A Passion For Helping Others

It began in 2009 when Reverend Sheila Crowe and Reverend Willow Heim made the decision that the Hogansville, Ga. churches that were providing food for the community consolidate their efforts to creating one food pantry. God’s Bread Basket was born … and it’s been full steam ahead!

Led by “Miss Willow”, Pastor Terry Rainwater, and a brigade of volunteers, they are a vital ministry to the community.

They take advantage of shopping at our LaGrange warehouse which was strategically located to conveniently serve the northern counties of Troup, Meriwether, Talbot, and Harris.

Thursday is the special day this operation goes into action and begins with a prayer. Then, a very organized, streamlined process begins, and teamwork takes over. Volunteers serve 80-90 people each week. Food boxes are assembled and packed for the line of registered people. Clients are processed individually and receive a box of food that includes canned and dry goods along with frozen meat. Frozen catfish, offered one particular day, was a smash hit and clients left with a smile. This year, God’s Bread Basket celebrated distributing one million pounds since their inception.

Changing lives one meal at a time … we are proud to partner with this wonderful ministry.
We have just completed our first fiscal year in our new warehouse in Columbus, Ga., and I can honestly say that nothing slowed the Feeding the Valley team down. We didn’t miss a beat with a major transition to a new facility, implementation of an online ordering system, and other new operational processes. We ended the year distributing more than 8.6 million pounds of food in our 14-county service area, a 6.2% increase over last year. Since 2009, when our Board of Directors made the decision to expand our reach and focus on growth regionally, our food distribution has increased 400%.

It takes a solid, dedicated team and everyone taking 100% responsibility for moving us forward so that we can help more people in need. It takes partners outside of our organization who believe in our mission to help us. It takes financial donors who are passionate about the needs of our communities to help us. And it takes volunteers to power the engine. We are much stronger because we work together.

On that day in 1983, when the first load of 1,469 pounds of food was delivered, our mission was established. It has never changed. As we celebrate our 35th Anniversary, we have so much to be grateful for, and we have so much more to do. We will continue to work toward the goal of solving hunger and thank everyone that touches our organization to help us achieve it.

Together we can solve hunger, one meal at a time.

Sincerely,

Frank Sheppard
President & CEO

In 1983, several of our local churches and community leaders came together to find a solution for people in the community who did not have access to food. They saw great need for there to be a central source of food to serve people going through hardships.

Fast forward to 2018, 35 years later, we continue to serve people in need in 14 counties. Our new state-of-the-art warehouse facility now enables us to have much greater capacity to do more to help more people. In our 35-year history, we have distributed 112 million pounds of food. Our mission has never changed and that is to provide healthy, nutritious food to people in need.

Our Numbers 2017-2018 A Record Year!

- Serving 14 counties, population of 437,000
- 87,000 people are food-insecure
- 35,000 under the age of 18
- 5.8 million lbs. of food was donated
- Serving more than 275 Partner Agencies
- 8.6 million lbs. of food distributed
- 1.3 million lbs. of fresh produce distributed
- 96,136 Mobile Pantry boxes delivered
- 256,500 Kid’s Café Meals prepared
- 110,000 additional Kid’s Summer Meals and Snacks
- 53,400 Buddy Packs delivered to schools for the weekends
- 32,500 Senior Meals delivered
- 7,500 Volunteers serving more than 24,000 Hours – Thank You!

The heart of our mission is to feed hungry people.
The Giving Garden

One of our new projects this year, as we now have the space, was to begin the efforts to garden. In a small area in our parking lot, we planted a garden with tomatoes, squash, cucumbers, peppers, and herbs. A local landscaping company, Eco Landscaping & Design, helped us plan the garden and purchase building supplies. They also donated peach and fig trees.

We were fortunate to have a crew of Publix volunteers build raised bed boxes as part of their day of service. Cedar boxes were built in half a day and the garden was planted a few days later.

It has been a success for its first year and we were able to include our harvest in the Senior Meals that we prepare every day.

Our hope is that our garden will continue to expand to other areas on our property so we can incorporate more fresh produce in our meal programs and also develop educational outreach activities to our local community.

