



# Food for Thought



WINTER 2022

A PUBLICATION OF THE FOOD BANK OF CENTRAL LOUISIANA

## From the Executive Director

It's a new year and we're all experiencing what the "new normal" looks like in our lives. **For the Food Bank, these are exciting times as we reflect on how much we accomplished over the past year, and we imagine all the good we can do going forward.** While we have been serving more neighbors, we have grown; and that growth has blessed us with tremendous opportunities. With our increased capacity, we have begun to take our services to a new level.

We were able to deliver the Backpack Program over the summer to children in summer schools and day camps. Reaching kids over the summer is always a challenge, so we hope to offer summer backpacks in more communities this year.

Our food distributions have been streamlined for the drive-through, which has made them more efficient and user-friendly. This model has decreased wait times and allowed us to serve more people at every distribution; and is now used across locations — at mobile pantries as well as at the Food Bank distribution center in Alexandria.

Our goal is to have all of our programs become truly centered on those we serve and equity-intentioned through focused use of data and service management. Improved technology helps us better understand where there are gaps in service, and what programs might best fit particular needs. We continue to offer referrals to other community organizations that can help our clients address their needs beyond hunger.

All this is to say that at the Food Bank, we don't lament that things will never go back to the way they were a couple of years ago. **We never imagined being able to serve so many, so well. We look forward to seeing just what this year will bring working in partnership with Cenla.**



Sincerely,  
**Jayne Wright-Velez**  
Executive Director



## Albertson's Foundation Supports the Food Bank

The Food Bank recently received a \$1,652 grant from Nourishing Neighbors. The grant was made possible by generous customers who visited Albertson's in Alexandria during September and donated at checkout to help provide healthy breakfasts for children. We will use the funds to support our Backpack Program, which provides weekend meals to schoolchildren. Nourishing Neighbors will fill more than 300 backpacks this year!

Nourishing Neighbors is a charitable program of Albertson's Foundation. The program aims to eradicate childhood hunger in America by keeping food banks stocked and supporting meal distribution programs at schools. In 2020 Nourishing Neighbors enabled 350 million meals, invested \$10.4 million in schools to feed kids, and provided \$9 million towards empowering BIPOC communities through hunger programs.

The Food Bank of Central Louisiana is proud to partner with Nourishing Neighbors to help fight hunger in our community.



## Grants Feed Families at Mobile Pantries

The Food Bank's Mobile Pantry Program continues to expand and feed more families across Central Louisiana than we ever have before. Since the start of this fiscal year in July, we have been fortunate to receive several grants to support this work. As Mobile Pantries are so important — especially for our neighbors in rural and outlying communities — we want to thank the grantors who have stepped up to help extend our reach.

- AmeriCorps Volunteer Louisiana Commission in the office of the Lt. Governor.
- Central Louisiana Community Foundation
- Louisiana Department of Revenue
- Louisiana Healthcare Connections
- P&G Fund
- Weyerhaeuser Giving Fund

## Food Bank Board of Directors

**Joe Gardner**  
Chair

**Todd St. Romain**  
Vice Chair

**Kent Lachney**  
Treasurer

**Cornelia Sutton**  
Secretary

**Lottie Bash**

**Ronny Briley**

**Gary Brown**

**Brian Couvillon**

**Christina Hathorne**

**Tim Holloway**

**Mandy Scoggin**

**Marie Simpson**

**Kelli West**

**Robert Willet**

**Krystal Williams**

## Food Bank Staff Members

**Jayne Wright-Velez**  
Executive Director

**Jodi Belgard**  
Agency Relations  
Coordinator

**Joseph Bono**  
Food Procurement  
Coordinator

**Dustin Bordelon**  
Operations Manager

**Frances Boudreaux**  
Good Food Project  
Director

**Yolanda Deshotel**  
Client Services

**Samantha DeWitt**  
Service Insights  
Coordinator

**Carrie Gill**  
Annual Fund Coordinator

**Ken Goff**  
School Garden  
Coordinator

**Linda Hutson**  
Director of Development &  
Community Relations

**Bridgett Johnson**  
Backpack Program/  
SNAP Outreach

**Hannah Johnston**  
Mobile Pantry Coordinator

**Rhonda Lair**  
GFP Community Gardens  
Manager

**Liz Matthews**  
AmeriCorps Program  
Supervisor

**Porsche Nicholson**  
Logistics Coordinator

**Lisa Robinson**  
SNAP Outreach  
Coordinator

**Carole Stafford**  
Volunteer Coordinator

**Vera Tyler**  
Warehouse Supervisor

**Cecelia Wagner**  
Development &  
Communications  
Coordinator

**Will Carter**  
**Charles Coine**  
**Johnny Knapp**  
**Glen Marshall**  
**Jerry Norris**  
**Samuel Sands**  
Drivers

