

"I Want To Give Back"

Located 70 miles north of New Orleans, the small town of Franklinton has 3,600 residents, and more than a quarter of the population lives below the poverty line.

But where there is a dire need, a beacon of hope exists. The Washington Parish Food Bank, a Second Harvest partner food pantry, serves 500 families every month.

Thanks to friends like you, Second Harvest has been able to keep the pantry shelves stocked by providing 200,000 pounds of food each year. But it is the dedicated volunteers who truly bring this mission to life. When the Second Harvest truck arrives, they stand ready to unload the nourishing supplies.

William has been coming to the Washington Parish Food Bank since it opened, first as a client and then as a volunteer. "I want to give back," he says.

William is not alone. Beverly spoke about a woman, Cecilia, who came to the food bank at the height of the pandemic with her 6-year-old daughter. Cecilia's husband had just died of COVID-19, and she came to the pantry in tears.

"She was inconsolable," Beverly remembers. "We told her that she was going to get through it. She kept coming back for help. And now, she's a volunteer."

Beverly says that many of the neighbors they serve are seniors who are facing the high cost of groceries, medication, and health care.

The Washington Parish Food Bank is a choice pantry, which means it offers neighbors a choice of products



Beverly and William help bring Washington Parish Food Bank's mission to life!

they'd like to use. The people who come here for support are able to pick items from a shelf, just like they would if they were at a grocery store.

Through the generosity of donors like you, Second Harvest can address food insecurity in rural towns like Franklinton. And partners like the Washington Parish Food Bank can ensure families and seniors receive nourishment, compassion, and the opportunity to rebuild their lives.

Together, we can make a lasting impact in our community, one life at a time.

FEBRUARY 2024

food for thought



**EARLY BIRDS
FLOCK TO HELP**
Our volunteers make
sure meals are ready
to roll for seniors.

See story on Page 3.

**\$1 CAN
HELP
PROVIDE
3 MEALS!**

How To Make an Even Bigger Impact

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.

**SECOND
HARVEST
FOOD BANK**
FEEDING SOUTH LOUISIANA



contact us

700 Edwards Ave.
New Orleans, LA 70123-3121
504.734.1322

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



**A Time
for Hope**



**SECOND
HARVEST
FOOD BANK**
FEEDING SOUTH LOUISIANA



no-hunger.org

A Message From Natalie



Recent statistics from Feeding America estimate that 5.5 million people age 60 and older experience food insecurity in the United States. That's 1 out of every 14 seniors across the country.

Although every state is home to older adults who face food insecurity, Louisiana has the

highest rate of senior hunger in the nation. In fact, 13.4% of our state's seniors face hunger. Many of our older neighbors face obstacles accessing and preparing food, including lack of transportation, living in food deserts, or coping with a disability or chronic health problem that makes it difficult to safely cook or drive to a grocery store.

Too often, seniors living on fixed incomes face impossible choices. Do they pay for prescription medications or do they buy food? Do they pay their utility bill or buy groceries? These are choices none of us

should have to make!

Here at Second Harvest Food Bank, we are working hard to relieve the burden of hunger from our older neighbors, but there's still a lot of work to do. I'm sure you share my passion to ensure that seniors do not face hunger in the coming years ... starting now!

We're focusing on older adults in this edition of *Food for Thought*. As you read through these stories, please keep the seniors in your own life — including in your community — in mind. Then please take a moment to give your best gift to Second Harvest to help provide nourishing food for seniors in need.

Remember, every \$1 can help provide 3 meals. Thank you for your kindness and compassion.

Thank you!

Natalie Jayroe
President & CEO



Sanctuaries of Support Senior centers are much more than a place for meals

Senior centers bustle with activity five days a week — from card games to crafting to fitness classes. In every parish, senior centers provide social connection and a daily nutritious meal.

Second Harvest prepares and delivers 1,800 meals per day to seniors, in partnership with the Councils on Aging in Jefferson, St. Bernard, Calcasieu, and Jefferson Davis parishes. These meals are a lifeline for seniors, who shouldn't have to choose between food and essential needs like medicine.

Second Harvest staff recently met with some of the seniors who benefit from this program.

