

**KIDS HAVE FULL STOMACHS
BECAUSE OF YOU!**

Most of us know what it feels like to be hungry before lunch or as soon as we wake up in the morning. But for thousands of children and their families in our community, feelings of hunger are often a part of daily life.

Fortunately, the JETS Kids Cafe is working hard to break the cycle of childhood hunger. For the past 30 years, this Kids Cafe has been serving nutritious after-school snacks to children from low-income families.

The program also stays open in the summer for a four-week-long summer camp, which runs Monday through Friday for about 35 children. All of the children qualify for the free and reduced-price meal program at school, so the food they receive at this camp is a huge help in supplementing the meals they aren't receiving while school is out.

Tree Currier, Director of the JETS Kids Cafe at Lambuth United Methodist Church, says the summer camp is a lifeline for the children who come each day. They serve breakfast in the morning, a hot lunch and a snack to take home in the afternoons. Tree says many of these children wouldn't have anything to eat if it weren't for the food they receive at camp.

“When we serve a hot lunch, for a lot of them, that's dinner,” she says. “A lot of them are not going to go home to anything else that night.”

Tree shares the story of one student who has been especially impacted by the Kids Cafe. He has a cleft palate, which has caused speech and reading delays, as well as a lack of confidence. His parents both have low-income jobs, so they're very grateful that both he and his sister can come to the Kids Cafe for nutritious food.



“We've had to send groceries home with this family so they can make ends meet,” says Tree.

Coming to the Kids Cafe year after year has helped build his self-esteem, and Tree says the difference is remarkable.

It's your gifts to the Food Bank that make programs like JETS Kids Cafe possible. Thanks to your generosity, these children and thousands of others throughout central and western Oklahoma have enough to eat during the hungry summer months when free school meals aren't available.

“You are literally helping change the lives of these children!” says Tree.



THE LINK

“Fighting Hunger... Feeding Hope”™

SUMMER 2008



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The mission of the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma is to help the charitable community effectively feed people in need.

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Your gifts are feeding hungry children and families this summer...see inside!

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FROM THE DIRECTOR



RODNEY W. BIVENS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friend,

It's getting close to the end of the school year, and summer's warm temperatures are beckoning. Many Oklahoma students have been looking forward to this time of year for months!

But many students approach the end of the school year with feelings of worry and fear. They worry about having enough to eat during the summer when they aren't receiving free meals at school. They're afraid that their parents won't be able to afford to buy more food while they're out of school.

That's why I'm so grateful for your support of the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma. Your gifts enable us to provide food to hundreds of agencies, including Kids Cafes, food pantries, senior centers and other summer feeding sites. You're helping ease the anxiety of hungry Oklahomans.

I'm excited about what lies ahead in the next several months for the Food Bank and for our community. We've planned to grow important programs like *Food 4 Kids*, Senior Feeding and our Regional Distribution System by expanding our existing facility. The new space should be up and running by this fall, thanks to the generous support of foundations, corporations and friends in the community who have given generously for this project. You can learn more about this exciting initiative on our website, www.regionalfoodbank.org.

As you read the stories and see the many faces in this special summer issue of *The Link*, I hope you'll be reminded of the incredible impact you're making in the lives of those in need in our community and state. Your support is invaluable to me as we work to fight hunger here in central and western Oklahoma.

Thank you for all you do for our neighbors in need!



"To think that one child would go to bed hungry somewhere in this country is heartbreaking... to know how many do is incomprehensible. Together, we must do more to make sure every child's needs are met."

-Katie Couric

You Help Young Families Get Back on Their Feet

For many families, summer means a time for vacations, camps and fun in the sun. But for families like Tanika's, it can be the most challenging time of the year.

Tanika is a single mother working hard to raise her two children, Devin, 10 months, and Mimi, 7. She loves her children and would do anything for them, but it's hard to provide the best when she's constantly worrying about whether to pay bills or buy groceries.

Tanika recently lost her full-time job, so she's depending on a part-time job to support her family while she looks for more permanent employment. Living on a reduced income has been almost more than she can handle. She says all of her money goes toward utility bills, rent and transportation, so she rarely has enough left over to buy food. She also has an outstanding medical bill looming over her head, but until she's back on solid ground, she won't be able to pay it off.

"Everything is so expensive," she says.

Now that Mimi is out of school for the summer, Tanika knows she'll need extra help to feed her children.

Fortunately, she's found the help she needs at the BritVil Food Pantry in Oklahoma City. This partner agency of the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma provides groceries to more than



Tanika and Devin take home groceries from the BritVil Food Pantry.

500 families like Tanika's every month. And it wouldn't be possible without you!

Tanika says it's a huge relief to know she can count on the BritVil Food Pantry for the food she needs this summer – and year-round.

"This keeps me from running out of food for my children!" she says gratefully.

Thanks to you, Tanika's young family will have enough to eat during the hungry summer months. What an irreplaceable sense of relief you've given Tanika – and so many other parents just like her – by choosing to share your resources with those who have less.

"Thank you so much, from the bottom of my heart!" she says. "I really appreciate it."

Thank You for Fighting Summer Hunger!

The end of the school year means not only a break from the classroom, but also a vacation from the free and reduced-price school meals that many children depend on. Summer can be a very hungry time for kids and families. Seniors also suffer to make ends meet on a fixed income as electric bills skyrocket with the onset of summer heat. But thanks to you, these men, women and children have access to meals and groceries to keep their stomachs full all summer long!



