What Makes a Disaster?

In late December and through most of January, the country endured a partial shutdown of the federal government, which affected thousands of workers in the Memphis area who were not working or were required to work without pay. For those long weeks of missed paychecks, government employees had to juggle their finances to make ends meet and for many, it was a real struggle. We knew we could help by providing nutritious food for those who found themselves in a situation beyond their control.

Our Partner Agencies relaxed the usual screening requirements, allowing federal workers to show an ID in order to receive food at a food pantry. In addition, we included federal employees in several Mobile Pantry distributions in the Memphis area. The details are in the story inside this newsletter, but I want to talk about something I’ve been asked about several times, based on my remark in a television interview.

Mid-South Food Bank approached the government shutdown like we would a disaster. We are the FEMA-designated agency for food in case of a disaster in our area. While this was not that kind of disaster, it was certainly a situation that was unexpected, devastating and required us to react quickly and appropriately to help people in need. So, yes, we treated it like a disaster.

I am so proud of the way our team came together to organize the registration of federal workers to receive food at the Mobile Pantry distributions, made sure we had enough food for the additional households, and got the word out to the public through the media, our website and social media. I am very grateful to generous donors who stepped up to provide gifts that helped us defray the costs of the food distributions and made it possible for us to restock our shelves quickly following that disastrous period. We were able to respond to the emergency situation because of your generosity.

Is It Summer Yet?

I am ready to put cold weather behind me and enjoy the Spring and coming Summer months. It will be here before we know it. Unfortunately, that’s the time when families with children experience their greatest need for food assistance. Kids are out of school and not receiving their nutritious school meals and families can have a difficult time providing three meals a day for growing bodies. Hunger doesn’t take a vacation.

The government’s Summer Nutrition Programs provide meals and snacks, helping to ensure that children do not face a nutrition gap once they no longer have access to school meals, but children must go to where the meals are served and eat on-site. Mid-South Food Bank has developed a program that acts as an extension of the school-based BackPack Programs. Called Summer Harvest, families are able to access boxes of nutritious food that includes some of the kid-friendly single-serve, easy to open and eat food from the BackPack Program with full-size cans and packages of nonperishable food, plus fresh produce, for nutritious family meals.

Good food fuels children’s minds and bodies. A gift from you for the Summer Harvest Program will contribute to children’s healthy growth and development by providing access to nutritious meals and snacks during the summer – a time when children can be more at risk for hunger.
One cold January evening inside a church in Alcorn County, Mississippi, near the Tennessee state line where Union soldiers marched for destiny at Shiloh, I drafted a prayerful pledge to do something for others. It was a decision that has drawn many collaborators to the powerful idea of providing food and hope for families.

I did not know where to start that day eight years ago, but Pinecrest Weekend Snackpacks for Kids took shape after consulting my wife, Lynda, and Pinecrest Baptist Church pastor Jeff Haney and his wife, Paula. The Haney’s were familiar with a snack pack program in an Arkansas town where they once lived and Linda knew about local child hunger after years of teaching school.

Partnering with the church’s food pantry, we began helping 60 students, which has grown to 290 students receiving Snackpacks every week at the combined Alcorn County/City of Corinth five elementary and middle schools. The program’s impact has garnered financial support from Pinecrest Baptist Church and other sources outside the church. I believe the tremendous community support is because people know there’s a need. In Alcorn County, the child food insecurity rate hovers at 23 percent, or more than 2,000 children, according to Feeding America.

Each week volunteers pack bags with single-serve juice, milk, cereal, chips, granola bars and a pop-top can of beanie weenies or other entrees. I deliver the Snackpacks to the schools. Pinecrest Baptist Pantry also makes USDA commodities and other food available once a month to provide assistance for families facing emergency situations.

At first we purchased the food at a grocer for $800 a week. But we soon learned of the advantages of becoming a Mid-South Food Bank Partner Agency and we know it would be difficult for the pantry and the Snackpacks without that key partnership. All the pieces came together for the program to succeed, exceeding our expectations. So too has the blessings received from the work to help others have a better life.

