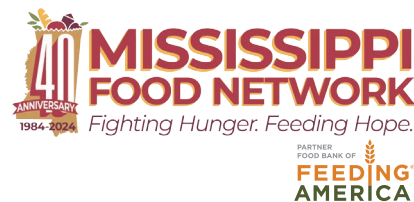


Food Matters

SUMMER 2024

Mississippi Food Network changes lives by fighting hunger today and feeding hope for a healthier tomorrow.



Sustained by Generosity

Did you know that roofing is the 6th most dangerous job in the United States? Brian sure does. While working at the docks, “I was doing some work and fell off the roof and broke my left leg,” he says. “I broke my ankle and cracked my tibia.”

Brian describes the horrifying experience. “I was cleaning the gutters and I just slipped off the roof. And bam, like that, I was seriously injured. Once you start falling, you can’t stop.”

Without insurance to get the proper medical care, Brian whispers, “It’s hard to get a job this way. So, I ended up at the soup kitchen.”

When asked if he will go back to work, Brian says, “I’m trying to. I need to.” But no one is willing to hire a worker who can barely walk and doesn’t have the strength to lift much. Sadly, he’s been unemployed

for over a year. He admits, “I don’t have any work, and I don’t steal, so I’ve got no income.”

Thanks to your ongoing compassion, Brian is able to get a hot, nutritious meal every weekday at our agency partner, Greenwood Community Kitchen. To you, the donor, Brian says, “We appreciate it. I appreciate it!”

But like many in the Greenwood area, the need is profound. Brian admits, “The soup kitchen meal is the only meal I get each day.” Trying to heal and get work is almost impossible while living on one meal a day.

Without your generosity, Brian says, “If I didn’t have this food, I’d probably have to steal something to eat.”

Thanks for all you do to help our neighbors who are struggling with hunger every day. You are making a huge difference.

Mission

Mississippi Food Network changes lives by fighting hunger today and feeding hope for a healthier tomorrow.

Vision

A Hunger-Free Mississippi.

Our Service Area

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



★ = Mississippi Food Network Distribution Center

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.

From the CEO

Dear Friends and Donors:



April 2024 marked the 40th anniversary of the founding of Mississippi Food Network (MFN). Also referred to, at that time, as the Community Food Bank, MFN completed its third month of existence in June of 1984 having distributed 10,000 pounds of food through 20 agencies in the Jackson MS metropolitan area. The food bank was able to open its doors by virtue of a gift of a 10,000 square foot warehouse and fundraising efforts yielding \$37,272.

As we began planning for the celebration for the 40th anniversary, we searched through minutes of meetings, old photographs, and historical documents. Among the historical documents, we found Vol. 1, No. 1 of the June/July 1984 Community Food Bank Newsletter. An excerpt from an article in that newsletter entitled *Food Bank Enters Third Month* reads as follows: "All in all the food bank has gotten off to an excellent start. With the continued support of the community at large, the Community Food Bank can only grow and eventually make a positive contribution to finding a solution to the problem of the existence of hungry people in a society with an abundance of food."

Indeed, the Community Food Bank, now MFN, did get off to an excellent start during its first three months of operation in 1984! Now, 40 years later, we remain on a positive trajectory of making a positive contribution to the problem of hunger and food insecurity in a society with an abundance of food.

Though Mississippi is the hungriest state in the nation with nearly 20% of its 2.9 million citizens facing food insecurity, MFN has grown from a 10,000 square-foot warehouse to two buildings containing over 80,000 square feet of warehouse and administrative space. This growth has allowed us to continue to fight hunger today while providing hope for a healthier tomorrow. We are distributing over 26 million pounds of food and grocery products annually, to those most in need, through some 430 agencies in 56 counties covering over 38,000 square miles.

As we continue to celebrate over 40 years of helping provide for our neighbors in need, we never forget that none of the work we do on behalf of those we serve and the extent to which we are able to do it would be possible without you, our many friends and donors. And, as always, your continued support is both needed, welcomed, and highly appreciated. Happy Anniversary MFN!

