

NOVEMBER 2022

# food for thought



**Our Daily Bread  
volunteers  
prepare food  
boxes for a  
distribution in  
Hammond.**

## A Time for Hope



**SECOND  
HARVEST  
FOOD BANK**  
FEEDING SOUTH LOUISIANA

A MINISTRY OF  
ARCHDIOCESE OF  
NEW ORLEANS

FEEDING  
AMERICA



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## A Message From Natalie | 40 Years of Fighting Hunger



Food brings us together, especially during the holidays. My favorite Thanksgivings were the ones where our family — parents, children, and grandparents — gathered around the table and reflected on how fortunate we were to have that opportunity to be together and

to have enough good food to eat. There were also times when we weren't sure where our Thanksgiving dinner was going to come from. We were fortunate that people helped us, and I'm grateful to be in a place where I see people helping each other all the time.

With the holiday season around the corner, I find myself thinking a lot about what I'm thankful for. For one, we just had the grand opening of the Gayle and Tom Benson Food and Nutrition Center in Jefferson Parish last month, which, thanks to generous capital campaign donors, gives us more capacity to feed more neighbors in South Louisiana. And we also held a ribbon-cutting event in Lake Charles at the new Second Harvest Community Kitchen at McNeese State University, which will help us provide prepared meals for children, seniors, and disaster relief efforts in Southwest Louisiana.

I'm also thankful we're implementing a federal grant with food banks across the state to purchase millions of

dollars of fresh produce, seafood, and other products from local farmers, fishers, and food producers. We'll be working with small farmers by providing technical assistance so they can grow their businesses and connect to opportunities to thrive. We're building assets for farmers, helping to strengthen Louisiana's food economy, and collaborating with a lot of other partners — all of which is extremely exciting.

Most of all, I'm thankful for you. With your support, Second Harvest can help families, children, and seniors who are trying to make ends meet despite the high prices of food, gas, and household goods. Neighbors whose budgets are stretched beyond their limits. South Louisiana residents who are recovering from hurricane damage. In fact, over the past year we've seen a 5% increase month over month of people who need our help. That all makes your support as important as ever.

Please read through this edition of *Food for Thought* and see the difference you're making. Then, I hope you'll consider a special holiday gift to help even more neighbors in need.

  
Natalie Jayroe  
President & CEO

## You're Fighting Inflation With Gifts of Food and Love

Marylyn, of Hammond, suddenly found herself with much less money for her family's food budget.

"I'm careful with bills, I don't have credit card debt, but then prices all seemed to suddenly go up at the same time, and then my electric bill shot from \$125 to \$386 overnight," she says. "It was just hard to visit the grocery store."

Thankfully, Marylyn is able to get help every week from Our Daily Bread, a Second Harvest partner food pantry located in Hammond. "Last year with Hurricane Ida, it killed me to keep a generator going, but we got by. But now, if a storm comes, I know we can't afford that again."

Marylyn is retired, but she's working part time at a local school to help make ends meet. She's grateful for the nutritious food she receives from the distributions. "It's me and my son and grandson," she explains. "The food we get here goes such a long way and makes such a great difference. Jesus will make things right, and I know he's working through the people here."

Our Daily Bread Director John Hair has seen the immediate impacts of inflation and the spike in food and fuel costs and household bills. "We continue to see new families and grandparents like Marylyn coming in, and more people who are working full time, who never visited a food pantry, and now need help getting through the month," he explains.



"Today, we met a family where a man came through the line, and his head was down, and he and his wife are raising a grandchild with a monthly income of \$800 a month," John says. "He showed me his utility bill, which was nearly \$400. He didn't know what to do and has been back several times to get enough food to just get by."

Too many families in South Louisiana have been struggling for nearly three years. The COVID-19 pandemic, ongoing hurricane recovery, and now the devastating effects of inflation have caused enduring hardship.

That's why the ongoing support of generous friends is so important. Your gifts to Second Harvest make it possible for our trucks to deliver much-needed food to hundreds of food pantries like Our Daily Bread across South Louisiana.

**Thank you for your kindness and compassion for our neighbors facing hunger. You can make such a difference for families this holiday season.**



## Looking Toward the Future: Doubling Second Harvest's capacity to serve our neighbors facing hunger

October marked the unveiling of Second Harvest Food Bank's Gayle and Tom Benson Food and Nutrition Center. The Center, based at Second Harvest's 700 Edwards Avenue location in Jefferson Parish, caps a \$15 million fundraising effort launched in 2018 to fund much-needed renovations.