Betty Wilbanks, 47, relates to the other folks at Pinecrest Baptist Church Food Pantry, despite not knowing all their names. Like them, she will receive a shopping basket filled with food to help her family of eight. She is a working parent and feels the pressure of paying bills and providing enough food for her family, including her fiancé, Gary, and six children ages two to 17. She is employed at a fast-food restaurant in Corinth and receives $63 in SNAP benefits, but it’s not enough, she laments.

Before visiting the Pinecrest Pantry, she recalled living “without lights on” during the month so her kids could eat. “It’s a struggle. I have a job, but everything is so expensive. You have to give up something to provide other needs, like food sometimes,” she says.

On this evening, Betty and her boys Marcus and Dalton were full of smiles as they selected food from the tables including grapes, cereal, frozen strawberries, pork loin, chicken, peas and deer meat processed and donated by the Tennessee Wildlife Agency. Volunteers assisted them with what they needed.

Betty says the food received is invaluable, and she is grateful it is nutritious and long-lasting. “The vegetables are healthy and the cereal, dried beans and spaghetti will make meals for several days,” she said.


Betty said she and others have no inhibitions about receiving it. “Everyone can use help sometimes; there’s no shame. If your family is struggling, you should get the help you need.”
Donor Spotlight
Helping Make It Easier to Be Healthy

As one of the nation’s premier health care insurance companies, UnitedHealthcare is involved in many aspects of helping people deal with a variety of illnesses and health conditions. The company is also aware of the direct correlation between good nutrition and good health. For this reason, they work with food banks throughout the country, including Mid-South Food Bank and its Partner Agencies. United Healthcare has been a Mid-South Food Bank supporter for many years, but in 2013, they began to focus on the Mobile Pantry as a way to reach people who deal with food insecurity, knowing they are probably also dealing with health problems. UnitedHealthcare sponsors Mobile Pantries throughout Mid-South Food Bank’s service area and has provided on-site health screenings and information at several sites.

“One of UnitedHealthcare’s pillars is providing resources to the whole person,” said Community Outreach Manager Corey Shadd. “It makes sense to combine providing healthcare information and services with food and nutrition. It helps both UnitedHealthcare and Mid-South Food Bank accomplish their missions.”

The Mobile Pantry program originally concentrated on underserved rural areas, which was also a focus of UnitedHealthcare’s community outreach. “We know that without adequate transportation, food-insecure individuals and families have limited food choices, which often means shelf-stable, pre-packaged foods that fall well short of good nutritional value,” Shadd added.

This kind of diet can contribute to nutrition related issues such as diabetes, high blood pressure and obesity among the food insecure. Poor nutrition can also be a contributing factor in coronary heart disease, stroke, cancer, asthma, and kidney disease. In some instances, USDA has found food insecurity is a better predictor of chronic illness than even income. [Source: Food Insecurity, Chronic Disease, and Health Among Working-Age Adults by Christian A. Gregory and Alisha Coleman-Jensen. USDA Economic Research Service, July 2017]

UnitedHealthcare’s 2019 support for Mid-South Food Bank’s Mobile Pantry program includes sponsorship of food distributions in Shelby, Lauderdale, Hardeman, Madison, Fayette, Dyer, Lake and Haywood Counties in Tennessee, providing thousands of pounds of food to low-income families.

“UnitedHealthcare is grateful for the partnership with Mid-South Food Bank,” said Shadd. “Working in the community to help people get and stay healthy is important to us so we appreciate the Food Bank, just like they appreciate UnitedHealthcare. It works both ways.”
New Year, Higher Goals – And a Call for More Volunteers

By Clifton Rockett, Manager, Volunteer Services

There is no more vital component of Mid-South Food Bank’s operation than our volunteers. In the last fiscal year, more than 13 million pounds of food was distributed across 31 counties – an accomplishment we could not have achieved without the 5,300 volunteers playing a vital, hands-on role.

As we move further into 2019, Mid-South Food Bank is relying heavily on volunteers, a priority heightened by the upcoming move into our new, larger facility that will mean increased distribution capability to meet our goal of 15 million pounds by June 30. The new facility will have an expanded area just for volunteers so more groups and individuals can join us to sort and pack food to be distributed to those in need throughout our 31-county service area. This work is absolutely critical; the axis of how more than 200,000 neighbors receive help. Mid-South Food Bank is one of the few volunteer opportunities in the area that can take large groups of up to 50 people.

