



MEMBER OF
**FEEDING
AMERICA**



food for Thought

A PUBLICATION OF THE FOOD BANK OF CENTRAL LOUISIANA

WINTER 2019



From the Executive Director

The Food Bank is blessed by the support of the Central Louisiana community. In turn, we share the blessings with those that need emergency food assistance. The Food Bank works with many different partners to achieve its mission of alleviating hunger in Central Louisiana.

The Food Bank contracts with the Louisiana Department of Agriculture to distribute USDA commodities in Central Louisiana through our network of partner agencies. Recently President Trump signed H.R. 2, the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, also known as the Farm Bill 2018, into law. This legislation funds critical programs nationwide that address hunger and food production. The Food Bank commends Congress for writing a bipartisan bill that protects and strengthens important nutrition programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP). These programs are essential resources for food insecure individuals in our community and help our Food Bank put more meals on the table for families in need.

We are fortunate to have so many federal employees in Central Louisiana, many who volunteer and donate to the Food Bank of Central Louisiana and other local nonprofits. The Food Bank worked hard to help these employees and families during this unexpected time of financial crisis. As an impact of the shutdown, many federal workers found themselves in a difficult financial situation. As in most communities, many people live in households living paycheck to paycheck. Some federal employees found themselves unable to buy food and were faced with the decision to request emergency food assistance, often for the first time.

The Food Bank stood ready to help those federal employees and their families as we do for all families that are in need throughout the year. We encourage Congress and the Administration to work together to find solutions that will end the gridlock. It is time to move forward together.

Sincerely,

Jayne Wright-Velez, Executive Director

The Food Bank's Good Food Project's Therapeutic Benefits

A garden is forever the practical and symbolic beating heart of humanity. It is that tucked away oasis of healing comfort so beloved by individuals, families, and communities as a place that nourishes the body, but also feeds the mind and the spirit. Here is the story of one such spot.



A major goal of the Good Food Project has been to educate Food Bank clients, youth, and the general public about organic, sustainable gardening practices. The hope was that individuals and groups would be encouraged and motivated to grow their own healthy food to experience the lifelong pleasures and benefits of gardening and as a compliment to fulfilling the Food Bank's mission to alleviate hunger in Central Louisiana.

During the capacity-building phase, up to the present, the Good Food Project has worked and will continue to work with diverse populations of individuals and groups. Among these people have been those in need of volunteer community service hours for offenses ranging from convictions related to drug or alcohol charges, behavioral health programs looking for calming, productive atmospheres for youth with challenging behavioral issues, to women who are seeking shelter due to homelessness or domestic violence.

Volunteer opportunities are offered each Wednesday morning in the demonstration garden, weather permitting. Here, folks from dissimilar backgrounds have found themselves working cooperatively together, digging weeds, creating rows for planting, harvesting, and other general garden maintenance, all while finding a therapeutic sense of community. People who have found themselves dealing with the consequences of life-impacting decisions have gained new, practical skills that will positively benefit them as they move toward better decision-making. As an added benefit, they are giving back

continued on pg. 4

Food Bank Board of Directors

Jill Kelone, Chair
Joe Williams, Vice Chair
Joe Gardner, Treasurer
Christine Meshell, Secretary
Amani Augustine
Lottie Bash
Wiletha "Wil" Brown
Brian Couvillon
Heather Daigrepoint
Eric Fletcher
Melissa Hill
Joe Sharp
Mary Treuting

Food Bank Staff Members

Cindy Baker
Good Food Project Gardens Manager
Jodi Belgard
Agency Relations Coordinator
Frances Boudreaux
Keller Enterprises Director of The Good Food Project
Dustin Bordelon
Operations Manager
Yolanda Deshotel
Client Services
Veronica Dorn
Client Services/Adopt-a-Senior Program
Linda Hutson
Director of Development & Community Relations
Bridgett Johnson
Child Nutrition Programs
Lori Kendrick
Food Procurement Coordinator
Johnny Knapp
Driver
Rhonda Lair
Good Food Project Garden Assistant
Jerry Norris
Driver
Hershel Nugent
Driver
Mark Rachel
Driver
Carole Stafford
Volunteer Coordinator
Vera Tyler
Warehouse Assistant
Jayne Wright-Velez
Executive Director

USDA Nondiscrimination Statement

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Services at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD-3027) found online at: http://www.ascrusda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

(1) Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410

(2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or

(3) email: program.intake@usda.gov

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Christmas Cheer Food Drive Collects 120,568 Pounds of Food

Tunica-Biloxi Tribe and KALB-TV sponsor Food Drive benefitting the Food Bank of Central Louisiana



Students from W.O. Hall 6th Grade Academy volunteer during the Food Bank's Christmas Cheer Food Drive Sort Day.

