

As a member of Feeding America, and a United Way Partner, Feeding the Gulf Coast works through member organizations and special programs to provide nutritious food to meet the challenge of feeding people who are hungry as a result of personal crisis or disaster. Feeding the Gulf Coast also educates the public regarding domestic hunger, proper nutrition and other related issues.

Feeding the Gulf Coast, Inc. was founded and incorporated in 1981. In 1988, the food bank became a member of Feeding America, the nation's hunger relief organization. Since its founding, the organization has distributed more than 200 million pounds of food to charitable feeding organizations across the 24 counties it serves—including nine counties in lower Alabama, eight counties in lower Mississippi, and seven counties across the panhandle of Florida. In 2016, the food bank distributed over 22 million pounds of food to more than 301,346 families through our network of over 400 partner agencies, consisting of church pantries, soup kitchens and other non-profit organizations.

To assist in its mission to increase food access and provide educational opportunities, the food bank operates the following programs:

#### **Retail Store Level Pickup Program (RSLPP)**

RSLPP gives the food bank and its agencies access to all food types, including produce, dairy, meat and bread. The program, created on the national level by Feeding America, partners retail grocery chains with local food banks. When stores have slightly damaged product or product nearing its expiration date, they pull it from shelves and instead of disposing of it, they donate it to their local food bank. In 2016, 174 stores along the Central Gulf Coast donated over 12 million pounds of food to the food bank through this program. In some areas, Feeding the Gulf Coast trains and certifies select agencies to pick up food directly from these stores and distribute the donations to their clients through their feeding programs. Not only does this get food into the hands of the hungry faster, it enables the food bank to use resources like trucks, employees, and monetary donations in other places.

#### **The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)**

TEFAP is a Federal program that helps supplement the diets of low-income Americans by providing them with emergency food assistance at no cost. Through TEFAP, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) purchases a variety of nutritious, high-quality USDA Foods, and makes those foods available to State Distributing Agencies. The amount of food each State receives out of the total amount of food provided is based on the number of unemployed persons and the number of people with incomes below the poverty level in the State. States provide the food to local agencies that they have selected, usually food banks, which in turn distribute the food to local organizations, such as soup kitchens and food pantries that directly serve the public. Feeding the Gulf Coast is responsible for administering TEFAP in its service area for Alabama and Florida.

#### **Mobile Pantry Program**

The Mobile Pantry Program allows the food bank to assist partner agencies with feeding up to 100 families in a single food distribution. On the day of distribution, FTGC delivers the pantry items on a refrigerated truck to the agreed upon site, where it is unloaded and distributed immediately, removing the need for thousands of pounds of food to be stored on site. Each mobile pantry holds an assortment of critical need items: protein, canned or fresh produce, dairy, and grains. This program allows us to provide a family with enough food for a week for just \$10. During natural disasters like Hurricane Katrina and the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill, the Mobile Pantry Program provided important recovery assistance by supplying disaster food to affected areas. In 2016, Feeding the Gulf Coast distributed over 1,590,000 pounds to over 31,000 families through 235 mobile pantries across Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida.

### **Produce Drop Program**

The Produce Drop Program is the food bank's newest distribution program. Similar to a mobile pantry, a produce drop is delivered directly to communities in need and distributed on the same day. Often the price of fresh produce, or the distance to grocery stores, limits a community's access to whole, nutritious foods. In 2016, the Produce Drop Program gave away over 60,400 pounds of produce to communities with limited food access.

### **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Outreach Program**

The SNAP Outreach Program began in 2010 with the signing of a contract to conduct SNAP outreach on behalf of the Alabama Department of Human Resources (DHR) throughout Alabama. In 2014, the food bank expanded SNAP outreach work by contracting with the Mississippi Department of Human Services (DHS) for 20 counties in Mississippi. Both state programs cover 50% of the expenses needed to perform outreach. In 2016, the SNAP Outreach team helped families gain access to over \$11 million in SNAP benefits.

### **Backpack Program**

The Backpack Program, which began in 2004, meets the needs of chronically hungry children by providing them with nutritious and easy-to-prepare food to take home on weekends and school vacations, when school meals are not available. The Backpack Program is located at schools with a high incidence of children in need. School counselors identify which children are in need and discreetly place the food in each child's backpack on Friday afternoon. During the 2015-2016 school year, the food bank distributed over 59,800 backpacks to 2,373 children.

### **Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)**

SFSP is a Federal program that provides meals to chronically hungry children when school is out for the summer. Of the nearly 22 million children nationally who receive lunch assistance during the school year, less than 18% receive a meal on a typical summer day. To ensure children in our region have access to free, nutritious meals, the food bank administers SFSP along the Central Gulf Coast and farther north in Alabama via satellite kitchens in Tuscaloosa and Auburn. In 2016, the food bank distributed 320,417 meals and over 139,000 snacks, serving 13,900 children.

### **Afterschool Meals Program**

During the school year, the food bank continues to feed children at afterschool enrichment programs in low-income areas. This program is funded through the federal Child and Adult Care Feeding Program. During the 2015-2016 school year, the food bank served over 768,600 snacks and meals to 6,243 children.

### **Cooking Matters Program**

Feeding the Gulf Coast partners with Share Our Strength to offer Cooking Matters classes along the Central Gulf Coast. Cooking Matters is a groundbreaking education nutrition program that connects families with food by teaching them how to prepare healthy, tasty, low-cost meals. In 2016, the food bank conducted 50 nutrition classes to 846 participants.

### **Community Garden Program**

The Community Garden Program educates the community on proper nutrition, environmental responsibility, and basic gardening practices. The food bank organizes a series of garden workshops each year. In 2016, the food bank conducted 8 workshops with 220 participants. The food bank also supports an expanding network of gardens, seeking out grant opportunities, providing basic gardening lessons and recruiting volunteers. At school gardens, the food bank has partnered with Alabama 4-H to offer Junior Master Gardener—an international youth gardening program that connects hands-on gardening tasks with math and science objectives.

### Gleaning Program

Gleaning is the act of collecting leftover crops from farmers' fields after the primary harvest, or from fields where it's not economically profitable for the farmer to harvest. Feeding the Gulf Coast assembles volunteers to harvest and pack the produce into boxes, then the food is transported back to the food bank for distribution to our partner agencies. We've partnered with several area farms to glean satsumas, blueberries and greens. In 2016, over 1,800 pounds of produce were gleaned from local farms.

### Volunteers

Feeding the Gulf Coast has a robust volunteer program, offering opportunities for ages 5 and up. There are a variety of volunteer shifts offered to individuals and groups seeking service hours including weekdays, weeknights and Saturday mornings. The food bank also hosts large service days for groups with up to 100 participants. In just a few hours, volunteers are able to make a huge impact: a group of volunteers can sort up to 1,500 pounds of food in one hour. In 2016, over 16,300 volunteers contributed 209,709 service hours to the food bank.

### Food Drives

Sponsored by various community organizations and businesses, food drives play a critical role in fighting hunger on a local scale by keeping the food bank stocked year round with shelf stable items. In 2016, food drives brought in 428,888 pounds of food, which provided over 357,400 meals.

### Disaster Relief

In addition to being a hunger relief organization, the food bank is also a disaster relief organization. Our facilities are prepared for emergencies with back up generators, an industrial-sized kitchen, shower stations and emergency supplies such as food and water. Anytime a disaster strikes in our service area, truckloads of food and supplies are sent from Feeding America and other corporations. We then work to get those supplies to the affected communities as quickly as possible. We also coordinate disaster efforts with the American Red Cross to ensure the most efficient and timely relief possible.