Working in the warehouse is not our only volunteer opportunity. We are distributing more food through our Mobile Pantry, and volunteers are needed to set up and distribute food to clients. We also always need help with clerical work in the office and to be part of the crew at our larger food drives that happen several times a year, plus other special events.

Our volunteers come from all walks of life, from children (age 10 and up) accompanied by parents, to church and civic groups to corporations large and small. People want to help the Food Bank, including a large number of repeat volunteers. I think it’s because we can all relate to food and what it would be like to not know if you’re going to be able to eat that day or tomorrow. Mid-South Food Bank intentionally educates volunteers about food insecurity as part of our brief orientation before volunteer shifts at the warehouse. We want them to know how volunteers, food and funds donations, and our Partner Agencies all collaborate to “Feed the Need” in the Mid-South. When people better understand the problem and the process to help, they understand the impact they make.

We invite everyone to visit our website www.midsouthfoodbank.org/volunteer. You can learn about our volunteer opportunities, read testimonials and fill out the Group or Individual application. When you send your application, a Volunteer Services representative will be in touch to answer all your questions and get you set up for your volunteer experience. We hope to hear from you soon.
Thousands Receive Help Due to Federal Government Shutdown

When multiple federal government departments closed for 35 days, Mid-South Food Bank anticipated an increase in need for food assistance from the many federal employees in our area who were furloughed or mandated to continue work without compensation. Mid-South Food Bank functions to help people who face a sudden job loss, a health crisis or other emergencies.

"It may not have been a typical disaster, but we approached it as disaster relief," said Mid-South Food Bank President Estella Mayhue-Greer. "With the furloughed employees, it deviated from responding to a natural disaster because we were able to prepare ahead of time."

Mid-South Food Bank worked with the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) at the airport, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Center, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the local U.S. Coast Guard offices. Food Bank staff visited federal workplaces to register workers to receive food assistance at several Mobile Pantry distributions. In all, nearly 2,000 households were helped through a tough, emotional episode.

In addition to the Mobile Pantry, all area Partner Agencies were instructed to help any federal worker that came to their food pantry with a valid federal ID.

Matilda Cushingberry, manager of the Greater Harvest Food Pantry in Memphis, anticipated many of the furloughed employees might be reaching out to the pantry for help, based on feedback from members of the church’s congregation. In January, 33 furloughed employees were among the 220 households that received help at Greater Harvest. Cushingberry said the circumstances did place extra pressure on the pantry.

"We embraced it, though, because we heard so many stories of these folks — many with tears — and we wanted to help," she said. "So many of them had never faced an unemployment like this and they are proud people. We tried to treat them with extra care, making it comfortable for them and also easy for them to get assistance."

Greater Harvest received support to serve the extra clients, she said, from increased grocery donations from several neighborhood stores wanting to help.

Mid-South Food Bank received help from generous donors including individuals who sent more than $6,000 in checks and online gifts or held food drives. The Food Bank also received funds from the City of Memphis and a significant donation from NIKE. NIKE also matched all employees’ online donations and several NIKE employees volunteered at a Mobile Pantry distribution for federal workers.

National companies assisted through Feeding America with grants to member food banks where large numbers of federal workers live.

"Providing assistance to federal employees through Mid-South Food Bank was only fitting because these are workplaces that have donated to the Food Bank to help others every year through Operation Feed and the Combined Federal Campaign," noted Mayhue-Greer. "We were proud to help them."

Chanelle Reynolds, her two daughters Aziyah, 9, and Tela, 7, and her mom Verlene, made their way through the organized line of cars in front of the Mid-South Coliseum on Feb. 16 for the final Mobile Pantry for government workers affected by the shutdown. They were one of 600 households that received 50,000 pounds of nonperishable food, fresh produce and frozen meat.

"We couldn’t miss this. It’s vital. I worked into the middle of the night but we all wanted to come and take advantage of this opportunity for help," said Chanelle, an IRS employee. "It’s a Godsend."
MLK Day Donation Drive Yields 12,000 lbs. – Most Ever

The 8th annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day food drive at the National Civil Rights Museum proved to be the most productive to date. Nearly 12,000 pounds of food was collected thanks in part to a grant the NCRM received enabling it to waive admission cost for that day, only asking visitors to donate food for admission.

