

food thought

WINTER 2021

Photo Credit: Angeld Hopper Photography

2021 GEORGIANS OF THE YEAR: COVID HEROES

*"Our staff really were the heroes. They were willing to do anything to help out the communities we serve."
-Mary Jane Crouch, Executive Director*

We are honored to be recognized by Georgia Trend magazine as one of their **2021 Georgians of the Year: COVID Heroes** highlighted in the January 2021 issue.

In her interview for the article, our Executive Director, Mary Jane Crouch, explained how each staff member, volunteer, and donor has been a hero in some way during the Pandemic. We are grateful that so many community members have been ready and willing to go the extra mile to meet the growing need for food throughout the year.

It was business as usual for the first three months of 2020 and then the world was hit by the novel coronavirus. America's Second Harvest of Coastal Georgia food bank was already classified as a first responder for natural disasters, but this was something entirely new and unprecedented. For the next nine months we continued business as usual but ramped it up by 150%. We had to think quickly, become creative, and move fast to procure and **distribute a record amount of 25.4 million pounds of food to our 21-county service area. That's the equivalent of 21.2 million meals or a 30% increase in quantity of non-perishable and fresh product that we moved out to those experiencing food insecurity.**

Many of our agencies had to temporarily shut down for the health and well-being of their staff and volunteers so, in response, we immediately increased our Mobile Food Pantry distributions, hitting each county at least once a month. When the schools shut down and then moved to virtual learning, we transitioned our Kids Cafe program to Grab & Go drive up meals to provide nutritious breakfast and lunch to children learning from home.

As Mary Jane stated so poignantly in her interview, **"Hunger is one of the major issues with COVID. People have lost everything. I'm not just talking about people at risk for hunger before, I'm talking about people who probably were never at risk."** Some in the mobile food pantry lines shared with her that they have always been food drive donors, not recipients.



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From the Executive Director

Dear Friends:

To say 2020 was a tough year would be an understatement. One month into 2021 and we are still uncertain of the forecast. We are hopeful that the COVID-19 vaccine will become more readily available and that more and more people will be able to take advantage of the inoculation. We have seen the food insecurity rate in our service area climb from 14.8 percent in 2018 to 20.4 percent in 2020 with Feeding America forecasting another increase to 26 percent in Coastal Georgia in 2021. One thing we are certain of: hunger continues to be an issue in our country as well as here in Coastal Georgia.

We deal with the food insecure population on a daily basis, but we are now assisting those that are new to experiencing food insecurity. Food banks across the country are facing the same challenges and we are all having to regroup and restructure to provide for the increased need. Food is essential to living and as long as the need is still present, with your continued support, we will persevere to lead the effort to end hunger and improve lives.

We have been overwhelmed by the generosity of our donors, supporters, volunteers, fundraisers, foundations, and grantors for standing with us through this uncertain and trying time. We have restructured our programs in order to better serve the population expeditiously, efficiently, and with safe contact with the public. Our staff has remained healthy and we have managed to keep our doors open for food distribution with the help of our partner agencies and the Georgia National Guard. We have provided a record amount of food to those in need — whether they needed help before or just since the wave of the pandemic hit. We have made new friends, built new partnerships and are optimistic that our future plans will allow us to reach even more of our neighbors in need.

Thank you for being a part of helping to end hunger in our community.

Stay safe!

Mary Jane Crouch
Executive Director

JOIN THESE HUNGER HEROES and Take Action Against Hunger



Benedictine Military School: Going Above and Beyond

BC's food and fund drive breaks records for Second Harvest

When COVID-19 forced the United States Postal Service to cancel their annual Letter Carriers' Food Drive, a group of high school kids rose to the challenge – and exceeded expectations. BC's senior class leadership, Cadet Colonel James GaNun (Cadet Brigade Commander and Co-Student Gov't President) and Cadet Lieutenant Colonel Cameron Landin (Cadet Brigade Staff and Co-Student Gov't President) took the lead in transforming their in-school food drive into one that incorporated neighborhood outreach as well.

Similar to the Letter Carriers' Food Drive, the senior leadership team requested permission to enter four neighborhoods of approximately 1,500 homes. Groups of students visited every home, placed donation bags and food drive instructions on each door, and then returned on the designated day to collect all the donations. Despite never attempting a method like this before, the students were surprised to see donation pick up vehicles packed with hundreds of canned goods. Cameron summed things up the best:

"I realize how willing people are to help when you give them the opportunity. Every person's 'little bit' of help adds up to a whole lot of community support."

After all of the trucks returned to BC, the bags of shelf-stable food items and monetary donations were combined with the in-school campaign. When our team at Second Harvest went to collect their donations, we were blown away to see the efforts of these incredible students – 19,200 food items and an additional \$9,500 in monetary donations – who broke the all-time BC food drive record!



Cadet Lieutenant Colonel Cameron Landin, Cadet Colonel James GaNun, and Mary Jane Crouch, America's Second Harvest



With so many more people needing food assistance in the past year, James and Cameron knew they had to rally the support of their peers to go above and beyond. "I'm very proud of our senior leadership and the entire student body because we ended up exceeding our goal," said James, "I'm thankful to be a part of something like this that is making a difference for Second Harvest and the people they serve."

