



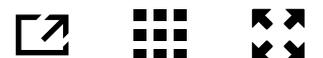
# She is fighting hunger by rescuing prepared foods

## Houston Hero: Barbara Bronstein

By Greg Morago | March 23, 2016 | Updated: March 24, 2016 3:44pm



Photo: Marie D. De Jesus, Staff



### IMAGE 1 OF 3

Barbara Heitman Bronstein, founder of Second Servings walks out of Snap Kitchen on Kirby Drive with prepared food donated by Snap Kitchen. The food will be redirected to local charities that service the hungry. ... [more](#)

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Several years ago, Barbara Bronstein found herself at a charity fundraiser in Houston that, unfortunately, had a lot of no-shows. She began to wonder what became of all the beautifully prepared banquet food that had gone untouched. All that uneaten food stuck in her mind.

"I hate food waste. I grew up with the clean-plate, there-are-children-starving-in-China thing," she said. "I never liked to see food go to waste."

So she made a few calls to find out about recovering prepared food for the hungry in Houston. She soon found out that there wasn't a program specifically dedicated to what she calls food "rescue." Those few calls morphed into dedicated research that turned into Banquet Bounty for the Hungry, a pilot program that grew into Second Servings of Houston - a nonprofit that is known as Houston's only prepared-food rescue organization.

Officially launched in February 2015, Second Servings is only a year old but already has rescued 50 tons of chef-prepared food that would have gone into a landfill. The food is taken directly to charitable meal providers that feed about 3,000 needy Houstonians on a weekly basis.

"I realized there was so much food to donate and such a need," Bronstein said.

"It's startling how much food gets thrown away that's still edible."

Second Servings wants to reduce that waste and get the food into the hands of some of the 800,000 people in Greater Houston who face food insecurity daily. Second Servings works with about 40 local

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## MORE INFORMATION

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### How to help

### Second Servings of Houston

**The group accepts refrigerated and frozen food that has been prepared and properly stored by regulated food businesses. The group needs a refrigerated truck, supplies and drivers. Go to [secondservingshouston.org](http://secondservingshouston.org) for information, or contact Barbara Bronstein at 713-824-6605.**

businesses - including convention centers, sports arenas, hotels, caterers, restaurants and cafeterias - who donate their unserved surplus food. The food is picked up by Second Servings volunteers and taken directly to Impact Houston, Magnificat House, Loaves & Fishes and Covenant House.

Second Servings operates as a courier service for leftovers, Bronstein said. The food is never warehoused. It goes directly from the donor to the receiving program that feeds the hungry. "I don't own the food. I pick it up and deliver it."

A retired marketing executive, Bronstein calls Second Servings her "retirement job." She, like everyone on the organization's advisory board and operating team, is a volunteer. The 265 supporters (food donors and core volunteers) share the belief of "filling stomachs, not landfills," Bronstein said.

"It's easier to throw food away. You just put it in the garbage," she said. "To rescue food takes a commitment to the community, the people in need, and the environment."

When Jason Schneider got a job in Houston in 2012 as executive director of Hilton Houston Post Oak he began looking for a local organization to recover banquet food. His inquiries eventually led him to Bronstein, and now Schneider sits on the organization's advisory board.

Schneider said that his company's involvement with Second Servings is a win-win situation. Plus, he said, "it makes me feel really good that we're not wasting food and able to help someone."

That's how Rachael Volz, owner of A Fare Extraordinaire feels too. "It's a perfect match for their company and ours. We overproduce for large events to make sure we don't run out. When you're doing high volume you have a lot of leftovers; it feels so good to put those leftovers to good use," Volz said.

A Fare Extraordinaire, a luxury full service event and catering company, has been a Second Servings donor since the beginning. Bronstein makes it easy to work with them, Volz said. "You can call or text and they'll come and pick up the food no matter the time of night.

Everyone wins."

Food that is rescued can be box lunches left over from conventions; food prepared for hotel banquets such as salmon with couscous or lamb skewers with vegetables; high-end catering food; sporting and special events leftovers. Snap Kitchen restaurants of Houston, another donor, puts healthy meals in the rescue pipeline. All the donations come from business that meet food safety standards.

Bronstein said her goals for 2016 are to expand the organization's rescues. She already is working with George R. Brown Convention Center, Houston First and Aramark to rescue leftovers from upcoming events including the Final Four at NRG Stadium and beyond that even the Super Bowl. She wants the organization to become a dependable source of food for Houstonians in need.

But Bronstein said the goal she'd actually like to achieve is a time when organizations like Houston Food Bank and Second Servings aren't necessary.

"I'd love to go out of business," she said.



**Greg Morago**

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