“We are glad to have played a role in helping our community, but we would be remiss if we didn’t give thanks to the Memphians and visitors from all around who gave generously to this cause at such a critical time,” said Connie Dyson, NCRM marketing communications manager.

Urban and Rural Hunger: One Problem with Two Faces

The scenic beauty of the nation’s rural areas have a disturbing reality for many living in those wide open spaces: food insecurity and hunger. As food banks in America still grapple with solving hunger, it is ironic that the rural countryside, where most of our food is derived, remains a significant food insecurity challenge.

“One of the big problems I see is transportation,” says Larry Browning, director of the Loaves and Fishes Food Pantry in rural McNairy County. “We have a lot of elderly clients and they have to get a ride with someone or they just cannot come to the Pantry.”

While the scarcity of basic resources facing populations in rural areas, including conveniently located grocery stores, is the same roadblock faced in many urban populations, it is harder to provide assistance in rural areas where there are fewer food pantries or other agencies to partner with. Mid-South Food Bank’s service area spans 31 counties in west Tennessee, north Mississippi and east Arkansas. Memphis is the largest urban area by far, followed by Jackson, Tennessee, and Tupelo, Mississippi. Other than those cities, the rest of its service area is rural, with several rural counties that have food insecurity rates near or over 30 percent, compared to 21 percent in Shelby County.

Access to food resources is a problem in rural areas of low population, where people are more spread out, making the Food Bank’s ability to reach them more difficult. This remains a two-tiered dynamic that Mid-South Food Bank confronts daily in its operations.

Rural Hunger in America by the Numbers

- 2.4 million rural households face hunger.
- Three-quarters of the counties with the highest rates of food insecurity are in rural areas.
- 86% of the counties with the highest rates of child food insecurity are rural.
Baptist DeSoto Team members packed 100 Diabetic Care Packages at Mid-South Food Bank for newly diagnosed diabetic patients. This program is made possible by a grant from the Baptist Foundation. (Front to back): Beth Lansdell, Director of Case Management and Social Services; Chaplain Terry Coleman, Senior Staff Chaplain; Allison Williams, Student Dietitian Intern; and Rachelle Richardson, Student Dietitian Intern. Chaplain Steve Edmonds, Director of Pastoral Care (not pictured) coordinates the program.

Retirement Party with a Purpose

Ray Pohlman, long-time AutoZone vice president of government and community relations and Food Bank supporter, retired recently. For his retirement party, he wanted something more than just a cake and good wishes. He requested a special food packing event for Mid-South Food Bank. So, before the party, several AutoZoners gathered to pack 100 Senior Grocery Boxes with about 30 pounds of food each to help low-income seniors in our area stay healthy by receiving the nutrition they need. It was the perfect way to give Pohlman a great send-off.

AutoZoners made quick work of packing 100 boxes with about 17 different food items.
Upcoming Events

National Association of Letter Carriers “Stamp out Hunger”
Saturday, May 11th

Operation Feed
May 13th through July 31st

Hunger to Hope Campaign for Tomorrow

Construction is well underway for the new Mid-South Food Bank facility, which is located on the corner of South Perkins and Knight Road, near Lamar Avenue. This location works for the Food Bank because it is easy for trucks to move in and out. There will also be a total of 12 dock doors, including a cold dock where fresh and frozen food can move directly in and out from refrigerated trucks to our cooler and freezer.

There is still time for you to be part of Mid-South Food Bank’s efforts to raise $12.5 million to consolidate our three warehouses into this one efficient distribution center that will enable us to collect and distribute more nutritious food and serve more people. Thanks to generous friends, we have raised $12.3 million.

We need YOU to help us cross the finish line.

Your gift will help build a new, efficient facility, but more importantly, you will help to move the needle from Hunger to Hope for so many. There are still many naming opportunities for you, your family or to honor someone special, including The Tree of Hope, a beautiful donor recognition display that will be prominent in the lobby our new headquarters. For a donation of at least $1000, you can “Buy an Apple” on the Tree of Hope.