We extend our sincerest gratitude to James, Cameron and the entire student body of BC. This has been an extremely challenging time for all of us, but the continued kindness of our community never ceases to amaze us. Your efforts are making a difference as we push to end hunger in Coastal Georgia. **THANK YOU!**



BENEDICTINE
— 1902 —
MILITARY SCHOOL

WTOC, The Annual Day of Giving and the Power of Peanut Butter

Virtual Day of Giving raises more than \$20,000 in support of Second Harvest.



Mike Cihla, Anchor on THE News at Noon, 4pm, 6pm and 7pm

We are truly thankful for our partners over at WTOC for hosting their annual Day of Giving. WTOC news anchor Mike Cihla and staff dedicated countless resources and airtime to promote their food drive and make a positive impact in our community. Despite the event going virtual this year, it was a huge success and raised more than \$20,000 for those at-risk of hunger in Coastal Georgia.

We had the opportunity to catch up with Mike after the event and captured his unique perspective on the Day of Giving. Personally, Mike participates because, in his 20 plus years at WTOC, he has witnessed the impact that Second Harvest has made in Coastal Georgia. Mike has gained numerous stories while covering the food drive, but one in particular stands out:

“This woman dropped off about ten jars of peanut butter. She told me, years ago, her family needed help too. Times were tough, money was lean, and she didn't know how she would feed her children. She turned to Second Harvest, who was able to help her family. Peanut butter was one of the items

she received, and it helped make the food stretch, plus her kids loved peanut butter. Today, she's blessed to be in a much better place financially but always remembers the stress and anxiety she felt. She hoped her peanut butter donation would give someone else a little hope to get through another day.”

WTOC Day of Giving allows the community the opportunity to come together before the holidays and easily make a difference by donating a dollar or two worth of groceries. It's awe-inspiring to see our neighbors stepping forward to help Second Harvest fulfill our mission – even during a global pandemic.

Over the last year, WTOC has worked tirelessly to support the efforts of Second Harvest to help get food to those facing hunger, often for the first time. Mike Cihla and WTOC have jumped at every chance to help us tell our story. While the goal is to host the 2021 Day of Giving in person, all of us here at Second Harvest are grateful for every opportunity we have to work alongside the WTOC team!

MANY THANKS



Choate Construction has become an invaluable corporate partner. They have spent numerous hours in our Volunteer Center packing emergency food boxes and Grab & Go breakfast packs and donated \$7,500 on The Day of Giving in support of the High Five Turkey Drive. Choate's investment in Second Harvest allows us to serve those in need in our twenty-one county service area.



Sam Bauman, WTOC Anchor/Reporter, Choate: Mark Thompson, Stephen Saxon, Alex Brown, Kirk Gilbert and Mary Jane Crouch, America's Second Harvest

Oh, What A Year it Was!

America's Second Harvest of Coastal Georgia covers 21 counties and 10,103 square miles.

Population **895,012**

Food Insecure **175,540** (20% of the population)

Pounds Distributed **25,571,032** (30% increase from 2019)

SOUTH CAROLINA

GEORGIA

Brown Bag for the Elderly

Packed and Distributed **13,200** bags or boxes to seniors

Kids Cafe

Prepared and Delivered **849,760** Grab & Go Meals to children

295 Non-Profit Partner Agencies

Distributed **12,886,094** pounds of food

SAVANNAH
MAIN DISTRIBUTION

242 Mobile Food Pantries

Distributed **9,448,959** pounds of food to rural and underserved areas

ATLANTIC OCEAN

FLORIDA



SOUTHEAST BRANCH

Volunteers Are Our Heart and Soul

In a year of never ending pandemic related hurdles, the simple act of volunteering became a challenge. The Southeast Branch was blessed with an influx of volunteer support even though we couldn't bring the volunteers into our warehouse. We utilized as many helping hands as were able to tolerate the weather at our Mobile Food Pantry Drive Thru Distributions. Without the aid of so many current and new volunteers, from INC, Rotary Pirates of the Spanish Mane, Sea Pack, Community Church, GA Honor Society, ROTC Brunswick High School, Hospice, First Presbyterian Church, Christ Church, College of Coastal Georgia Faculty & Students and United Way, we would not have been able to keep up with the increased need in our community. We hope that after the pandemic is under control we will still be able to maintain our incredible volunteer force!



Sixth Annual Empty Bowl – A Virtually New Approach

For the last five years, Glynn Visual Arts and their pottery studio members have supported America's Second Harvest of Coastal Georgia by hosting an annual Empty Bowl dinner and bowl sale with 100% of the profits benefiting the food bank. The 6th Annual Empty Bowl was a bit different and featured an "Earth to Table" display and a virtual dinner. Supporters were encouraged to come enjoy the gallery showing of bowls displayed as artful table settings. Guests were able to purchase a single bowl or an entire set—all in the name of ending hunger in Coastal Georgia.



The event showcased the talents of GVA studio and area potters who donated 300 bowls that grossed over \$9,000 to help feed our neighbors in need. We've never had a lovelier array of bowls or a more important year to support this new take on an old favorite. Many thanks to Glynn Visual Arts and the creative force of Anne Marie Dalis, Debbie Craig and Elizabeth Holland for reimagining this event during the pandemic.

SOUTHEAST BRANCH WORD FUN

Find these words!

- | | |
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| Agency | Mobile |
| Brantley | Pandemic |
| Camden | Pottery |
| Charlton | Southeast |
| Distribution | Students |
| Empty Bowl | Volunteers |
| Glynn | Wayne |
| McIntosh | |

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