Sincerely,

Charles H. Beady, Jr.

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



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Backpack Program Improves Students Academically

When you're a school principal like Sawanda, who loves students, you'll do just about anything to help them succeed. "I'm always seeking opportunities to enlighten and enrich my students and families. Just looking for things to educate and make sure that my students are taken care of." High on her priority list is food.

The city of Ruleville struggles with intense poverty (24%), which makes Ruleville Central Elementary one of the poorest schools in the state. "Right now, we are a 100% free school. So, a lot of our students get free breakfasts and lunches. We're also in a position to offer backpacks for all of our students, and that's every Friday. They can take those bags home for weekend consumption," Sawanda explains.

Thanks to you, the Backpack Program is helping all of the students at Ruleville Central Elementary, who otherwise would be going to school struggling with hunger each day. "Although we have families with different opportunities, it's always good to put healthy food in the hands of our students. Sometimes, food choices that parents make may not be the best. When you look at healthier foods, you look at more cost, which many of our families cannot afford," Sawanda says.

It's not just providing food; Sawanda is driven by a higher purpose. **"Our goal is to feed our students over the weekends and hopefully, they will thrive and come back to school on Monday energized and ready to work another week of school."**



If students don't receive the nourishment they need, there will be more sickness in school. "That's why it's so important that we have resources like the Backpack Program in place to make sure we eliminate situations where students are not getting what they need. A lot of times, if you have sick students, you're going to have high absenteeism. And if they're not here at school to learn, then we can't teach them," Sawanda explains.

Food security has proven to make students better in Ruleville. "It helps out a lot being able to put food in their hands. Students are now performing at a greater rate academically. We moved from C to a B to now an A school," Sawanda says with a big smile.

Your ongoing compassion for young students suffering from hunger in Ruleville is making a big difference. Because of your generosity, their attitude is, "If I'm important, now I can excel because someone is taking an interest in me, investing in me, keeping me healthy and well-fed," Sawanda says.

The consistency of food provided by Mississippi Food Network and support from the Glenn Family Foundation is so critical to the 272 students at Ruleville Central Elementary.

With deep conviction, Sawanda conveys, "It's awesome. It's a great thing, and I just encourage all donors and sponsors to continue — never giving up on our future."

Seniors Struggling with Food Insecurity

Mississippians are the poorest people in America, pay the highest sales tax on food, and bear the weight of at least 10 percent inflation. And when you're on a fixed income, like 70-year-old Alice, rising food prices make living healthy almost impossible.

"The groceries are so high now," she cries. "Everything is going up while the merchandise is getting smaller. Inflation, it's just going to have to stop!" As a retired cook from Shoney's, Alice doesn't have a good answer to food insecurity other than being creative. "I know how to stretch food. Yes, I do. I know how to conserve the food I get," she admits.

Because of your generosity, Alice can get desperately needed food at Care Center, our agency partner. "I try to come every Wednesday," she says. Unfortunately, she's not always able to get food because there's not enough for everyone in line. "Actually, I try to come until you all run out. I have come and got right there and they said, 'Well, we're out.' But it is what it is," she explains.

That's why your ongoing support is so critical for seniors struggling with food insecurity, like Alice. **"It helps. I mean, it helps. You're able to put food on the table, and that's the main thing. You have something to eat. Like I said, it helps," she confesses.**

Like you, Alice is generous with others. "Well, I'm around older folks, and I love giving. I love helping people," she says. With any food she has, "I cook and feed people. People come and eat. And sometimes they'll knock on my door and ask me for a sandwich. And I'll go fix them a sandwich."

Alice has a special message to those of you who give of your precious time, talent, and treasure: **"Just keep giving and you'll get your blessing from it. Everything you do, you'll get a blessing for doing good."** Thank you for doing good and making a difference in our neighbors' lives!



Save the Date!
40th Anniversary Celebration
Thursday, September 12, 2024 at MFN



Your kindness and generosity make a BIG impact. Thank you!

WWW.MSFOODNET.ORG