The results of the 2018 KALB-TV Christmas Cheer Food Drive are complete, and 120,568 pounds of non-perishable food items were collected from Avoyelles, Grant, Natchitoches, Rapides, and Vernon parish schools, according to Jayne Wright-Velez, executive director of the Food Bank of Central Louisiana. Sponsored by the Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana and KALB-TV, 59 local schools participated in the drive to help collect food for the Food Bank of Central Louisiana.

The total amount collected in Avoyelles parish was 23,875 pounds, 6,233 pounds in Grant parish, 4,592 pounds in Natchitoches parish, 60,381 pounds in Rapides parish, and 25,487 pounds in Vernon parish.

The following schools led their parish in donations:

Avoyelles — Lafargue Elementary (3,736 pounds) and Bunkie High School (6,358 pounds)

Grant — South Grant Elementary School (2,675 pounds), Grant Junior High (1,637 pounds), and Georgetown High School (925 pounds)

Natchitoches — Weaver Elementary School (903 pounds), Natchitoches Magnet School (795 pounds), and Natchitoches Central High School (1,346 pounds)

Rapides — Phoenix Magnet Elementary School (14,627 pounds), Tioga Junior High (6,283 pounds), and Alexandria Senior High School (7,433 pounds). Phoenix Magnet Elementary School also took home the top prize for donating the most pounds per student (28.57 pounds per student).

Vernon — West Leesville Elementary School (2,485 pounds), Leesville Junior High (4,884 pounds), and Rosepine High School (4,264 pounds).

Eight thousand dollars in prize money from the Tunica-Biloxi Indians will be distributed to these schools for their outstanding efforts to help the Food Bank of Central Louisiana.

"We appreciate the continued support of the Tunica-Biloxi Tribe and KALB-TV for sponsoring this food drive," said Wright-Velez. "We would like to thank the students, parents, teachers and school personnel who make this food drive a success."

"We would also like to thank the local sheriff's departments, the city of Natchitoches, and the many volunteers who helped during the week of the Christmas Cheer Food Drive," continued Wright-Velez.

The Food Bank's Good Food Project Receives a Grant from CHRISTUS Fund



The Food Bank of Central Louisiana received a \$38,886 grant from CHRISTUS Fund to support the Good Food Project's School Garden Program. The Good Food Project has an extraordinary opportunity to guide children toward healthier lifestyles by creating healthy nutritional environments within the school garden.

Nutrition is a critical building block for student success. Active, healthy, and well-nourished children are more apt to attend school, are more prepared and inspired to learn. The garden setting, paired with the nutrition program, provides learning opportunities that takes children from planting seeds to sampling healthy food grown from those seeds. The children will acquire lifelong skills that will sustain them — how to grow and prepare their own food.

The fact that children expend energy while gardening is another plus in the fight against childhood obesity and promotes healthy behaviors. The funding for this program will span a 12-month period and will enable the Good Food Project to partner and expand organic school gardens within two schools in Rapides Parish School District. Each of those school gardens will have fully installed raised garden beds or container gardens, planted, maintained and harvested by the children in a living classroom.

CHRISTUS Fund (www.christusfund.org) is a grant-making department located at the CHRISTUS Health headquarters in Irving, Texas.

Suddenlink, a Brand of Altice USA, and the Food Bank of Central Louisiana Wrapped Up the 12th Annual "Connecting to Those in Need" Food Drive

Altice USA, parent company of Suddenlink, and the Food Bank of Central Louisiana wrapped up the 12th annual **"Connecting to Those in Need"** fall food drive in November, **collecting 7,905 pounds of nonperishable food.**

This partnership between Suddenlink and the Food Bank started in 2007 and has collected more than 306 tons of food (612,000 pounds). The Food Bank distributes more than six million pounds of donated grocery items annually, which **helps approximately 22,400 needy people in Central Louisiana.**

"Hunger is a symptom of poverty and economic stress, which can be relieved through the kindness and generosity of our community. We are grateful to Altice USA and to its Suddenlink division for recognizing this need and helping lead the cause through this annual food drive," said Jayne Wright-Velez, executive director of the Food Bank of Central Louisiana.