The vision to grow the food bank's facilities began in 2005 when we were responding to hurricanes Katrina and Rita from a 30,000-square-foot warehouse in Jefferson Parish. President & CEO Natalie Jayroe compares this time to operating a Walmart Supercenter out of a 7-Eleven. The food bank grew to meet our community's needs by opening a Second Harvest facility in Lafayette in 2006 and purchasing a 200,000-square-foot warehouse in Harahan in 2010.

It took another decade to fully realize the funding to make these renovations possible. Major supporters like Gayle Benson, Cathy and Morris Bart, and many others helped us reach our goal for this fundraising effort.

These improvements will allow Second Harvest to increase capacity to more than double our impact and serve more people in need in South Louisiana. Some of the major improvements include a new 200,000-square-foot roof, expanded areas for volunteers, climate control in the warehouse, additional cold storage capacity, and a new two-story office structure in previously underutilized space.

"It was such an ambitious expansion for us, with so many moving parts," Natalie says. "And the work began in the middle of COVID, and continued

on through our response to multiple hurricanes, tornadoes, and floods. Our staff and volunteers were such troopers as we watched it grow, piece by piece."

The Harahan warehouse will continue operating as the main facility for our 23-parish service area, while the food bank is also moving forward this year with an expansion of warehouses, offices, and kitchens in Lake Charles, Houma, and Acadiana.

Second Harvest VP and Chief Operating Officer Elisha Darcey-Pike says the expansion makes the food bank even more accessible to those in need. "When we purchased the building in 2009, we faced the issue of upgrading an old building to have better wheelchair ramps and railings, a very intensive and expensive process in an old warehouse, on a very limited budget. We are so glad to have full access available now, including an elevator to the new second-floor workspaces.

"Our growth over the last 10 years reflects us trying to keep up with the increasing need in our communities. If this Edwards Avenue building could talk, it would tell the story of hundreds of millions of pounds of food coming and going through its doors, staff persevering through many disasters, and the countless South Louisiana residents fed by the work happening under this roof."

**On behalf of our staff, volunteers, board, and the people we serve, our deepest thanks to everyone who helped turn the Second Harvest Gayle and Tom Benson Food and Nutrition Center from a vision to a reality.**

## Tomorrow's Harvest Society

### You can provide meals today ... and hope for tomorrow

Tomorrow's Harvest Society celebrates supporters who are committed to leading the fight against hunger in South Louisiana. When you join the Tomorrow's Harvest Society, you impact the future of Second Harvest by including us in your legacy giving plans. By thoughtfully arranging your gift now, you are ensuring a tomorrow that sees fewer neighbors with food insecurity. Interested in making a planned gift to Second Harvest or learning more about your options? Contact Heather Sweeney at **504-729-2839** or **hsweeney@secondharvest.org**.







## Your Gifts Feed Healthy Futures: School pantries provide children and their families with the nourishing food they need to learn and grow

At 16 schools across South Louisiana, school-based pantries provide nutritious food to some of the most at-risk children and families in our communities.

"We've really grown the number of school pantries," says Second Harvest Children's Programs Manager Tanya O'Reilly. "They provide a stable source of food, especially for families who may not be able to make it to a traditional food pantry during work hours."

A long-term partner of Second Harvest in the school pantry program is Scott Middle School in Lafayette. Principal Venus Soileau says she sees the direct impact hunger has on students daily.

"The goal is to just make sure our students have everything they need to be able to come to school and focus on what's important," she says. "It's food, but it also includes personal hygiene products as well. School has to be more than just learning; it's helping kids with whatever they need to be able to focus on learning."

In St. Landry Parish, the Second Harvest school pantry at Palmetto Elementary School has operated for many years. "Many students cook for themselves, so we make sure that what they're taking home is something

they can handle preparing, like microwaved meals," says Principal Kellie Rabalais. "Sadly, a lot of children rely upon the free and reduced meal plan as their main source of proper eating, and this pantry helps us expand that greatly."

Second Harvest's newest school pantry is at South Cameron High School, a K-12 school located in a community devastated by Hurricane Laura two years ago. Many of the community's institutions have not returned after the storm, leaving the residents who remain with limited resources to meet their basic needs. We're partnering with South Cameron High School and CHRISTUS Ochsner SWLA Foundation to provide much-needed groceries to students and their families, including shelf-stable staples, fresh produce, dairy, and meat.

**Thank you for supporting Second Harvest with your financial gifts, which make vital programs like school-based pantries possible. By providing proper nutrition, you are helping to give children a better chance of success at both home and school. Remember, every \$1 you give can help provide 4 meals.**



## contact us

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To learn more or to make a donation to Second Harvest Food Bank, visit [no-hunger.org](http://no-hunger.org).

