

# Food Matters

SUMMER 2025

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



## Weathering the Storm: Roy and Melanie's Path Forward

Roy and Melanie have been displaced due to Hurricane Beryl since last July. They came to Hattiesburg, Mississippi, believing it would be a temporary refuge, but "relocating here has been hard," says Melanie.

Their journey began when Melanie's family took Roy in during his battle with COVID-19. After 90 days in the ICU and losing much of his strength, Roy was grateful to simply be alive, thanks to the care Melanie's family gave him.

When Hurricane Beryl caused them to leave Texas, the house they were getting ready to move into fell through and they were forced to move. With the help of FEMA, they made their way to Hattiesburg, where Roy is from.

But with limited resources, finding a job without transportation has been a major hurdle. They now sleep in their car, trying to make ends meet.

They rely on public transportation, which only runs on weekdays, to get to Christian Services for food. They can't afford to pay for gas. They try to go every day, but sometimes can only make it three times a week because they need money for bus tickets. "We hate when we can't make it. It's hard when you don't have breakfast in the morning. But when we do make it to Christian Services, two thumbs up. They are great."

Despite their current situation, Roy and Melanie remain optimistic, stating, "We try to stay positive." As they continue searching for work, they are grateful for the support of Christian Services during this tough time.

## 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.

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Charles H. Beady, Jr., Ph.D.

## Dear Friends and Donors:



When I was interviewed for the position of CEO at Mississippi Food Network, an interview that took place virtually, from my home in the Virgin Islands, I was asked, if offered the position, how long would I plan to stay at MFN? My response was, if the Board was satisfied with my performance, I would serve for a minimum of ten years. I have held this position for over ten years, and it is now time for me to retire. I will do so as of June 30, 2025.

I will retire with a proud and impressive record of accomplishments. Those many accomplishments include an endowment to be used as needed, an outstanding staff, a senior administrative team that is second-to-none, and a food bank that is much improved over the one that existed when I became CEO in August of 2014. Upon accepting the position of CEO, the overarching goal I set for myself was to significantly improve this food bank, and that upon my retirement, what I was able to accomplish would continue to propel MFN on its path of amazing growth and increased capacity to serve the citizens of Mississippi experiencing hunger and food insecurity.

None of what I have been able to accomplish would have been possible without your support. In my absence, your continued support will be very much needed and very much appreciated.

Sincerely,



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



## It Takes a Village — and a Pantry: Cheryl's Story of Sacrifice and Support

Cheryl, a 78-year-old grandmother, has spent nearly a decade raising her five grandsons, aged 1, 5, 9, 12, and 14. With their mother working to rebuild her life, Cheryl has become both a mother and provider, ensuring her grandsons have what they need to grow up healthy and loved.

Every chance she gets, Cheryl picks up essentials from the local food pantry and heads to the grocery store to fill in the gaps. "Whatever I get in these food boxes, I take them and make use of them," she says. "I never throw anything away." She takes pride in cooking, and her grandsons remind her how good her food is. "They always tell me my food tastes good because I cook with love," she says.

Cheryl often makes sacrifices, sometimes skipping meals herself to ensure her grandsons eat well. "My thing is, they eat first," she says. Retired, Cheryl has watched over them almost since birth. Cheryl takes time to donate when possible, grateful to help others in need.



## The Quiet Strength of Lewis: Giving Back While Getting By



Every week, Lewis arrives at Care Center Ministries in Jackson, not just for himself but also to bring his son, who volunteers his time there. Lewis has been retired for seven years, and, like many in his position, he's learned how to stretch his resources, trying to keep things together for his family. It's not easy. He supports a household of three, including his 20-year-old daughter and her three-year-old son, who bring joy to his life but also add to the strain on his limited income.

On the surface, Lewis seems to be a regular volunteer, making sure his son arrives to help out at the pantry every week. But in truth, he's also there as a participant, picking up food for his own family every other week. He depends on this pantry to help make ends meet; without it, he'd have to find another food pantry to fill in the gaps. Even with these visits, Lewis sometimes has to negotiate extensions on his bills to make sure his family has enough to eat. He's worked hard his whole life, and now, in retirement, he's navigating a tight budget.

**Save the Date!**  
**Moonlight Market**  
Thursday, September 11, 2025 at MFN



# Spotlighting the Partners Behind the Scenes

Mississippi Food Network (MFN) has food industry partners across the state. MFN had over 400 retail and food industry store locations supporting our cause in 2024. In total, they provided over 5.5 million meals to our neighbors in need. This contributed to the over 20 million meals distributed. These partners allow us to continue our mission year-round by supporting us in many ways.

One major way these retail partners support MFN is by providing food for our 430 agencies. Many retail stores have food that has passed the date when they can sell it. This is where our Food Procurement team steps in. They bridge the gap between retail partners and our agencies to make sure the food gets to our neighbors. This food is still good and gives our neighbors in need meals that would have otherwise been thrown out. Thanks to the many partnerships MFN has built, our agencies can simply visit their local partnered retailer to pick up fresh produce and other needed foods.

Another way these retail partners support MFN is through a variety of events. One of these retail partners is Kroger, which supports us year-round in a number of ways. The main event they partner with us on is Turkey Drive 16. Kroger allows MFN to collect turkeys outside of their locations in the Jackson Metro area, which are then distributed to our partner agencies.

Another major yearly campaign is *Fight Hunger. Spark Change.* with Walmart and Sam's Club.



Each year, they partner with all Feeding America food banks across the country. Partnerships like these are vital to making sure our neighbors are fed.

One easy way you can support MFN is by choosing MFN as your Community Rewards partner with Kroger. This means that with every purchase made at Kroger, a small portion will be donated back to our organization. **You can also choose MFN as your round-up organization with Walmart and donate every time you check out.** MFN is always looking for partners. Every donation matters, regardless of the size. At the end of the day, we strive to feed one more person than we did yesterday. You can help us fight hunger today and feed hope for a healthier tomorrow.

## Retail Donations in 2024



DONOR NAME	TOTAL MEALS DONATED
The Fresh Market	39,045
Koch Foods	60,000
Dollar General	436,938
The Kroger Company	889,213
Sam's Club	1,521,582
Walmart Stores, Inc.	2,344,639

Thanks to all of our retail donors, we had a total of

**5,885,787 MEALS DONATED**

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

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