**Landon Anderson**  
**Evelyn Keller**  
**Shaquille Jordan**  
**Tess Grey**  
**Bradrick Lewis**  
**Pam Lipsey**  
**Linda Swafford**  
**Mike Sykes**  
Warehouse Associates

**Melissa Dorsey**  
**Michael Fish**  
**Edward Guidry**  
**Seneca McGinnis**  
**Layla Mioton**  
**Courtney Walker**  
**Kristin Williams**  
AmeriCorps Members

### 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, audiotape, 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.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](http://www.ascr.usda.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](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

## THE RAPIDES FOUNDATION

### Grant Funding Supports Produce Purchasing Program



Some neighborhoods in the United States, particularly those in low-income areas, have been dubbed “food deserts” because residents do not live near supermarkets or other food retailers that carry affordable and nutritious food. Low-income residents of these neighborhoods and those who lack transportation rely more on smaller neighborhood stores that may not carry healthy foods or may offer them only at higher prices.

A lack of healthy options could lead to poor diets and to diet-related conditions such as obesity or diabetes. If low-income households in food deserts can only purchase food at higher prices, they may be more prone to food insecurity — not having enough food for active, healthy living.

A recent Feeding America study found that many households served by the network of food banks include people coping with a diet-related chronic disease. Fifty-eight percent of households reported having at least one member with high blood pressure and 33 percent had at least one member with diabetes. Based on a recent survey conducted by the Food Bank of Central Louisiana, more than one-half of the clients (56%) rated their health as fair or poor.



The Food Bank of Central Louisiana is working hard to provide more fresh produce for the families served at the Alexandria warehouse, at mobile food pantry distributions, and at the member agencies.

In the spring of 2021, The Rapides Foundation approved \$150,000 in grant funding to the Food Bank to purchase fresh produce over a five-month period to distribute across The Rapides Foundation's 9-parish service area. This

project was structured to support the mission of The Rapides Foundation to improve the health status of Central Louisiana, and their vision to positively impact Central Louisiana by deploying resources to improve key factors of health status.

Prior to this grant initiative, 45% of those served by the Food Bank of Central Louisiana report they sometimes (32%) or rarely (12%) have fruit and vegetables available.

During the five-month period, the Food bank purchased 793,250 pounds of fresh produce including cabbage, carrots, cucumbers, eggplant, onions, potatoes, sweet potatoes, watermelon, yellow squash, and zucchini.



*We are so grateful for this funding from The Rapides Foundation that has allowed us to purchase fresh, healthy produce to distribute to families who often don't have access to these items."*

**- Jayne Wright-Velez,  
Executive Director of the Food Bank of Central Louisiana**

“We heard so much positive feedback from our clients about how much they appreciated and enjoyed the mix of produce they received with their food box,” Wright-Velez continued.

# The Good Food Project in Alexandria

## Found Creative Ways to Continue Educating Students

By: Amy Robertson, State Public Affairs Officer at Natural Resources Conservation Service

Adapted for the Food Bank of Central Louisiana newsletter



The Food Bank of Central Louisiana's Good Food Project is an organization dedicated to teaching the next generation about the importance of growing food, conserving natural resources, and giving back to their communities. Over the past several years the Natural Resources Conservation Service has partnered with the Good Food Project to teach thousands of students across Central Louisiana the importance of conservation and agriculture.



In a "normal" year staff from the GFP visit schools, teach about gardening and the importance of knowing how their food is grown and, more importantly, growing food for themselves. Most times the GFP team, led by Frances Boudreaux, Director, would visit schools, teach a lesson, and then help students and schools plan and plant a raised vegetable bed garden. The lesson included the entire process, from beginning to end that included planning, planting, tending, harvesting, and then eating produce raised in the gardens.

All of that ended in March of 2020 when COVID-19 ushered in a new reality that included how students would be able to learn and access information. The Food Bank of Central Louisiana made necessary changes across the organization, including developing a video series and corresponding educational materials that students could watch on YouTube.

Frances recalls the creative process of adapting to a virtual learning environment, "The Food Bank of Central Louisiana's Good Food Project team and I have so enjoyed the process of developing, writing, and coordinating video lessons that are aligned with the Louisiana Believes Science Standards." She continues, "**The Covid Pandemic has presented some serious challenges to our work, but we are endeavoring to overcome them to benefit students in our eleven-parish service region.**"

Dexter Sapp, Rapides Soil and Water Conservation District Outreach Coordinator totally agrees with Frances. Dexter has witnessed first-hand how Frances and her team have pivoted and adapted to a quickly changing environment to make sure they completed and fulfilled their outreach commitment. "I am so impressed at how the

Good Food Project has adopted new ways of reaching students in this pandemic environment that we are in," he said.

