

Finding Help When Life Gets Hard

Holly's life changed quite a bit over the past several years.

She began raising her grandson, Shawn, now 7, when he was born. A year later, Holly's mother was diagnosed with cancer. She died in 2020, and things have not been the same since.

At one of Southeast Missouri Food Bank's mobile pantries, Holly talked about some of the challenges she's faced.

"The past couple of years have been a transition," Holly said. "I had to go take care of my mom on the east coast because she had cancer, and after six years of fighting, she passed. So, with grieving my mom, then the gas prices rising and me losing my social security, things have gotten hard."

She said it's hard to make ends meet on her fixed income, paying for rent, bills and other essentials. Holly receives some SNAP assistance (formerly food stamps), but that was reduced earlier this year, and she still has a growing boy to feed. She said she is thankful to be able to receive help from the food bank and its partners.

"I just want to say I'm grateful, and it is helpful because people need food," Holly said. "Especially with them cutting back a lot on assistance (like SNAP)."



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Mission

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

southeast missouri



help more. reach more. feed more.



It's Getting Harder to Stretch a Dollar



It's crossed all of our minds over the last year or so. We've browsed the aisles at our local grocery store, grumbling about how much more it costs to buy food these days.



Maybe you've cut back, buying a store brand instead of name brand, or decided to forego some special treats.

But have you ever stood at the register, mentally doing the math and hoping you have enough money to pay for the food you need to feed your family?

It's something that more of our neighbors face than you may think.

At a mobile distribution in Cape County, a neighbor shared her experience. "I picked up some salami that I used to pay a couple of dollars for. I took it up to the register and scanned it. It was \$6.84! I told the cashier, 'I'm sorry, I can't afford this.'"

When you're living paycheck-to-paycheck, a couple dollars here and a few cents there quickly add up.

For the last couple years, food prices have increased more than a few dollars and cents. According to the USDA Food Price Outlook, costs will continue to rise this year, with an overall increase of 6.2% over 2022, when prices increased by nearly 10% over 2021.

A dollar doesn't go as far as it once did for our neighbors who are working to provide for their families.

When every penny you earn is budgeted, changes like this take a toll, not just financially, but also mentally and emotionally.

At a distribution in Poplar Bluff earlier this year, one mother told us she doesn't need to visit a food pantry every month. But she's grateful to know she has someplace to turn when times get tough, like when her husband's hours are cut or the family has an unexpected expense.

As prices continue to rise, Southeast Missouri Food Bank will continue to be here to offer relief to these neighbors. And we can only do that thanks to your generous support.

Joseph Keys

CEO of Southeast Missouri Food Bank



Food Pantries Ease Burden of Rising Prices

Calvin put himself through school at Three Rivers College in Poplar Bluff while working as a security guard. When he graduated, he joined the Maine Corps and served four years before being injured.

That injury changed his life, but he was able to get by. Then prices rose sharply over the last couple years.

"The raising of the utilities and food is what affected me the most, especially the gas prices," Calvin said. "Sometimes, I have to borrow money to keep up."

Calvin visits St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry in Poplar Bluff when he needs extra groceries for the month. The food pantry partners with Southeast Missouri Food Bank to distribute TEFAP (The Emergency Food Assistance Program) items, which include foods grown and raised in the U.S. and distributed to food banks via the USDA. TEFAP, which has income requirements for recipients, is a critical source of nutritious food for people like Calvin.

"I have been coming to the food pantry distribution for a few years so I can use my money in other areas," Calvin said. "They give out good things, and it is enough to make a few meals, which is really helpful."



Help Fight Hunger Every Month



Southeast Missouri Food Bank works every day to provide nutritious food for our neighbors facing hunger, but we can't do it alone!

That's why support from donors like you is so important to us.

Earlier this year, Julie joined the food bank's Feed365 group when she set up a monthly donation.

"I believe food, shelter, clothing and water are basic needs everyone has a right to," Julie said. "And right now, food prices are insane. This is an easy way for me to give back and support my community."

Feed365 is a caring and compassionate group of givers who make monthly donations to SEMO Food Bank to help fight hunger in southeast Missouri. This provides a reliable source of ongoing support and nutritious food for those who need it most.

When you become a member of our Feed365 monthly giving program, you make a real difference in the lives of families, children, seniors and veterans across southeast Missouri.

To set a monthly donation, visit semofoodbank.org or call Heather at 573-475-7573.

Helping Keep Food on a Family's Table



Wayne was born with spina bifida and has faced challenges his whole life, but that has not stopped him from taking care of his family.

Wayne and his wife have been married for 27 years and have three grown children and a grandchild. Over the years, Wayne has had a variety of jobs — radio, social work, the casino — but when his health started to decline two years ago, he was no longer able to work and provide for his family.

At a mobile food pantry in Chaffee, Wayne, who was there with one of his daughters and grandson, said rising prices have been hard on his family.

"It has been tougher the past few years, just getting by with bills and coming (to food bank distributions) when we can because of food being so expensive," he said.

With Wayne unable to contribute to the family's income, there have been sacrifices, including cutting back on food. But Wayne knows he can rely on SEMO Food Bank and its partners for assistance with food and other necessities for his family.



"It is unbelievable the help that they give," Wayne said. "There are a lot of people, including me, that have to come here, or we may not have the food we need."



Hunger Action Month is Coming!

September is Hunger Action Month, the Feeding America network's annual nationwide campaign designed to inspire people to take action and raise awareness of hunger across the country.

Orange is the color of hunger awareness, so we encourage everyone to wear orange on Fridays in September!

Be on the lookout for more ways you can get involved this Hunger Action Month and help neighbors facing hunger in southeast Missouri!



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 Sarah Garner at 573-471-1818.