



J.T. Wood, Lee Daniel, Gerald Everett, Sandra Cornwell, Deena Brand, Doug Brand, Merle McMillian

## Serving Hearts in LaGrange



Merle McMillian and J.T. Wood

From distributing food every week to families, providing weekend backpacks with food to students, serving an elementary school as a Partner in Education, and caring for the homeless and homebound, the Serving Hearts volunteers at Baptist Tabernacle Church in LaGrange, Ga. take pride in helping their community. "We are a *servant church*, and God laid this ministry on our hearts to serve others," says Merle McMillian, who helps lead the program and purchases food from Feeding the Valley for their programs.

For 18 years, Baptist Tabernacle has had a strong partnership with Feeding the Valley. "We can't go anywhere and buy food for \$.19 a pound", says Merle, "our partnership with Feeding the Valley food bank is vital to our ministry."

**"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world."**  
Margaret Meade

More and more, we see our Partner Agencies assisting grandparents who are caring for their grandchildren. The Serving Hearts volunteers are making sure that a great-grandmother caring for two special needs grandsons have enough healthy, nutritious foods. We know that "grand families" face a high rate of food insecurity. These loving grandparents need the support of the community during this challenging, but joyful time. As one volunteer, J.T. Wood says, "This is what the Lord tells us to do."

Whether it's a hot meal for a homeless person, a box of groceries for a homebound senior, or weekend meals in a backpack for a child, a caring heart and warm smile can make a big difference in someone's life.

**To learn more about the Serving Hearts Program, visit [btclagrange.org/community-ministries](http://btclagrange.org/community-ministries).**

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# Food for Thought

This year marks the fourth year of the pandemic with its resulting fallout.

Now with the economic environment we are experiencing, families are facing hardships. Food prices have increased by 24%, and hardworking people are making tough decisions between paying their rent, keeping their lights on, or buying food. To make ends meet, more families need our services for food assistance. We are helping 35% more people than we did before COVID.

In 2021, Governor Kemp reallocated unused funds from the American Rescue Plan and the CARES Act to support capital projects for Georgia food banks. This is a wonderful gift that will be transformational for Feeding the Valley! This funding pays for 75% of two expansion projects, one in Columbus and another in Albany. Construction is complete in Albany, and our Columbus expansion will be finished at the end of the year.

At our central warehouse in Columbus, we will increase our dry food storage capacity by 100% and our cold and frozen food storage by 50%.

**This means that we will be able to provide more healthy, fresh produce and lean meats to families in our service area!** We will also enhance our volunteer experience by building a new, larger volunteer center that allows more community volunteers to be directly involved in helping with food distribution.

Why is this increase in storage capacity so critically important? We don't want to turn away large donations of fresh food from our retail donors because of a lack of space to safely store the food.

We don't want food sent to a landfill instead of providing it to hungry families in our community.

**The expansion project of the Columbus warehouse is a \$5.7M project with the grant covering \$3.2M. We have raised \$2M with \$700,000 remaining to raise in the Columbus area.**

Traveling down to Southwest Georgia, to our Albany warehouse, we have added cooler and freezer capacity, which helps us distribute fresh fruits, vegetables, and frozen meats to our southern neighbors. This will make our operations more efficient, and more families, children, and seniors will be well served.

**The Albany warehouse is a \$5.1M project, with the grant covering \$3.7M. We have raised \$1.1M with \$300,000 remaining to be raised in the Albany area.**

**Both projects will allow us to provide more food to our rural counties, which have some of the highest food insecurity rates in the state.**

**More Families Need Our Help.** These projects will have a significant impact and change the lives of the people we serve. Please join us and consider a donation to either or both projects at [feedingthevalley.org](http://feedingthevalley.org). Every penny makes a difference and gets us closer to the goal.

