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A Letter From the Executive Director

Food Safety is the primary concern of the Food Bank of Central Louisiana. Food donated to the Food Bank is quite often food that will not sell. It may not have passed quality control standards by the manufacturer. It can be a test market item, a

seasonal food item (like Christmas cookies or items in holiday packaging), an item intended for export or simply a labeling error. It is true that many of the items that are donated to the Food Bank of Central Louisiana are past one of three dates that are stamped on products, "Best By," "Use By," or "Sell By." These are the dates for the period when a food product is at its peak. It does not mean that the product is inedible or not safe for consumption.

The Food Bank works with manufacturers on the guidance and timelines on how far past the dates the food can be safely distributed. In addition, the Food Bank staff monitors and tests donated product to determine if it is edible prior to distribution. If there is any question about the safety of food items, they are discarded.

Food safety does not end there for the Food Bank. Our organization is monitored by four different entities to ensure that the Food Bank is adhering to safe food handling practices, Feeding America, the American Institute of Baking (AIB), the Louisiana Department of Health & Hospitals, and the Louisiana Department of Agriculture & Forestry. The Food Bank is required to have a certified ServSafe Manager on staff. We have two. In addition, all of our partner agencies and Food Bank staff are required to pass a scored ServSafe Food Bank Food Handlers test annually.

This is not to imply that the Food Bank is perfect in any way. We do want to emphasize the seriousness of food safety and any allegations of food poisoning as a result of consumption of donated food from our organization. To date, we have not had one documented case of a food borne illness from our food supply from the Food Bank in our organization's 27 year history.

The Food Bank and its partner agencies reach more than 22,000 impoverished people in central Louisiana each month, distributing more than seven million pounds of food and grocery products. We could not do the work we do without food donations from food drives, local retail stores, and food manufacturers. It's through these partnerships that we are able to provide safe, emergency food to those in need in our community.

Sincerely,

Jayne Wright-Velez,
Executive Director

Pineville High School Seniors Raise Funds and Volunteer for the Food Bank

Connor Littleton, a senior at Pineville High School, hosted an estate sale with proceeds benefiting the Food Bank of Central Louisiana in January for his senior project. This successful event raised \$2,100 for the Food Bank. The majority of the items sold belonged to his late grandparents, Wanda and Alex Littleton. Connor's grandfather, Alex Littleton worked for many years with Pineville CCAC, helping start their food pantry.



Wesley Williams used his musical talent to conduct a concert at Pineville High School on February 23. Wesley recruited local musicians to perform at this event which raised \$450 and 35 pounds of food for the Food Bank of Central Louisiana.

Anna Dardar also raised funds for the Food Bank of Central Louisiana for her senior project. Anna hosted a garage sale in February and raised \$400 and 33 pounds of food to support the organization's hunger relief efforts. Blake Parks hosted a concert at Spoons in Alexandria and raised \$200 for the Food Bank of Central Louisiana.

In addition, the Food Bank of Central Louisiana had four Pineville High School seniors who volunteered at the Food Bank for at least 20 hours for their senior projects. These students helped pack emergency food boxes, Adopt-A-Senior program boxes, and backpacks with weekend meals for low-income students.

In order for students to graduate from Pineville High School, they are required to complete a Senior Project. The Senior Project incorporates traditional and performance based teaching and strategies that merge with strong basic knowledge and skills requiring a real world application. The Senior Project is a challenging, student-driven, teacher-guided culminating program.

"It's great to see students give back to the community and we appreciate the work and commitment of the seniors from Pineville High School," said Jayne Wright-Velez, Executive Director of the Food Bank of Central Louisiana.

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Good Things are Growing with the Good Food Project

This sustainable gardening program has progressed over the past couple of years to become a leader in the local food movement. In 2016-2017, 72 individuals visited the Good Food Project to learn more about the program, many left with seeds for their home gardens and/or cultural recommendation guides to help them know what to plant each month. Gardens under the guidance of the program have increased to 65 in 10 of the 11 parishes served by the Food Bank of Central Louisiana.

The roster of gardens as of March 2017 included 34 general community partnerships (ranging from a true community garden, two domestic violence advocacy centers, city governments, farmers markets, a public library, healthy community coalition to a state ag center, individuals with disabilities and/or mental health organizations, 2 shelter programs, 1 church health program, and 7 youth-oriented programs), and 3 satellite garden partnerships (GFP helps provide direct maintenance at these with garden and nutrition classes provided). The list of GFP partnerships also includes 31 public and private school gardens.

Work is progressing with some additions coming to the demonstration garden. With funding from the Central Louisiana Community Foundation 2015 Impact Award, we are near completion of a work pavilion and handicap accessible paths in the demonstration garden. These additions will enable GFP to offer more garden classes to a broad range of individuals from across central Louisiana.