Among them was Catherine at the Marrero/Harvey Senior Center. Her laughter was infectious as she recounted tales of being a lifelong New Orleanian.

"I love the meals! They are always nutritious and very tasty," said Catherine. "I also like how they are low sodium, given that I have a strict diet."

Then, there was Alexander, a 100-year-old veteran who enlisted in the Army two weeks before the attack on Pearl Harbor. He has volunteered at the center for decades.

"I started working here after I retired," shared Alexander. "I used to deliver the meals every day for years, and now I enjoy the meals and support the center by helping here in the dining room."

At the Jefferson Davis Council on Aging in Jennings, we met Karllis. He loves talking to people, and his daily visit to the senior center is the highlight of his day. Karllis is grateful for the meals and the fact that he is no longer



Karllis is grateful for the meals and friendship.

isolated at home and feels like he's part of a family again.

Every meal served is a step toward alleviating hunger and ensuring that no senior has to face their twilight years alone or agonize over the choice between food and medical bills.

Your support means so much to the thousands of seniors who rely on Second Harvest every day for a hot meal or box of groceries. Thank you for making a difference!

Early Birds Flock To Help We're so grateful for our volunteers — and for friends like you who support the programs that provide meals for seniors

Every weekday morning, the Reily Foods Kitchen is in full swing by 6 a.m. On this particular day, music is playing in the background. The kitchen staff has already prepared the shrimp creole, broccoli, and cherry cobbler that will be served to seniors in Jefferson Parish that day. And the kitchen is buzzing with activity.

Nearly 20 volunteers are on-site, ready to serve and package the meals that must be ready for delivery by 8:30 a.m. You may be wondering what kind of people come to volunteer in the kitchen so early in the morning. We have quite a few dedicated early birds!

One is Julia, a retired schoolteacher from Marrero. She is originally from New Jersey, but moved to Southeast Louisiana to teach first grade. Over the years, she also taught kindergarten and preschool. She loved working with young children, and today, she loves working in the kitchen and helping others.

Dianne, a retired administrator, is another early riser who comes in to help. Originally from St. Bernard Parish, she moved to Metairie after Hurricane Katrina. Dianne



Dianne and Julia enjoy preparing meals for older neighbors in Jefferson Parish.

began volunteering at Second Harvest during her time at Shell, where she worked for more than 30 years. Now she's able to spend her mornings making a difference for older neighbors.

We also have Henry from Terrytown. He's a physics major in his junior year at Louisiana State University. Henry wants to join the technology industry when he graduates. But right now, he loves volunteering during his breaks.

Are you an early riser with a desire to give back to your community? Second Harvest needs you! Even if you like to sleep in, we have shifts later in the morning and in the afternoon. Go to no-hunger.org/volunteer and sign up!

Birthday Boxes of Joy How one child turned his birthday into a joyful occasion for others

Nine-year-old Ryder has always looked forward to his birthdays with excitement, but this year was different. He had just finished reading a book about the power of paying it forward, which left a deep impression on his young heart. From that moment on, Ryder knew he wanted to do something meaningful for his upcoming birthday — something that would make a difference in the lives of other children.

One evening, while sitting at the kitchen table with paper and markers, Ryder's eyes lit up with an idea. He decided that instead of receiving gifts for himself, he wanted to give back to kids who might not have as much to celebrate. With the unwavering support of his mom, he hatched a plan.

Ryder's birthday invitations had a unique request: instead of bringing presents for him, guests were asked to make donations to support his new project. Friends, family, and neighbors were touched by his selflessness. They contributed generously, and Ryder's piggy bank grew heavier with each passing day.

With these donations, Ryder created special birthday boxes filled with everything needed to make a birthday cake — cake mix, frosting, sprinkles, colorful balloons,

candles, and even a can of soda. He knew that not all kids had access to eggs, so the soda could be used as an egg substitute in the cake recipe. It was his way of ensuring that every child, no matter their circumstances, could experience the joy of a birthday celebration.

Ryder and his mom delivered the birthday boxes to Second Harvest, and his act of kindness created ripples of happiness throughout the building. His heart swelled with joy as he imagined the smiles and laughter these boxes would bring.

We're grateful for Ryder's selfless donation to Second Harvest and hope his story will be an inspiration to our community.

