Their Healing Powers

Our partnership began with donated pallets of straw bedding. “Who can use these?” we asked. We knew of Warrior Outreach – a ranch in Harris County, Ga. that offers an equine therapy program to veterans, soldiers and their families and gave them a call. We’ve been partners ever since.

Nestled in the woods in Fortson, Ga. near Fort Benning it serves as a sanctuary for military families and veterans. They come here to “get away” and enjoy a day in the country riding horses, having a picnic, or a military social function with their unit. Warrior Outreach is a special place for those who have served our country.

It’s the heart of its founder CSM (Retired) Samuel Rhodes. After serving 29 years in the Army, Sam understands first hand the struggles of soldiers and their families and the experiences of PTSD, suicide, anxiety and depression. Programs that offer equine therapy, music therapy, team building, confidence building are core to the Warrior Outreach mission.

Horses, just like our canine friends offer a sense of calm to humans. Certified riding instructors are on hand to assist in the Horsemanship Program. This type of therapy is helpful to people in social, emotional and behavioral ways and offers a calm, healing experience.

Just recently a beautiful community center was built at the ranch that includes a full kitchen and meals are prepared for guests. Bagged groceries are also offered to veterans and their families to take home. Passionate, caring volunteers and generous donors make all of this magic possible.

Service to others is in his DNA and Sam Rhodes knows that he is changing lives of those who have been called to serve our country. We know he is, too.

Learn more about Warrior Outreach: warrioroutreach.org

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At Your Service

With our recent expansion into our southern counties, we now serve 17 counties in Georgia and one in Russell County in Alabama. Our new service area covers 6,200 square miles. The population of this area is 550,000 with 109,000 people experiencing food insecurity of which 35,000 are under the age of 18.

Opportunity also knocked unexpectedly at our door this year and offered us the chance to expand into the counties of Calhoun, Dougherty, Lee, and Terrell. We will be operational in the fall, with a distribution center in Albany to serve this area. With an average poverty rate of 21% in this area, we know we have a challenge going forward, but our team is focused and committed to serve this region.

With the help of our many food and financial donors, volunteers and our great team, we distributed 9.5 million pounds of food in our service area. All of our programs continue to grow and more churches and non-profit organizations want to partner with us to serve people in need.

In Georgia, one in five children are food insecure. Food insecurity exposes these children to the risk of delayed cognitive development, behavioral problems, and diet-related diseases. Our Kids Café Program is one way that we help address this problem. This year, we provided 288,332 hot, nutritious meals to children after school.

Our Summer Kids Café Program was very successful this year. We expand this program to touch more children during the 10 week summer break from school. Our kitchen staff exceeded expectations and prepared a record 92,300 hot meals and snacks. We realize that we have reached our capacity for our Kids Café Program and will need to acquire additional resources. This will be our focus as we pursue future grant opportunities.

With the help of volunteers, our Mobile Pantry Program is becoming more robust. Through this program, we reach people living in rural areas and don’t have access to emergency food resources. We distributed 89,826 supplemental boxes of food through this program for the year.

Our team is the best! This great work takes a focused, dedicated team with a passion to serve the hungry and change lives. I am always amazed at the wonderful support we receive from our generous donors and our volunteers, and I am confident that together we can solve hunger.

Sincerely,

Frank Sheppard
President & CEO
There is a special magic happening down in Randolph County, and former NBA player, Donnell Harvey is at the heart of it all. His dream, Reconstructing Youth Foundation (RYF) is a full year of after school programs, a summer football and basketball camp, and a summer learning camp for younger children. After playing basketball for the Randolph-Clay County High School Red Devils as #34 and receiving a scholarship to play at The University of Florida, Donnell later went on to play in the NBA. Returning to his roots as a mentor and working with kids in his hometown is his passion.

During the school year, RYF offers educational and enrichment programs after school. As their partner, we are their food source for meals and snacks they serve the children participating in their program. Not only do these kids get to learn about the values of honesty, patience, respect for others, goal setting, and a “work hard” ethic to help prepare them for life — they get a healthy, nutritious meal every day.

“RYF is like painting a picture to a kid and it means everything to me. The NBA gave me vision and a way to see how small and how big the world is and inspired me to go back to my hometown and give kids the opportunity to imagine and live their dreams. I want to be a change maker and make a difference. That’s the biggest reward for me in the world,” says Donnell.

We know he will.

It’s Thursday morning and about 120 are people already starting to line up around the little church in the shopping center strip as early as 8:00 a.m. They know that there will be hot coffee and doughnuts and that they will leave with a gift of wonderful food including canned goods and a lot of fresh produce. Pastores Jose Martinez shops at Feeding the Valley every week to ensure that people receive a variety of food.

Iglesia Pentecostal Church is a small church with a big heart. Located in a food desert in the North Highland area of Columbus, Ga. with a congregation mostly of the Hispanic and African American community, Pastores Martinez delivers the Sunday service in Spanish with English translation.

A very big part of their ministry is to serve the homeless. “Homeless people don’t only come here for food – they come for love,” says Pastores Martinez. Close to the Chattahoochee river banks, this area has a high homeless population. This is where Danny lives.

Danny serves as a volunteer on food day and is also able to receive food in return. He’s a homeless veteran trying to get back on his feet and loves this church. An old bicycle is his mode of transportation and during the week he is able to get day jobs in construction. But, he is devoted to helping at Iglesia as much as possible. He hands out food and speaks to everyone he helps. “This church has given me something to do and I feel like somebody. I don’t feel invisible,” says Danny.

We are grateful for Pastores Martinez’s work in this neighborhood and want to make sure that we can fill the needs of this special church. He will tell you, “We are a small church, but we make big miracles.” And they are.
Interested in Becoming a Volunteer?

Volunteering offers help to people in need, worthwhile causes, and the community, but the benefits can be even greater for you, the volunteer. Volunteering and helping others can reduce stress, combat depression, keep you mentally stimulated, and provide a sense of purpose. Becoming a volunteer of Feeding the Valley will not only be a meaningful experience, but it will allow you to help feed people that are facing hunger every day in your local community.

**VOLUNTEER TASKS MAY INCLUDE:**

1. Packing Mobile Pantry boxes – boxes that are packed for families in need
2. Packing bags for our Buddy Pack Program – nutritional, kid-friendly bags that are sent home with children during the school year
3. Assisting at a Mobile Pantry site - Handing out the Mobile Pantry boxes to recipients
4. Other duties as assigned

If you are interested in becoming a Feeding the Valley volunteer please visit our website at [feedingthevalley.org](http://feedingthevalley.org) and click on the “Volunteer” tab or contact Shelby Williams at: swilliams@feedingthevalley.org.

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**Aspiring Chefs**

Eighteen weeks of studying and testing for their ServSafe credential, these Open Door Culinary students achieved their goal to learn new work skills and are ready to work in the restaurant and food service industry. We enjoy our partnership with Open Door Community House in Columbus, Ga. and open our kitchen to them to work hands-on with a chef. It's win-win for everyone.