Spring 2017 finds GFP staff and committed volunteers moving to prepare the demonstration garden, school, and community garden beds, transitioning them from cool weather crops like broccoli, cabbage, greens, and carrots to spring and summer crops. Beans, tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, okra, cucumbers, various herbs, melons, and squash are being planted in all the gardens associated with GFP. Good Food Project provides soil, transplants, seeds, and amendments to all the gardens we serve. We value and appreciate the continuing support of our 290 volunteers who make it possible for us to sustain the community gardens.





The 25th Annual Letter Carriers' Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive

Making a difference, one bag at a time.

Saturday, May 13, marks the 25th anniversary of one of America's great days of giving – the National Association of Letter Carriers' Stamp Out Hunger food drive. Letter carriers travel through the community every day, often coming face to face with the sad reality for too many, hunger.

So, each year on the second Saturday in May, letter carriers across the country collect non-perishable food donations across the community. These donations go directly to the Food Bank of Central Louisiana and local food pantries to provide food to people in central Louisiana who need food assistance.

Last year, more than 80 million pounds of food was donated nationally, feeding an estimate 64 million people. In central Louisiana, more than 70,000 pounds of food was donated to provide food to those in need throughout the Food Bank's 11-parish service area. Over the course of its 24-year history, the drive has collected well over one billion pounds of food, thanks to a postal service universal delivery network that spans the entire nation.

The need for food donations is great. Currently, 49 million Americans — 1 in 6 — are unsure where their next meal is coming from. Sixteen million are children who feel hunger's impact on their overall health and ability to perform in school. And nearly 5 million seniors over the age of 60 are food insecure, with many who live on fixed incomes often too embarrassed to ask for help.

This food drive's timing is crucial. Food banks and pantries often receive the majority of their donations during the Thanksgiving and Christmas holiday seasons. By springtime, many pantries are depleted, entering the summer low on supplies at a time when many school breakfast and lunch programs are not available to children in need.

Participating in this year's Letter Carriers' Stamp Out Hunger food drive is simple. Just leave a non-perishable food donation in a bag by your mailbox on Saturday, May 13, and your letter carrier will do the rest. With your help, letter carriers and the US Postal Service have collected more than 1.5 billion pounds of food in the United States since this food drive began. Please help us in our fight to end hunger, as we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Letter Carriers' Stamp Out Hunger food drive.



Food Recovery: Benefiting People in Need, the Environment and the Economy

An enormous amount of food is wasted in the United States each year. According to ReFED, a collaboration of business, nonprofit, foundation, and government leaders committed to reducing United States food waste, indicates that 72 billion pounds of safe and wholesome food does not make it to the kitchen table every year in the U.S.



All this loss takes place in a country in which 42 million people are food insecure. Feeding America, and the food banks across the country, are working to improve food donation programs and address hunger. Feeding America currently rescues 2.8 billion pounds of safe and wholesome food from going to waste and provides it to families in need through the network of more than 200 food banks.

Food loss occurs at every state of the food production and distribution system. Excluding consumer waste at home, 52 billion pounds of food from manufacturers, grocery stores, and restaurants end up in landfills. An additional 20 billion pounds of fruits and vegetables are not harvested on farms or left in fields to be plowed under.

Every year, American consumers, businesses, and farms spend \$218 billion a year growing, processing, transporting, and disposing of food that is never eaten. That's 52 million tons of food sent to landfills annually, plus another 10 million tons that is discarded or left unharvested on farms. Meanwhile, one in seven Americans is food insecure. Please continue to support the Food Bank of Central Louisiana and other hunger relief agencies as we continue to tackle food waste and hunger.

- **72 billion** pounds of food is lost each year, not including food waste at home
- **\$218 billion** worth of food is thrown away each year
- **21%** of landfill volume is food waste
- **21%** of fresh water is used to produce waste that is then discarded
- **Up to 40 percent** of the good, safe food produced in America never makes it to people's plates. Instead 40 percent or 70 million tons goes to waste.
- Did you know that there is a federal tax incentive that ALL food donors can take when donating food, whether they are large or small, grower, packer, rancher, food manufacturer, retailer, restaurant, and more? The federal food donation tax deduction provides an enhanced tax deduction when food is donated to a 501c3 nonprofit for the care of the ill, needy, or infants.

THANK YOU!



Grand Tire Automotive Center in Pineville hosted a Car Show on March 18 and raised \$1,135 and 167 pounds of non-perishable food for the Food Bank! We appreciate their support!

Thanks to the employees, management, and shoppers at Kroger in Alexandria who raised \$14,956.79 through the Souper Bowl of Caring Campaign in February. We are so thankful for the great partnerships we have in this community!



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