Dexter explains one of the best examples of GFP's creativity, "Frances wrote a book that is titled *"The Good Food Project Story"* that describes how to grow healthy food in a sustainable way." This book was written for students and the community at large which has proved to be an excellent way of reaching a targeted population.

View their story by following this link:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=yQxToQhUb5g&t=11s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yQxToQhUb5g&t=11s)

"The Good Food Project online classes have been successful as well," explained Dexter. According to Frances, The Food Bank of Central Louisiana is in the process of copyrighting the curriculum being developed by the Good Food Project.

Frances sums up the purpose of the outreach agreement and the Good Food Project, "Our resolve is to work as safely as possible and to fulfill our commitment to teach youth sustainable gardening practices and to connect these children with healthier food options, behaviors, and improved health outcomes, and to honor The Food Bank's mission to alleviate hunger in Central Louisiana."

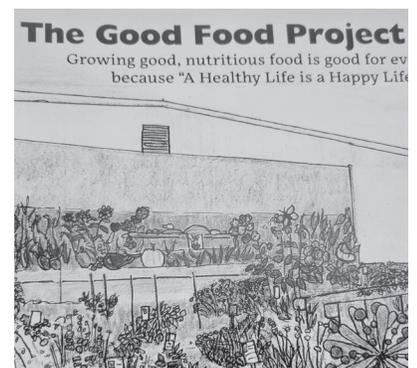
To view some of the GFP video series visit

[www.youtube.com/user/lindahutsonfb](https://www.youtube.com/user/lindahutsonfb)

.....

### Important stats:

- GFP has created, filmed, and uploaded a series of videos that have been shared with educators and students within the Food Bank of Central Louisiana's service region.
- Since the summer of 2020 GFP has reached over 2,000 students in Central Louisiana with the videos and corresponding lessons.
- Since the spring of 2021 GFP has installed 12 new school or youth-oriented community gardens and expanded six existing school or community gardens. GFP currently partners with 49 school gardens and additionally, another 30 community gardens in an eleven-parish region.



## \$100,000 Challenge Grant

Double your donation to the Food Bank of Central Louisiana! The Food Bank has received a \$100,000 challenge grant from an anonymous donor to help us in our fight against hunger. From March — May, your donation will be matched 1 to 1. In short, every dollar you donate will be doubled. Your \$50 donation will be matched with \$50. Your \$100 donation will be matched with \$100. Your \$500 donation will be matched with \$500.

To double your gift, you can make a donation using one of the following two methods:

- Donate on-line: [www.fbcenla.org](http://www.fbcenla.org) and click the "Donate Now" button.
- Mail a check to: Food Bank of Central Louisiana / 3223 Baldwin Avenue / Alexandria, LA 71301.



## Christmas Cheer Food Drive Collects 161,933 Pounds of Food

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

The results of the 2021 KALB-TV Christmas Cheer Food Drive are complete, and 161,933 pounds of non-perishable food items were collected from Avoyelles, Grant, Natchitoches, Rapides, and Vernon parish schools.

Sponsored by the Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana and KALB-TV, 61 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 41,325 pounds, 15,861 pounds in Grant parish, 8,739 pounds in Natchitoches parish, 65,611 pounds in Rapides parish, and 30,397 pounds in Vernon parish.

The following schools led their parish in donations:

- » Avoyelles — Lafargue Elementary (6,828 pounds) and Bunkie High School (13,458 pounds).

- » Grant — South Grant Elementary School (5,089 pounds), Grant Junior High (1,022 pounds), and Georgetown High School (2,936 pounds).
- » Natchitoches — Provencal Elementary School (1,753 pounds), Natchitoches Magnet School (2,352 pounds), and Natchitoches Central High School (1,224 pounds).
- » Rapides — Phoenix Magnet Elementary School (12,289 pounds), Pineville Junior High (6,109 pounds), and Pineville High School (5,593 pounds). Phoenix Magnet Elementary School also took home the top prize for donating the most pounds per student (32.42 pounds per student).
- » Vernon — Rosepine Elementary School (6,595 pounds), Vernon Middle School (1,665 pounds), and Rosepine High School (6,334 pounds).

Eight thousand dollars in prize money from the Tunica-Biloxi Tribe has been 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. We would like to thank the students, parents, teachers and school personnel who make this food drive a success. We are grateful for the hard work of our partners in this extraordinary drive: the sheriff's departments of Avoyelles, Grant and Vernon parishes, the city of Natchitoches Public Works Department, and the Paragon Casino Receiving Staff."*

**- Jayne Wright-Velez,  
Executive Director of the Food Bank of Central Louisiana**

