



A Beacon of Hope for the Holidays

Mary remembers the pangs of hunger she faced growing up, and she swore her children wouldn't know what that was like.

"It was really tough, but we survived," the East Prairie woman said of her childhood.

She worked hard over the years to keep her promise to her family, but still faced food insecurity at times. She has raised several grandchildren and still has one living with her.

"It's a frightening thing not knowing where your next meal is coming from," Mary said.

Although she receives SNAP benefits (formerly known as food stamps), it's not enough for all the

food Mary and her grandchild need each month.

She has been fortunate to receive help from Flame of Hope, an East Prairie pantry that partners with Southeast Missouri Food Bank.

Food pantries like Flame of Hope are a beacon of hope to many people who struggle with hunger. With the food Mary gets, she can make meals stretch further and help put more food on the table during holidays like Thanksgiving and Christmas.

"Thank you from the bottom of my heart," Mary said. "(Donors and volunteers) don't realize how many people they help and give hope to."



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Mission

To end hunger and leverage
the power of food to build
healthy communities.

A Time for Gratitude and Reflection

The holidays are a time for thankfulness and reflection. When 2020 drew to a close, we all hoped 2021 would bring a return to normalcy. We thought the altered work schedules, uprooted school routines and increasing isolation for senior citizens were behind us.



What we found were new challenges – an ongoing pandemic and rising food and transportation costs – and the

realization that for many families, the struggle to put food on the table was normal.

We also found that people who could help, did help. Donors, old and new, stepped up, supporting the food bank and our programs. Volunteers showed up, packing food boxes and helping at mobile distributions.

As the end of 2021 approaches, we have much to reflect on but much more to be thankful for. We are grateful for the support we receive from the communities we serve. We are thankful for the partners who support our mission all year and the network of agencies that help us reach people in need throughout the 16 counties we serve. We thank you for helping us provide hope to our most vulnerable neighbors.

Food plays an important role in our holiday celebration, whether it's your grandma's famous pecan pie or your aunt's secret stuffing recipe. This year, as you enjoy your bounty, take the time to remember our hungry neighbors who are not as fortunate.

On behalf of everyone at Southeast Missouri Food Bank, I wish you and yours a very Happy Holiday season.

Joseph Keys

CEO of Southeast Missouri Food Bank

Give the Gift of Hope for the Holidays

The continuing pandemic and increased fuel and food costs have left many families struggling to make ends meet.

You can help these families get the food they need and honor your loved ones with Holiday Hope Cards from Southeast Missouri Food Bank.

With a contribution of at least \$25 a card, we will mail this special greeting to each person on your list. Or you may purchase 10 cards to send yourself for a contribution of at least \$250. (Gift amounts are not disclosed to recipients.)

For more information or to purchase your cards, call Heather at 573-471-1818 or visit semofoodbank.org.



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Pantry Workers Care for the Community



Many senior citizens rely on food distributed by Virgie's Place, a food pantry in Kennett, Mo.

Beverly, who runs Virgie's Place, said many of the people she helps are elderly and live on county roads, making it difficult for them to get out to get food. That's why Beverly and her team of volunteers are more than willing to deliver the food to them.

"I tell them if they don't have transportation, tell us and we will get the food to you," Beverly said. "Even though we are poor ourselves, we will get the food to them."

Cars line up early in the small parking lot for mobile food distributions in partnership with Southeast Missouri Food Bank.

"We try to serve as many people as we can in this area," Beverly said. "This town is hurting and very poor, and a lot of people don't have the resources."

From the line of cars to the volunteers delivering food, Virgie's Place serves the people facing hunger in Kennett and the surrounding area, with Beverly leading the way.

"My parents made me a community person growing up, doing mission work," Beverly said. "You get up every day and say, 'I'm going to help somebody.'"



Food Drives Go Online

Everyone is familiar with canned food drives. You see them at schools, churches and grocery stores, especially during the holidays.

And while food from these drives is an important tool in the fight against hunger, Southeast Missouri Food Bank has introduced a 21st century twist on the traditional canned good drive: virtual food drives.

Terri Jestus, public relations manager with PC Medical Centers Cape Girardeau, read an article about the virtual food drive program and thought it was a good way for the company to give back.

"With everything everybody is going through, with more people out of work than normal, a lot of these people have children who are hungry," Jestus said. "In the past we have done canned food drives, but the virtual food drive was so easy to use."

Another benefit of virtual food drives is that donations can include protein, fresh produce and dairy, some of the most requested but hardest to source foods.

Businesses, organizations, families or individuals can set up virtual food drives and challenge others to give. Every \$1 donated helps provide four meals to people facing hunger.

To set up a virtual food drive, visit semofoodbank.org and click on the virtual food drive link under "Get Involved" or visit semofoodbank.fenly.org.

Friends Help Each Other in Hard Times

Life can change in an instant. One day you're healthy, the next you're partially paralyzed.

Daniel, from Wayne County, was a jack-of-all-trades working as a carpenter, electrician and a mechanic. Earlier this year, that changed when he suffered a stroke that paralyzed the left side of his body.

With support from a brace, he can walk a little, but he still struggles.

"It's the simple things that mess me up," Daniel said, his voice cracking and eyes filling with tears.

Before the stroke, he was able to provide for his family of four. Now, he relies on food distributions to supplement his families' groceries. Even with his disability check and his wife's paycheck, it's barely enough to get by after paying all of their bills.

"If these food distributions didn't exist, I'd probably have to rely on friends and family for help," Daniel said.

Daniel's friend Ricky drove him to a food distribution in Greenville. Ricky, who is also disabled, lives on Daniel's property and was picking up food, too.

"By the time I pay my doctor bills – and I pay all my bills first – what I have left over is what I buy groceries with, which isn't much," Ricky said.

Both Daniel and Ricky are very thankful for food distributions from Southeast Missouri Food Bank and its partners.

**"Thank you all every much," Daniel said.
"God bless them."**



Happy Holidays

**Wishing you a warm & happy holiday season.
Thank you for your support throughout the year.
~ Southeast Missouri Food Bank**

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Leave a legacy that makes a difference for families facing hunger. Ask us how to include Southeast Missouri Food Bank in your estate planning. Contact Lisa Church at 573-471-1818.