fridges, many lost jobs, and a heartbreakingly number of people lost their homes.

Our staff and volunteers were able to begin our response immediately after Ida's winds had died down, and as soon as roads were passable we were delivering food and supplies. The hardest-hit communities have many, many months of recovery ahead and we will be there every step of the way.

Since Ida's landfall on August 29, Second Harvest has delivered millions of pounds of water, food, and disaster supplies across fourteen parishes. Our Community Kitchen ramped up yet again for emergency response, producing thousands of meals each day to deliver to storm survivors and first responders. Immediate aid went out in our pre-packed disaster boxes. Seeing the tractor-trailer loads of non-perishable food and water we've received from Feeding America, partner food banks from around the country, and other donors has been truly humbling.

The numbers tell us about the level of response, but the human impacts are hard to put into words. Once again, so many of our neighbors are facing months of rebuilding their homes and communities. Thousands of people who have never had to reach out for help before suddenly find themselves needing to turn to a food pantry for the first time, and we are ready to welcome them with open arms and an open heart.



Just as we are responding to Hurricane Laura in the Lake Charles area more than a year later, we will be assisting Hurricane Ida victims for a long, long time. We feel privileged to be in a position to render aid to anyone in need, because every one of us has been there before. At some point in our lives, we've all had to ask for help. After this latest storm, we're honored to pay that help forward in any way possible.

Your financial support is what makes all this possible. We are grateful for you and all of our donors who trust Second Harvest to serve our neighbors in times of disasters.

Natalie Jayroe
President & CEO





Thank You for Helping Families like Tia's

When Hurricane Ida slammed into Houma, Tia Williams could have been scared. When the hurricane damaged the roof of her home, she could have been angry. But those weren't options. For Tia, positivity was the only option.

"We still have a lot to be grateful for," the single mom of two said. "We could be a lot worse off." Tia is remaining positive in the face of tremendous challenges. When we met Tia two weeks after the storm, she was living in her car with 6-year-old Logan and 5-year-old Londyn. "I have an ice chest in my car," Tia said. "We're trying to get by right now."

Despite Tia's situation, she wanted to help her community in the wake of the storm. So, she and her kids volunteered at a food distribution in Houma. "I still have time to give back," she said. "That's an important lesson for the kids, too." Tia helped distribute hot meals, fresh produce, and other supplies to families driving up to the pantry. Logan and Londyn helped by giving out bags of cold grapes.

Hurricane Ida has been the most recent in a growing list of challenges that Tia has overcome. She'd been a bartender at a local restaurant for six years when the business closed because of the pandemic. Then, she started her own bartending business, working numerous events in the community. But since the hurricane, those events have been canceled and work has dried up.

But for Tia, positivity rules. And even though she has a lot of challenges to overcome, she also knows she's up to the task — and she's already looking to the future. "I'm looking forward to me and the kids getting a new house, maybe relocating, maybe going back to school. There are a lot of possibilities."

You're Giving Hope to Communities Recovering from Hurricane Ida

Sisters Annie and Sheila have lived in Montegut their entire lives. And after Hurricane Ida, they could hardly recognize their hometown. "I don't think there is a livable house here anymore," Sheila said.

While many homes were destroyed, there was at least one place that survived the Category 4 hurricane: the Live Oak Baptist Church, a Second Harvest partner food pantry. That's where Sheila and Annie were after the storm, preparing to distribute water, food, and supplies to anyone who needed them.

"Without power, everyone has lost all the food they have," Annie said. "People have been texting, saying 'thank you so much for the food.' The church sustained minor water damage from the heavy rain. But like before the hurricane, it remains a hub for the community. "We're planning to use the church as a storage area for hurricane relief supplies and a place for people looking for a place to live who have lost their homes," Sheila said.

If it weren't for Sheila, Annie would be among the residents looking for a place to stay. Her home was destroyed in the hurricane, so she's been living with her sister, helping take care of Sheila's kids. "I don't know what I'd be doing without my sister," Annie said.

As work continues to clean up the community, Sheila and Annie see one sign of what's to come. "The church being saved like it was gives this community hope," Sheila said. "And people seeing the doors open and the food here gives the people hope, too."

Your gift to Second Harvest is giving hope to many communities across South Louisiana recovering from the devastation of Hurricane Ida. Thank you for your generosity.



Despite Personal Losses, Second Harvest Staff are on the Frontlines of Disaster Response



Of the tens of thousands of local residents still recovering from Hurricane Ida, some of them are Second Harvest's own employees.

Second Harvest Director of Operations Mamie Jackson oversees a staff of 44, including drivers, warehouse specialists, and those who manage all the logistics of delivering 50+ million pounds of food annually to people in need.

Mamie was one of fourteen Second Harvest team members facing catastrophic storm damage. An oak tree left a massive hole in the roof of her Kenner home. "Water came in from everywhere," she told us. "It was like dominoes, an upstairs bedroom collapsed, then a closet here and there, and then everything crashed down into the bedroom below."

She rode out the storm at her home. "We just sat there and watched it all fall apart. I knew we had to open the food bank as soon as possible, so we stayed through the storm. And then, the water came. I could not believe so much water could just be blown into one home. We used all the towels, blankets, sheets in the house to try to stop it and get it up, but it was a losing battle."

Despite the destruction to her home, as soon as the storm passed Mamie immediately began assessing the impacts to Second Harvest and how fast she could get trucks of

food, water, and supplies on the road. Many long days followed, overseeing the distribution of millions of pounds of disaster supplies, all while trying to save her home.

The first days and weeks of any disaster response are the most intense and require working long hours every day. "Our team has been beyond outstanding. Everyone lost power at home for a week or more, and many had extremely serious damage of their own. We helped any way we could, air mattresses in offices until we could find better accommodations for them, help in finding fuel, things like that. Every storm is different, but my people have been through this before. They know how to work long, hard hours, but they also know when to step away and take a breath to keep going."

"I think about people not as fortunate as us, without enough insurance for something like this, and maybe living close to the edge already. I do feel fortunate, but I'm honestly really, really tired. I just stare at everything we still need to do and think, 'Damn.' "

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Tomorrow's Harvest: Help Fight Hunger for Years to Come

While we need your support today more than ever, planned gifts will ensure Second Harvest is here for decades to come. You can make a lasting impact by naming Second Harvest as a beneficiary of a will, trust, life insurance policy, or retirement or savings account.

If you have already included us in your estate plans, please let us know so we can thank you and include you in our legacy society, "Tomorrow's Harvest."

For more information, please contact Director of Development Heather Sweeney at hswweeney@secondharvest.org or 504-729-2839.



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To learn more or to make a donation to Second Harvest Food Bank visit www.no-hunger.org

