

FEBRUARY 2019

# food for thought

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**NEIGHBORS  
IN NEED**



 **SECOND  
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FOOD BANK**  
FEEDING SOUTH LOUISIANA

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# A message from Natalie



## Hunger in a State of Plenty

A study recently issued by Loyola University New Orleans confirms what our staff and volunteers find to be true every day. Despite Louisiana's rich food culture and reputation as a "foodie" destination, our state has the second highest rate of food insecurity in the nation – and *it is rising faster than any other state.*

The findings in the report, ***Hungry at the Banquet: Food Insecurity in Louisiana 2018***, are stark. In most of Louisiana's parishes, more than 15% of people are food insecure, and in some areas, the rate is as high as 34%. This is much higher than the average national food insecurity rate of 12%. **One in four Louisiana families rely on SNAP (food stamps) to meet their monthly food needs, and a full two-thirds of these recipients are children.**

Second Harvest is doing all we can to fill this food gap, but the results of this study are shocking. In a state that is celebrated for its food, many continue to struggle against hunger every day. And it is only getting worse.

A major factor is "food deserts," places without convenient access to a full-service grocery store or farmer's market. Residents in these areas, often working families or seniors on a limited income, must choose between traveling long distances to purchase bare necessities, or going with unhealthy options like convenient stores and fast food outlets. There is a direct link between food deserts and poor health. This vicious cycle of unhealthy options is contributing to our state's high rates of diabetes, obesity, and hypertension.

**While we will always be here to respond to the need of any South Louisianan facing hunger – whether it is a child going to school hungry, an older person choosing between food and medicine, an oil and gas worker laid off from their job, or an entire community coping with a natural disaster – we are also increasingly focused on strategies that make a greater long term impact, such as our oncology clinic pantry at University Medical Center.**

Because of these challenges faced by so many of our neighbors, we are even more grateful for friends like you who make it possible for Second Harvest to provide more than 32 million meals a year. **On behalf of those we serve, thank you for your compassion and generosity.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Natalie J".

Natalie Jayroe  
President and CEO

# You're Improving the Lives of Cancer Patients

This year, Second Harvest opened the first hospital-based food pantry in Louisiana and one of the first in the nation – the Therapeutic Food Pantry at University Medical Center's Cancer Center in New Orleans. Patients struggling with malnutrition and food insecurity can access this pantry for high-quality, nutritious food to help combat hunger and promote optimal health.

Gay Carroll is one of those patients, and is very grateful for the support it gives.

"It means I don't have to worry about getting food, or worry about getting food at the end of the month. That's a real concern for someone in my position," she said. "It has helped me to eat better and feel better. I have more energy to do more things, and I feel like it has helped me survive this condition."

Ms. Carroll is a fighter, and is responding well to treatments. "I have stage four breast cancer, but the doctors say I'm responding well. It's great that this pantry is here in the hospital, where people need it. It's been a really great project."



**Dr. Adam Riker, surgical oncologist and Director of the Breast Health Program at UMC, says the therapeutic food pantry has absolutely made a positive impact.**

"It's been an incredible transformation for our patients, because now they realize how they feel now that they're eating so much better," Dr. Riker told us. "They've got more energy, they can get through their treatments a lot easier because they're eating a higher quality of foods. More importantly, we are benefitting their immune system, which is so important for our cancer patients."

The program also offers classes to teach patients how to prepare healthy meals using the items available in the pantry, and other services to improve patients' quality of life, including massage therapy, exercise classes, art therapy, and more.

***Our deepest thanks to the generous support of Baptist Community Ministries, Methodist Health System Foundation, and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana Foundation for making this important project possible.***

## THANK YOU for Helping Seniors in Need

Ms. Geraldine Bickham is no stranger to hard work.

"I worked my whole life, from the Southdown Sugar Mill, to working in restaurants, and cleaning houses on my hands and knees," the 79-year-old Houma resident told us.

Now, after a lifetime of work, she relies on a limited income from Social Security to get by every month.

"I have to make everything happen from that one check. It's very tough some months."

Ms. Bickham says that's why she's so thankful for the Plymouth Rock Baptist Church food pantry, one of hundreds of community partners supported by Second Harvest.

"I always did what I had to do to feed my family," she said. "Now, I feel so blessed that someone is helping people like me get by."

Louisiana leads the nation in seniors who are hungry.



"One in four seniors in our state is at risk of hunger," says Second Harvest Chief Impact Officer Melanie McGuire. "Many of them find it hard to turn to a food pantry after providing for themselves and others for decades. But that's why we're here, and our community partners like Plymouth Rock are so good at making them feel welcome."

Thank you for helping Ms. Bickham and thousands of other seniors served by Second Harvest partner food pantries and soup kitchens across South Louisiana.



## You're Building HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES

You help Second Harvest provide the equivalent of **32 million meals annually to people in need**. And we are always looking for ways to deliver healthier options to the families we serve to address the link between hunger and poor health. The "Healthy Communities" program is one way we do this.

Thanks to your generosity, Second Harvest's School Pantry program provides food to students and their families at their school. Healthy Communities takes it a step further, bringing a truckload of fresh produce and other services to monthly events at local schools.

Second Harvest launched a Healthy Communities site this year at Phoenix High School in Braithwaite. This area in Plaquemines Parish is considered a "food desert." Residents have to drive at least 45 minutes to reach the nearest grocery store, and that's only if they catch the Mississippi River ferry on time.

"We were able to send home items with all of our students during the Healthy Communities program this month, which

was right before Thanksgiving break," says Lindsey Lozes, Phoenix High School Counselor. **"Our students especially enjoy the cereal, crackers, and produce during their week off from school."**

At these Healthy Communities events, Second Harvest staff and partners offer nutrition education and services such as screenings for blood pressure, diabetes, and other nutrition-related illnesses.

"These school pantries help support the local community, as well as students and their families," said Second Harvest Nutrition Coordinator Jacqueline Futch. "It's a hand up, not a hand out. We have seen hundreds of working families benefit every month from being able to have fresh fruits and vegetables."

**The Healthy Communities initiative is possible thanks to the generous support of Chevron and donors like you.**



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

