



Summer 2020

FEEDING *the* HUNGRY

Letter from the CEO

How has your life changed in 2020? With the introduction of COVID-19 into our lives, I would bet many things have changed! At the Food Bank of Northeast Arkansas, we have made some significant changes in recent months so we can safely continue serving people facing hunger.

In March, area schools closed their doors to students and implemented online learning to mitigate the spread of COVID. Children were unable to access free and reduced lunches at school. The Food Bank partnered with area schools to provide family food boxes in lieu of our weekly Backpack Program. More than 4,100 family food boxes were distributed through area schools. These boxes included child-friendly foods from our typical Backpack Program as well as canned goods and fresh fruit for the entire family. Schools went the extra mile to ensure families had access to these boxes by running bus routes to deliver the food or engaging teachers and volunteers to deliver boxes to homes.

In April, we made the difficult decision to temporarily stop allowing volunteers to work at the Food Bank's Distribution Center. In a typical month, we have more than 100 different volunteers who work at the Food Bank. We felt continuing to engage volunteers in our facility was not in the best interest of the volunteers' health and well-being. Thankfully, we received a grant from a generous donor to hire five temporary employees through the end of September. This allowed us to manage the tasks typically handled by volunteers, plus we have employed more people at a time when our unemployment rate has surged in Northeast Arkansas.

Most of our partner food pantries have remained open through the pandemic but have switched to drive-thru distributions. This enables their food pantry volunteers to work outside and practice social distancing while families safely stay in their vehicles while receiving emergency



Volunteers April Finch and Robert Chambers help load a truck with food for delivery in Monette.

food assistance. The Food Bank increased Mobile Pantry Distributions from one per week to five per week! We have also implemented drive-thru service at our mobile distributions.

Since March, the Food Bank of Northeast Arkansas has served 37,649 households providing the equivalent of 2.7 million meals for more than 105,669 people. Thank you for your generous support of the Food Bank of Northeast Arkansas. Because of you, people facing hunger have access to nutritious food during a very difficult time. Thank you for caring.



With Gratitude,

Christie Jordan

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visit our website at
FoodBankofNEA.org
We're very social!
Join us on:



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The New Normal

Buffalo Island Central Schools Backpack Program

COVID-19 has changed so much about our daily lives, but for people facing hunger the need is ever present and growing. A normal week at Buffalo Island Central Schools would see more than 700 students buzzing through the halls. Since March 13 Buffalo Island Schools, along with schools throughout the United States, have remained empty leaving students who rely on school meals wondering when they'll be able to eat again.



Monette Chief of Police, Brian Carmichael, loads his truck with food for delivery in Monette.

"We know that families are making tough choices: do I buy food, do I pay my electric bill, do I buy my kid a birthday present?" said Kima Stewart, **Director of Elementary Education for Buffalo Island Central.** In the early days of the pandemic, schools mobilized to make sure students did not go hungry. Buffalo Island Central, like many area schools, delivered food to the doors of students with the help of several volunteers in the community.

"We're blessed to be able to join up with the Housing [Authority], the city, the police, the school, the county, the Food Bank of Northeast Arkansas, all these people coming together for the benefit just to feel confident that no one is going hungry, that no one is suffering," Stewart said.



A-State Chancellor, Dr. Kelly Damphousse, helps load cars at a drive-thru distribution held at A-State on June 5, 2020.

A-State Food Pantry

On March 17, more than 14,000 Arkansas State University students transitioned to all online courses. As in-person class meetings and campus activities shut down, several students were left without employment. As a result, the A-State Food Pantry has seen a surge in new clients.

“With many on-campus and part-time jobs lost due to the pandemic, students are expressing a need for assistance with rent, utilities, etc. in addition to food,” said Katey Provence, Assistant Director of the Leadership Center at A-State. “The last few months have also opened my eyes to how many students depend on resources at the university that we often take for granted.”

