



## MFN Keeps on Truckin'

Mississippi Food Network was fortunate last spring to purchase a brand new 18-wheeler trailer through grant funding from **Tyson Foods**. We were ready to roll with more reliable transportation to help build our capacity to distribute additional food. However, in mid-March when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, MFN experienced a staffing shortfall of truck drivers. In addition to the impact COVID-19 was having, tornadoes ripped through south Mississippi affecting thousands of Mississippians. Needless to say help was needed quickly. A phone call to Jim Richards, President and CEO of **KLLM Driving Academy** and a former MFN Board of Directors member, requesting assistance in recruiting a truck driver resulted in an amazing offer. Richards immediately offered to send one of his driving instructors over to help, free of charge, until an additional driver could be hired.

KLLM's driving instructor Kevin Webb answered the call and delivered food to our partner agencies all over the state for five weeks during late April and May. Not only did Webb drive the truck, he worked right alongside MFN staff at mobile food pantries to distribute food in some of the hardest hit areas of the state. Webb says he averaged about 250 miles a day on the road delivering food.

**"Working with Mississippi Food Network was a worthwhile and rewarding experience for me," says Webb. "I felt like I was helping make a difference in people's lives."**

Webb said he wasn't very familiar with Mississippi Food Network before the experience and shared his own story of food insecurity. "I wish my family had known about an organization like Mississippi Food Network when I was growing up," says Webb. "My dad was a truck driver with seven children to feed."

**"Kevin was the perfect person at the perfect time to help when we needed it," says Cassandra Mobley, MFN's Director of Agency Relations. "We can't thank him and our friends at KLLM enough for stepping up and showing their support."**

Rest assured that Mississippi Food Network's now fully staffed team of drivers are out on the roads every day logging miles and delivering food. No matter the circumstances, Mississippi Food Network keeps on truckin' indeed to provide food for families in need.

## Mission

To relieve poverty-related hunger in our service area by distributing donated and purchased food and grocery products through a network of member churches and non-profit organizations. We provide nutrition education to our needy clients. We also emphasize advocacy and related needs.

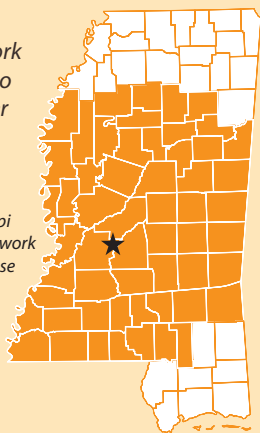
## Vision

To eliminate poverty-related hunger in our service area.

## Our Service Area

Mississippi Food Network distributes to 430 member agencies in 56 counties.

★ = Mississippi Food Network Warehouse



## Food Network Fact

Our service area is big! Our 56 counties add up to 32,955 square miles of Mississippi fields, towns, and cities.

With an estimated 386,650 food-insecure Mississippians across all that space, that's about 12 people per square mile who are struggling with food insecurity.

## Board of Directors

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## Dear Friends and Donors,

My message in our last newsletter began with me expressing hope that the COVID-19 pandemic would be a recent bad memory. As I write to you at this time, that hope has been swept away. The negative effects of the pandemic continue to be felt at every level of our society. The wearing of protective face masks, for instance, is not just a common practice, but a requirement in many U.S. cities and states. Some colleges and universities have suspended fall sports; many businesses that closed in response to the virus have yet to reopen; major retailers are filing for bankruptcy at an alarming rate. As such, food banks are being overwhelmed with unusually long lines of individuals and families seeking help, many of whom are facing hunger and food insecurity for the first time, due to the pandemic and other factors over which they may have no control.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, we at Mississippi Food Network have had to rethink and make adjustments as to how we go about the work we do. Some of our agencies, for instance, have closed due to coronavirus concerns; and, the ones that are open, in concert with us, have had to use creative scheduling to keep up with the increased demand for food. We have rethought how we go about distributing food, in order to accommodate Center for Disease Control (CDC) safety protocols to not only keep our employees safe, but also those individuals to whom we are distributing food. We are having to employ temporary workers to replace the volunteers we were previously able to rely on to help with sorting, packing, and food distribution.

**There is a saying that "every cloud has a silver lining." If there is a silver lining to this pandemic cloud that is overshadowing us, it is how graciously those of you who are able have responded with your financial gifts to help support the increased demand for food this unprecedented health crisis is causing.**

Without your support, we could not do what we do. As always, your continued support is needed and appreciated.