Kids Café Rocks!

School has started back up and our Kids Café Program is in full swing. Each day, magic happens in our 3,000 sq. ft. commercial kitchen and more than 2,000 meals are prepared for children after school. These meals are delivered to 15 sites in public housing neighborhoods, after school programs at local non-profit organizations, and community centers. In the summer we expand our sites to reach out and include additional rural counties.

Educational elements are also part of the concept which includes the library book mobile visiting some sites, volunteers who read, and teach arts and crafts.

This summer we expanded our program and delivered 110,000 meals and snacks to 28 sites. Providing healthy, nutritional meals to children is critical to their development, growth, and ability to learn. Our hope is that they are successful in school and life.

More Healthy Choices

THANK YOU PINEY WOODS FARM!

Our LaGrange Warehouse Coordinator, Jimmy Pruitt, has his hands full of wonderful organic tomatoes from Piney Woods Farm. Piney Woods Farm is a certified organic farm, located in LaGrange, Ga. and donates fresh produce to Feeding the Valley. Both warehouses in Columbus and LaGrange enjoy distributing fresh vegetables all summer - and our partner agencies are delighted to get them.

Piney Woods also offers educational opportunities to growers, gardeners, schools, youth groups, and consumers. They are passionate about sustainable living and organic agriculture.

Now that we have four times more cooler space in our new facility, we are able to incorporate fresh, nutritious, healthy food in all of our food distribution programs and appreciate all the local farms that donate to us.
Paul Burr

Volunteers are the Power Behind our Mission

He was his mother Annie’s caregiver for the last eleven years of her life. After Annie Burr passed away last June, Paul Burr just wasn’t sure about what he was going to do next. With his degree in Business, he had a rewarding career as a financial business manager from a local car dealership. Now retired, he still wants to remain active.

He tells us that throughout her life, Annie put others first. Always helping others and thinking about others before herself. The house was too quiet after his mom passed and staying home wasn’t fun. So, last September, he looked for a way to serve the community and visited Feeding the Valley to learn about volunteer opportunities. After a conversation with our Warehouse Coordinator, Michelle Henry – he was working within 15 minutes, and he now has a way to serve others and honor his mother’s life.

Like clockwork, he walks through our market place doors at 8:15 a.m. and starts to organize the grocery boxes. He helps in the packing room and the kitchen when needed. He enjoys hands-on work and most of all enjoys meeting the people from our partner agencies. “I am amazed at what I see at Feeding the Valley,” says Paul, “I enjoy getting to know the people who serve in the agencies and hear their stories about the people they are helping.”

We are grateful for volunteers like Paul and their spirit to serve others. In the past year, 7,500 volunteers contributed 24,000 hours of their time to help families in need.

Volunteers are the roots of a strong community and the power behind our mission. We are grateful for their time and their caring hearts.

Give a Few Hours....Make a Big Impact!

Volunteers are the roots of a strong community and we would never be able to serve people in our footprint without a dedicated force of people who want to commit their time to help us. We encourage individuals and corporate, or civic organizations, to make it a team building activity.

If you are interested in volunteering at our Columbus or LaGrange facilities, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator Shelby Williams: swilliams@feedingthevalley.org.

Serving Our Veterans

Beginning in 2018, Feeding the Valley partnered with the Department of Veterans Affairs in Tuskegee, Ala. to help provide food for Georgia veterans who were just getting placed in homes. With our operations located in Columbus, Ga., the home of Fort Benning, we mobilized to answer this call. We provide a meal box which contains meats, produce, bakery, and canned items, as well as a house-warming starter box with personal items for these newly-homed vets. It includes dry and canned goods, juices, snacks, meat, and fresh produce.

Once a month we have a mobile pantry exclusively for this group and case workers come to the Feeding the Valley warehouse to pick up food boxes and they deliver them to their veteran clients.

Emergency food boxes are also ready if there is a hardship and these, also, are coordinated with the Veteran's Affairs case workers.

It is our belief that no veteran should go without food, housing, health care, work, or respect. And we do what we can to be sure they have food.