Please consider making your gift today at www.midsouthfoodbank.org/hunger-to-hope-capital-campaign or contact Estella Mayhue-Greer, 901-527-0841.

Throughout the upcoming year, Andy Ticer and Michael Hudman, chefs/co-owners of Enjoy AM Restaurant Group, will bring 12 award-winning chefs from around the country into their kitchens for a series of restaurant takeovers. The events will be held once a month at a chosen Enjoy AM restaurant: Andrew Michael Italian Kitchen, Hog and Hominy, Catherine & Mary’s or The Gray Canary. These one night only menu and dining experiences will benefit Mid-South Food Bank’s Healthy School Pantry Program. For more information, go to https://andrewmichaelitaliankitchen.com

Mid-South Food Bank sends thanks to these organizations that serve as ongoing food drop-off sites, in addition to our office at 239 S. Dudley 38104, Monday – Friday 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Beth Shalom Synagogue
6775 Humphreys Blvd. 38120
Drop off in the main foyer
Tuesday – Friday 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.; Saturday 9:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Cumberland Presbyterian Church
8207 Traditional Place, Cordova 38016
Monday – Thursday 8 a.m. – 5 p.m., Friday 8 a.m.-noon.

Eyewear Gallery
428 Perkins Ext. 38117
Mon – Thurs 9 a.m. - 5 p.m., Sat 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m.
A group from ALSAC, the fundraising arm of St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital, volunteered at Mid-South Food Bank recently. Their efforts highlighted the intersection of two philanthropies working to help children in need.

“Maintaining family-centered care for the families who turn to St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital during one of life’s most difficult journeys is at the heart of our mission,” reflected DeAnna Cox, ALSAC analyst-event operations. "Those of us who volunteered at the Mid-South Food Bank definitely sensed that spirit between our organizations."

For a couple of hours the group sorted and packed food for hundreds of meals at Mid-South Food Bank’s warehouse. The food the group handled was designated for families across the region, helping many of the 110,000 children facing food insecurity.

While ALSAC employees have volunteered at Mid-South Food Bank in the past, it was this group’s first time to help. Many in the group mentioned that they appreciated the emphasis on food safety, from examining food items’ best-by labels to screening for packaging defects. It helped to grasp a better understanding of food waste.

"But most of all, it was eye-opening to hear how many families are in need of food in our region. We are grateful for the Mid-South Food Bank and all its volunteers and staff who make food available to the families that need it most," Cox said.

The Tennessee Justice Center (TJC) recently held a state-wide anti-hunger summit, Ending Hunger in West Tennessee, at Mid-South Food Bank. Guests included the nutrition team from TJC and representatives from Congressman Steve Cohen’s office, Shelby County Schools, YMCA, AARP, University of Memphis and Memphis Tilth. Pictured: Mid-South Food Bank SNAP Outreach Coordinator Drenda Herron makes a presentation on how she is successful in working with the local and state DHS offices, Food Bank agencies and other agencies and nonprofits to find eligible SNAP applicants and help them get the benefits they deserve.

Oak Forest Elementary in Memphis is one of 120 schools competing in the annual Kids Kan food and funds drive. The Shelby County School, with 430 students in grades K-5th, collected over 2,000 food items and raised $478. Those collections convert to 3,000 meals for food-insecure families in our community! Since 1988, Kids Kan has generated more than 400,000 meals each year. Kids Kan is sponsored by Kroger, with additional sponsorship by FedEx and Incredible Pizza. Pictured are fifth graders who helped promote Kids Kan to Oak Forest’s student body and parents.
Tributes January – February, 2019