"Altice USA is committed to supporting and investing our local Suddenlink communities where our employees live and work. We are grateful for the opportunity to support with the Food Bank of Central Louisiana in the fight against hunger in the area," said Robbie Lee, Regional Vice President of Market Engagement in the Louisiana area.

Local school districts in Allen, Catahoula, Concordia, LaSalle, Sabine, and Winn parishes were also invited to participate in **"Connecting to Those in Need."**

The top collecting schools included **Oberlin Elementary School with 1,273 pounds** and **Vidalia Lower Elementary School with 875 pounds of food.**



The Food Bank's Good Food Project's Therapeutic Benefits

continued from pg. 1



to their community which is life-affirming and self-esteem building.

Several individuals who came to fulfill court-mandated community service hours have felt such peace in the GFP demonstration garden that they have continued volunteering even after the court-mandated hours had been met. One woman even went on to become a

GFP volunteer of the year due to her dedicated service to the program, even bringing a young niece and nephew to join in on the fun on Workday Wednesdays.

Currently, GFP has a long-standing partnership with DART (Domestic Abuse Resistance Team) located at a federal housing program in Grant Parish, Louisiana. According to DART Advocate, Amanda P. White, the community garden partnership with the Good Food Project "impacts the entire community." People in the neighborhood come to the "Kugichagulia" (self-determination) garden for food, fellowship, information, clothing, and resource information.

The beauty of this partnership lies in the notion that if a woman was reluctant to seek domestic violence counseling for fear of a partner finding out, she could use the "cover" of helping in the community garden. This surreptitious arrangement allows the survivor a chance to gain information and advocacy all while supplementing her knowledge as to how to provide food for herself and her children, if she has any. It also offers her an opportunity to engage with other survivors and members of the housing program that then helps broaden her support network should she decide to leave her abusive partner. The produce grown in the garden benefits the entire community, not just survivors. Acceptance, and non-judgmental support are important attributes formed by this community that have improved the lives of so many who have enjoyed the existence of the small garden space.

Good Food Project of the Food Bank of Central Louisiana has built a program that we hope will enhance the lives of all who live in Central Louisiana either through the sustainable gardening skills we teach or from the nutrition information we share, or by affording those who might need it, a healing place to grow in body, mind, and spirit.

The Food Bank Receives Hunger Is Grant from Albertson's

The Food Bank of Central Louisiana is excited to receive a \$1,237.10 grant from Albertson's and the Albertson's Foundation from their *Hunger Is* initiative to eradicate childhood hunger. The funds will be used to support the Food Bank of Central Louisiana's BackPack Program.

"We're excited that Albertson's and Albertson's Foundation are supporting the work we do each day to help local kids start their day with a good, nutritious meal," said Jayne Wright-Velez, executive director of the Food Bank of Central Louisiana. *"We know that the Albertson's Foundation sets a high standard for Hunger Is grant recipients because the grants go only to organizations who have the greatest impact on fighting childhood hunger. We're proud to be a part of that recipient group and thank Albertson's and their customers for helping us continue to make a difference in the lives of children in central Louisiana."*



Hunger Is, a charitable program of the Albertson's Foundation, is designed to build awareness and raise funds in an effort to eradicate childhood hunger in America. Funds raised through *Hunger Is* focus on adding breakfasts in and out of school through the federal

nutrition programs and other means to combat childhood hunger and improving other health-related outcomes. Each Albertson's location selects a local organization or food bank to receive the donations. Funds for our \$1,237.10 grant were collected by the Albertson's store in Alexandria.

American Legion Riders Post 145 Raises Funds for Adopt-a-Senior Program



American Legion Riders Post 145's fundraising efforts raised \$20,250 to support the Adopt-a-Senior program in Vernon Parish. We are so thankful for the dedication and support from the Legion Riders. In the past eight years, the American Legion Riders have raised \$126,950 sponsoring 846 seniors in Vernon Parish.



Thanks to the Enterprise Rent-A-Car Foundation for their donation of \$7,000 through their "Fill Your Tank" campaign to support the Food Bank's hunger relief efforts.