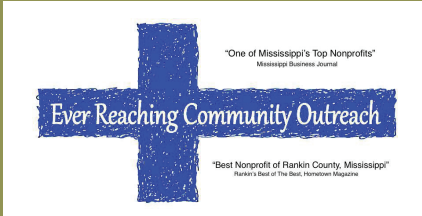
Sincerely,

Charles H. Beady, Jr., Ph.D.  
Chief Executive Officer

**Without your support, we could not do what we do.**







## AGENCY PARTNER SPOTLIGHT:

### Ever Reaching Community Outreach, Pelahatchie, MS

Mississippi Food Network has approximately 430 Agency Partners that help us distribute food to those who need it most. We could not distribute the volume of food we do without them. Our Agency Partners know the needs of their individual communities, and the people who live in them. They are critical to our mission to relieve poverty-related hunger. That is why we would like to introduce you to Ever Reaching Community Outreach (ERCO) in Pelahatchie, Mississippi.

What began in August 2012 as a project to help a family in need has since turned into a sizeable grassroots organization of Christians from a variety of different denominations. Not only is ERCO a food pantry, it's also a

donation center that accepts clothes, shoes, furniture, household items, and food, and gives them away for free to those in need.

"At ERCO, we strive to meet the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of people on an individual level," says Kathy Jo Latham, facilities manager at ERCO. "We offer hope and encouragement, enabling people to better themselves."

**Latham says Mississippi Food Network is a vital resource for their organization. "We are so appreciative of the extra food that has been provided during this time of extra need," said Latham.**



## 705,648+ Farmers to Families Food Boxes Distributed in Mississippi

The Farmers to Families Food Box Program is a USDA led effort designed to assist farmers and food distributors who have been hard hit by the COVID-19 crisis. Through a partnership with Mississippi Food Network, **Merchants Food Services** and **MS Fruit & Vegetable Company** have distributed 705,648+ of these family-size food boxes to every county in the state from mid-May through the end of August. MFN assisted these companies by connecting them with non-profit agencies and churches to distribute the food boxes via "truck to trunk" distribution. The program is scheduled to continue into October. The food boxes contain fresh fruit and vegetables, dairy products, and meat products. **Additionally, Merchants Food Services also distributed 166,000 gallons of milk for Mississippi families in need.**



## Welcome Belhaven University Women's Soccer Team Volunteers

In August, the Mississippi Food Network welcomed our first volunteers since March — the Belhaven University's Women's Soccer Team! After signing in, temperature checks, a spritz of hand sanitizer, and putting their masks on, these student-athletes spent their morning packing assorted backpack meals for Mississippi children. This was not only a great opportunity for the women's team to give back to children in many Mississippi communities, but they also allowed the Mississippi Food Network an opportunity to open our doors once again to volunteers.

**The team put together 1,080 kits in two hours, which set a high bar for future groups as the Mississippi Food Network works to safely allow volunteers to pack food boxes and meal kits for individuals, families, and children throughout the state moving forward.**

# Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation Supports a Healthy Mississippi in Time of Need

"The Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation proudly supports Mississippi's communities. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, the Foundation is supporting food banks across the state so Mississippians will have access to healthy foods," says Sheila Grogan, President, Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation.

Through the Foundation's partnership with Mississippi Food Network, many children's bodies and minds are being fueled with a bag of food — a bag of hope. The food is all child friendly, and can be prepared by the children themselves if their parents are at work. Arionna Miller is one of the children Mississippi Food Network serves in Grenada. Arionna would usually attend an after-school program where she would receive a snack. Due to COVID-19, the after-school program is closed; however, the program's employees are distributing bags of healthy snacks and breakfast items to the children's homes. Arionna said, "I am very thankful for my bag of snacks, especially my cereal for breakfast."

**During the summer months, MFN distributed 40,324 child feeding snack bags, 57,618 lbs. of fresh produce, and 27,650 family food boxes to 51 counties in the state.**

"We appreciate our partnership with the Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation during these unprecedented times. Their investment in our organization is an investment in the people of Mississippi, and will help us provide food assistance to those who need our services. Working together, we can help each other through these unfamiliar times," says Charles Beady, CEO, Mississippi Food Network.



## Nissan Neighbors Program Doubles Annual Grant

Nissan's Vehicle Assembly Plant in Canton has a years-long partnership with Mississippi Food Network, and its employees regularly volunteer to help pack backpacks with healthy lunches and snacks for kids with food insecurity. This year Nissan North America extended its fight to curb hunger by doubling its annual contribution in response to the rising rates of food insecurity due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Through the company's Nissan Neighbors charitable giving program, a community-based initiative, our food bank received a \$50,000 check delivered by Nissan Canton employees in a surprise visit.**

*Pictured in photo: Caroline Wright (Nissan), Dr. Charles Beady (MFN), Bryan Horn (Nissan)*

**Your kindness and generosity makes a BIG impact. Thank you!**

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