

"Helping others just
Makes You Feel Good"

Matthew 25:35 is a Second Harvest pantry partner run by the St. Charles United Methodist Church in Destrehan. What started as a small food pantry helping only a handful of families quickly grew into a big distribution center, assisting more than 300 families a month.

Maryanne is the dedicated director of Matthew 25:35. At an age when most people hope to be retired, Maryanne puts in 80-hour work weeks and shows no signs of slowing down.

"We try to change people's lives. So we do a lot more than just handing out food." Maryanne says they also help through educational programs and provide purpose for community members who volunteer their time.

One widowed volunteer says that after losing her husband, working at the pantry "saved her life."

Another volunteer, Paula, began helping out at Matthew 25:35 when her grandchildren grew older and no longer needed her every day for childcare. She missed being busy, and a friend gave her the idea to volunteer at a food pantry.

Seeing families' faces as they gathered essentials was profound. "It fulfilled a spot in my life," Paula reflected.



"Helping others, seeing their smiles ... it just makes you feel good."

For Maryanne and Paula, the pantry is more than a job or a volunteer shift. Every day they see the impact they are making in their community.

You can make an impact in your community, too, when you give a gift today! Thank you for your generosity!

FEBRUARY 2025

food for thought



NURTURING VEGETABLES AND GENEROSITY

Zoie's Farm is a valued part of Second Harvest's Farmers' Initiative

See the story on page 3.

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

Plan Today

How to make an even bigger impact

The 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 can ensure 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@no-hunger.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.

Second Harvest's email addresses have changed from @secondharvest.org to @no-hunger.org. For questions about donations, contact us at givetoday@no-hunger.org.

A Time for Hope



**SECOND
HARVEST
FOOD BANK**
FEEDING SOUTH LOUISIANA



no-hunger.org

A Message from Natalie



At Second Harvest Food Bank, we’re committed to ensuring our neighbors have reliable access to nutritious food. Part of that commitment includes supporting local food systems and family-owned farms.

I am inspired by the story of the Fontenette family and Zoie’s Farm and their dedication to farming and local produce. Second Harvest partners with small farms across Louisiana, just like Zoie’s, to purchase fresh produce for our neighbors.

This edition of *Food for Thought* also focuses on senior hunger in our communities. Louisiana has the highest rate of senior hunger in the entire country, with 14% of our elderly neighbors facing food insecurity. That means 1 in 7 Louisiana seniors struggle to get enough to eat!

For our elderly neighbors living on fixed incomes, every day can bring impossible decisions. Should they purchase their lifesaving medications or buy groceries for the week? Should they keep their heat on during cold nights or stock their pantry? No one should face such choices — especially those who have given so much to our communities over the years.

I ask you to think about the older adults in your own life. Then consider making your most generous gift today to provide nourishing meals to seniors in need.

Remember: **Every \$1 you donate can help provide 3 meals to someone facing hunger.** Your compassion and generosity make a real difference in the lives of our elderly neighbors. Thank you!

Gratefully,

Natalie Jayroe
President & CEO



A Box Full of Hope You help us provide so much more than food to seniors and families

On a sunny Monday morning, a line of cars snakes around the parking lot of Celebration Church. Among them is Ms. Pat, who waits patiently, ready to receive her monthly box of food, as Second Harvest employees and volunteers check in cars. “This box really helps me get through the month,” she says with a warm smile.

Ms. Pat’s food box is part of the Senior Box program, a lifeline for seniors with limited income. In partnership with the USDA’s Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), Second Harvest ensures that each month, seniors receive a 30- to 40-pound box filled with essential groceries. These boxes include nutritious items like canned fruits and vegetables, dried beans, rice, shelf-stable beef stew, cereal, juice, and cheese — about 20 items in total.

Ms. Pat and her granddaughter chat with the volunteers as they load the box into the back seat of her car. “With rent and groceries skyrocketing, my daughter and granddaughter recently moved in with me,” she shares, highlighting the challenges many families face today. “This is my fourth month receiving this box, and I honestly don’t know what I would do without it. I’m just so grateful.”



Ms. Pat is grateful for the food she receives for herself and her family.

Thanks to support from the USDA and generous donors like you, the Senior Box program provides essential food to more than 20,000 seniors throughout South Louisiana. Each box provides sustenance, hope, and community connection to our senior neighbors who need it most. For Ms. Pat, it’s a reminder, that even in tough times, kindness and support are just around the corner.

Thank you for your gifts that make programs like the Senior Box program possible!

Meet the Family Behind Zoie’s Farm

From dawn until dusk, the family behind Zoie’s Farm pours love into every seed they plant on their two acres of land in Arnaudville. Jarvis, Brandy, and Zoie Fontenette are growing food, nurturing a connection to the land, and passing down a cherished tradition to the next generation.

At just nine years old, Zoie is the heartbeat of this family farm. She’s up early in the morning — planting seeds, harvesting crops, and learning the ropes of sustainable farming. Zoie is already a budding farmer and loves vegetables. Her favorite? Kohlrabi — which she will take a bite of straight from the earth!

The Fontenettes are committed to growing vegetables like kohlrabi and cucuzza squash, which you rarely find in grocery stores today. For every “ancient” crop they grow, they are bringing back the flavors our ancestors cherished. These aren’t just vegetables for this family; they’re helping us eat for wellness and a connection to our past.

Zoie’s Farm is just one of many small, family farms in Louisiana that participates in Second Harvest’s Farmers’ Initiative. Second Harvest purchases crops from Zoie’s Farm to distribute through our programs and partners to ensure more of our neighbors have access to fresh, local produce. Our partnership with Zoie’s Farm is part of the

effort to build a sustainable and thriving local food system.

Thank you for helping Second Harvest support farmers like the Fontenettes, who pour their heart and soul into every seed they plant. They’re proving that with dedication and love, you can farm something truly special that creates a better, healthier future for all.



"I Want to Help" Your giving allowed Shanika to go from getting help to giving help

Meet Shanika, a volunteer at the Plymouth Rock Baptist Church, a Second Harvest partner food pantry in Houma.

When Shanika returned after evacuating from Hurricane Ida three years ago, she found her home destroyed. “I didn’t have anything when I came back. Nothing.” Shanika and her 3-year-old granddaughter, whom she cares for, were left without a home.

For two years, a FEMA trailer became their temporary residence. During that difficult time, Second Harvest and Plymouth Rock Baptist Church were there to provide support. The pantry director would personally deliver hot meals and supplies to their door, which was a big help for people without a car.

As hard as it was, Shanika remained determined. “Whenever I get straight, I want to volunteer. I want to help,” she vowed.



True to her word, as soon as she got permanent housing, Shanika began volunteering at the pantry that was once her only reliable food source. For her, it was deeply personal. “I just felt I had to do something back, to give back.”

Thank you for your continuous support that helps neighbors get back on their feet so they can help others!