In response to the increased need among students, the A-State Food Pantry has remained open through interim periods and offers curbside pick-up of pre-packed food. Additionally, they hosted a drive-thru distribution at Tomlinson Stadium on the A-State campus. **Volunteers from the A-State Spirit Squad, A-State Basketball, and the Leadership Center handed out boxes of produce and pre-cooked chicken to 264 households.**

Osceola First United Methodist Church Food Pantry & Backpack Program

Like schools and businesses across the country, the First United Methodist Church in Osceola has ceased in-person services in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Their food pantry, however, has seen an increase in clients.



Cars line Carthon Street for a drive-thru distribution hosted by First United Methodist Church in Osceola on June 18, 2020.

“There is definitely a need. It’s changed. It’s ramped up a lot,” said Rev. Rollin Mullins. In addition to the food pantry, the church runs a Backpack Program for Carroll Smith Elementary, North Elementary, and Osceola STEM Academy.

When schools closed down, the Food Bank of Northeast Arkansas worked with schools to provide food to students and families. In lieu of weekly bags, the Food Bank provided family food boxes to students. The boxes contained four weeks of child-friendly, shelf-stable food as well as other non-perishable items to feed a family. **First United Methodist in partnership with Osceola Main Street and several volunteers have distributed 150 family food boxes since the beginning of April.**



Trumann Food Pantry volunteers Allen (left) and John (right) load food into cars at a drive-thru distribution in Trumann on June 17, 2020

Trumann Food Pantry

As unemployment increased across Northeast Arkansas due to COVID, volunteers at the Trumann Food Pantry saw more and more clients.

“In the beginning when people first became unemployed, we had a big demand for our services,” said Terri Dunham, Director of the Trumann Food Pantry.

Prior to the pandemic, clients visiting the Trumann Food Pantry could walk into the pantry, get their box, and leave. But in recent months, Trumann Food Pantry had to adapt how they serve clients to keep both clients and volunteers safe. “It’s been a whole new adjustment trying to help people. I don’t know if we’ll ever get back to normal,” said Hazel Riley, Trumann City Council Ward 3. In this “new normal” high-risk volunteers are responsible for boxing up food inside the pantry while low-risk volunteers load food into cars. The pantry is currently only doing drive-thru at their pantry.

When asked why it is so important for Trumann Food Pantry to continue operating, Terri replied: “People are hungry whether we’re in a pandemic or not. Some people are hungrier. We can’t not meet basic human needs.”

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- Terri Dunham,
Director of the Trumann Food Pantry

Serving After The Storm



“You know there was a tornado, right?” Those were the words Major Anthony Baso heard over the phone from the Salvation Army Disaster Coordinator in Oklahoma as he emerged from his family’s storm shelter on March 28. The EF3 tornado produced winds up to 140 miles per hour and ripped a 12-mile path through one of the busiest areas of Jonesboro and obliterated homes along Old Bridger Road.

In the days following the disaster, the Salvation Army — a Food Bank of Northeast Arkansas partner agency — mobilized to feed those affected by the storm and those working to clean up. Major Baso started reaching out to local stores and restaurants trying to get prepared food as quickly as possible and when a local McDonald’s offered 800 Quarter Pounders, he and his son loaded up their truck and started handing out burgers. “It was really a good effort by the community and the different agencies that were responding to try to help,” said Major Anthony Baso, commanding officer of The Salvation Army of Jonesboro.

The Salvation Army Canteen (mobile feeding unit) set up near the Mall at Turtle Creek and Elizabeth Lane, feeding those impacted by the tornado. Between March 29 and April 1, the Canteen provided 1,598 meals.

Empty Bowls Goes Virtual!

*Wednesday,
September 23, 2020*

For the health and well-being of our supporters and staff, the Food Bank has changed the Empty Bowls Luncheon to a virtual T-Shirt fundraising campaign. We still need your help raising funds to feed our community. Become a sponsor, order a shirt, or donate toward the event to help us feed the hungry.

Shipping available on T-Shirt orders or you may pick up your order starting on September 18 at the Food Bank of Northeast Arkansas. Deadline to order is August 31.



NO MORE EMPTY BOWLS

*Purchase a
shirt here:*



*Become a
sponsor here:*