Honorariums
In Honor of
Ika Anasi
  Given by Emily Bailey
Lyne Anderson
Amy Kauerz
John Balfour
Michael Balfour
Andrea Barrach
  Marcia Platkin & Steven Platkin
Margaret Classet
Robert Reese
Stephanie Clein
  Michelle & Paul Clein
Sally Clique
  Susan Archer
Allean Cobb
  Shawn & Tamokia Cobb
The Staff of the College of Graduate Health Sciences
Donald Thomason
Richard & J.J. Doughtie
Mr. & Mrs. John L. Ryder
Michelle Duckworth
Esra Roan
Anne Engle
  Robert Reese
Louise Engle
  Robert Reese
David & Jackie Flaum
  Alice Berman
William Gotten
  Mary Edith Walker
Romney Grandi
  Xochitl Delgado
Carolyn Guyton
  Teri & Jack Rowell
Robert & Betsy Halfacre
  Bob Friedl
The Herman Family
  Carolyn Schrier
Rabbi Martin Hinchin
  Fred & Joyce Graflund
John Hunt
  Paula Stack
Kitty Cannon & Jim Waller
  Patricia J. Walker
Camille King
  Diane Bonner
Keith & Barbara Leach
  Ann Rabalais
  John, Sarah, & Poppy Leach
  Ann Rabalais
  Judge Freeman Marr
  Dawn Boone
  Rev. Dr. & Mrs. Randy McClay
  Kent Wunderlich
  John McNary
  James & Esther Leduc
  Eloise Mills Robinson
  Christopher Fields
  Russell Pernell
  Carla Preacher-Ryan
  Phyllis Yarbrough
Stan & Kathy Pruet
  Sandra M. Allen
Beverly Royer
  Robert Reese
Cheryl Sanders
  Robert Reese
The Sarver Family
  Nicole Williams
Evelyn Simkins
  Pearl Simkin
Sarah Spiotta Peppel
  David Peppel
Dev Varma
  Esra Roan
Marcia Wells
  Kim & Jessica Hunter

Memorials
In Memory of
David Alperin
  Given by Phyllis Levine
  Dr. & Mrs. Charles Plesofsky
  Bettie T. Rubenstein
Bobbie Baras Field
  Phyllis Levine
  Alice Baskin
  Donald Baskin
Robert & Betsy Belcher
  Ann Bendall
Dr. Charles H. Brown
  James Doyle
Frances Buchalter
  Phyllis Levine
Nancy Chalatas
  Jimmie L. Price
Delores Common
  Dan & Patty Rucker
Senora DeCosta Karr
  Miriam DeCosta-Willis
Rosalind Dupuy
  Eleanor Buckely
Trina Freeman
  Michael Balfour
Debbie Giannini
  Matthew Giannini
Dr. Cheryl Golden
  Eleanor Buckely
Virginia Granger
  Rodney A. Coleman
Chuck Hutton
  Ann Hogue
Benton Jarrell
  Bonnie J. Hart
Bill Carrington Jones
  Pat & Roy Moore
Seth Lucas
  Sam, Suzanne & Richie Siegel
Brian Maiher
  Susan L. Drewes
Bobbie J. Mathis
  Eleanor Buckely
Donald May
  Dr. & Mrs. Charles Plesofsky
Masako Karube Mayes
  David Mayes
Anna Mayhue
  Eleanor Buckely
Frances Mayhue
  Eleanor Buckely
Marjorie Mayhue
  Eleanor Buckely
John McNary
  Judy W. Bell
Ricky & Felicia Bursi
  Brad Conder
Dr. & Mrs. Charles S. Foster
Kristina Gifford
  Cristina R. Graybill
Judith Haas
  Jessica Hord
John Kaltner
  Phyllis Levine
Laura Loth
  Janet Morrow
Jennifer Place
Aunt Mildred
  Elizabeth Pacaud
The Miller Family
  Carolyn Schrier
  Lois Pointer
  Claudette Shephard
  Ani Rak
  Jere & Kim Parobek
  Orvin & Flossie Reed
  James E. & Mary Lou Reed
  Mr. & Mrs. W.T. Reese
  Robert Reese
  Shirley Richard
  Estella Mayhue-Greer
  Nina Rogers
  Thomas G. Rogers
  Livija Rutkowski
  Phyllis Levine
  Irvin Salky
  Betsy Belz
  Reinhard Schimek
  Carola Conners
  Danny Schmidt
  Robert Reese
  Mr. & Mrs. Mohan Singh
  Dr. & Mrs. D.D. Singh
  Les Stallings
  Jimmie L. Price
  Lee Thompson
  Bettie T. Rubenstein
  Jim Walter
  Robert Reese
  Stuart Westland
  Phyllis Levine
  Mathis B. Wilson
  Eleanor Buckely
  Mattie Louise Wright
  Earnestine Benton