Frank Sheppard  
President & CEO



*Reaching the Least.*  
the Last, the Lost  
Albany Rescue Mission



For 45 years, the heart of the Albany Rescue Mission ministry has been to serve the most vulnerable in the community. They serve the homeless, and drug-addicted men and women by feeding them food and scripture. You must go to church and hear the word first before you get a meal voucher. Working with the Albany Area Mental Health Department, they send their graduates from a 12-week program there for more assistance or to help them find employment.

Allison Daniel, who worked at a local medical practice as a Medical Assistant, left her job about a year ago to help with her husband's ministry. She manages a thrift store that

# A National Call to Action on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health



It has been over half a century since our elected leaders have held a call to action to meet and discuss the issues of hunger, nutrition, and health. Many pivotal strategic programs that are still in effect today were developed. SNAP and WIC benefits, National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, and nutritional labeling were just some of the historic legislation that resulted from this conference in 1969.

In September 2022, the White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health was held and along with many healthcare professionals, several Feeding America food banks were invited to participate. Frank Sheppard, President & CEO of Feeding the Valley was honored to be one of the participants.

Heart disease, obesity, and type 2 diabetes are some of the leading causes of death and disability and can be attributed to food insecurity. These diseases are often driven by a lack of high-quality, fresh, nutritious food. People living in underserved, rural areas, seniors, military families and veterans, and communities of color have the highest impact.

The Biden-Harris Administration has committed more than \$8 billion towards this cause.

You can find all the details about this plan and the next action steps at: [www.health.gov/our-work/nutrition-physical-activity/white-house-conference-hunger-nutrition-and-health](https://www.health.gov/our-work/nutrition-physical-activity/white-house-conference-hunger-nutrition-and-health)



Claire Babineaux-Fontenot, Feeding America CEO, and Frank Sheppard attend the White House Conference.

*"I feel good about the fact that, for the first time in over 50 years, the country decided to pause and really ask some important questions about why is it that people are hungry in America, and what is it that we might do to change the trends that we've been seeing? And I think we have a good sense of direction on what needs to happen next."*

**-Claire Babineaux-Fontenot**

Edited from interview  
with Marketplace

is a major revenue source for the mission and runs the kitchen and pantry where a hot, nourishing meal is prepared every day at lunch for anyone that attends a church service first. **The Mission provides meals for 45 to 100 people a day.** "We feed anyone - both ways. First the word of the Lord and then with food," Allison says. She also provides grocery bags from the pantry for anyone in need. She has a soft spot in her heart for single fathers. "If I had the resources, I would create a single dad's men's shelter," she says. "There is no judgment of others, she says, I teach my children and practice the philosophy that we 'forgive, forget, and move on.'"

**The relationship with Feeding the Valley is strong. "The team at the Albany warehouse always calls me when they are trying to find a place to take fresh produce and meats after all the other Partner Agencies have picked up their orders. I love those folks down there. No food is ever wasted," says Allison.**



Allison Daniel's mission is to nourish the hungry with a healthy meal every day.

# Publix Super Market Charities: Making Communities a Better Place to Live



Publix Super Market Charities has contributed more than \$42 million to hunger-related programs. In 2022, we received \$225,000 in grant funding from Publix Super Market Charities. These funds were earmarked for specific projects: **Increase meal capacity and purchase a mobile pantry truck.**

To increase our meal capacity, we were able to purchase a second food sealer line, that will run two meals at a time in our commercial kitchen. With our flash-freezing capability, we hope to ramp up our meal production and freeze meals to deliver in bulk quantities to Partner Agencies in our rural counties.

We all know about the high cost of fresh produce, and one of our biggest initiatives is to have the ability to provide more healthy, fresh fruits and vegetables to our agencies. This funding allows us to purchase a new refrigerated mobile pantry truck. It's on order and will arrive soon, and we can't wait to fill it with fresh fruits and vegetables and serve more families in our footprint.

Our corporate donors, just like all our donors, are vital to our mission and we are very grateful for all of them. **We appreciate the support and commitment Publix makes to the communities where they live and work.**