WE'D LIKE TO EXTEND A HEARTFELT THANKS TO THE FOLLOWING GROUPS FOR DOING THEIR PART TO HELP THEIR NEIGHBORS IN NEED:

AN ENERGY BOOST!

Chesapeake Energy Corporation offered to match every dollar donated up to \$125,000 as part of a *Food 4 Kids* match campaign. You responded and we are happy to report that \$170,000 was raised – giving us a total of \$295,000 for the *Food 4 Kids* backpack program! Thank you to everyone who responded to the challenge and a huge thank you to Chesapeake Energy!

FOOD 4 KIDS GRANT AWARDS

The Food Bank has recently benefitted from several generous grants supporting the *Food 4 Kids* program. We would like to sincerely thank America's Second Harvest – The Nation's Food Bank Network who gave \$25,146; The Presbyterian Health Foundation who gave \$15,000; The Harris Foundation who gave \$10,000; The MDRT Foundation who gave \$5,000 and the Union Pacific Foundation who gave \$3,500.

AMERICAN IDOL GIVES BACK

The Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma was one of five food banks selected to receive a \$100,000 grant through the American Idol Gives Back Charity Project. Funds from this grant will provide for the expansion of both *Food 4 Kids* and the Summer Feeding program to help feed children in outlying rural Oklahoma communities.

KIDS CAFE EXPANSION

The Food Bank would like to thank America's Second Harvest, Mars Food U.S., LLC and Uncle Ben's for the generous \$35,000 grant for the startup of a new Kids Cafe site in Clinton, Oklahoma. The Food Bank also received a \$2,500 grant for the purchase of physical fitness equipment for all 19 Kids Cafe sites!

KRAFT FOODS

Kraft Foods awarded the Food Bank a \$35,000 grant through its Community Nutrition Program that will allow the Food Bank to expand its distribution of fresh foods to the agencies we serve.

WALTON FOUNDATION

Thank you to Arvest Bank and the Walton Foundation for their \$10,000 donation to the Food Bank's Grady County *Food 4 Kids* program!

LAMAR OUTDOOR ADVERTISING

If you thought you saw the Food Bank name in lights recently...you didn't imagine it! Lamar Outdoor Advertising graciously donated six of their digital billboards to the Food Bank for the first two weeks in April. Thank you, Lamar!

CHEFS' FEAST

The "All You Need is Love" Chefs' Feast, presented by Chesapeake Energy, was held on April 17th at the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum. We would like to thank the Chefs, the sponsors, the volunteers and the guests for making the evening such a huge success!

CASADY SCHOOL 4TH GRADE CLASS

Casady School's 4th grade Read-a-Thon fundraiser brought in \$6,295 this year for the Food Bank's Kids Cafe program – a huge increase from last year's \$1,500! Thank you, Casady 4th graders!

DONOR RECEPTION

Thank you to Terry Byers and Anders Carlson for hosting a spring Partners in Hope donor reception in their beautiful Nichols Hills home!

You Make Life Brighter for Those in Need

PROFILE

At age 57, Joe has experienced more trials than most.

Five years ago he underwent surgery to receive a pacemaker after a heart defect threatened his life. His poor health and seriously failing eyesight eventually forced him to quit his job in construction. Not only is it frustrating for Joe that he is physically unable to work, but the stress of not having enough money is very difficult to handle.

He receives disability assistance, but it's only a little more than \$600 a month – not nearly enough to pay for rent, utility bills, medical expenses and groceries. He receives \$10 in food stamps, but he says it barely lasts him a week.

Because he can't drive due to his legal blindness and he can't afford other transportation, Joe rides his bike everywhere. Unfortunately, this significantly limits the places he can go and things he can do. Joe just needs a little extra help to get the food he needs.

Thanks to friends like you, he's found help at the Lawton Food Bank, a partner agency of the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma. This food pantry served 38,000 hungry people last year by providing them with nutritious groceries and job assistance training.

Joe is so grateful for the food he receives. He says that without the help of the food pantry, he would only be able to eat once a day, at the most.

"Thank you!" he says with genuine appreciation. "It's a blessing that there are places like this. There would be a whole lot of really hungry people [if it weren't for you]."

Your gifts to the Food Bank are changing lives like Joe's every day.



Joe rides his bike home with groceries from the Lawton Food Bank.

It's Never Too Late to Make a Difference!

If there's one thing Sharon Meeks and the members of the volunteer retiree group Pioneers have proven time and again, it's that it's never too late to make a difference.

Pioneers is made up of nearly 4,300 local retirees who donate their time and talent to a variety of community service projects throughout Oklahoma. While Sharon enjoys giving back to the community through these many service outlets, she says the cause that's closest to her heart is the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma's *Food 4 Kids* backpack program.

For the past five years, Sharon and a group of about 40 Pioneers have been coming to the Food Bank once a month to help assemble the bags of food that go inside each *Food 4 Kids* backpack. Sharon says the Pioneers enjoy volunteering with the Food Bank so much that many come back to help other times throughout the month.

Sharon first became aware of the *Food 4 Kids* program through a newspaper article. After researching other backpack programs online, she knew she had to find a way to help.

"I began to read the stories from different teachers of how their students couldn't concentrate and were fainting in class because they didn't have anything to eat over the weekends," she says.



Pioneers in action.



The Pioneers receive an award in 2003 for completing 1,000 hours of volunteer work at the Food Bank.

It wasn't long before Sharon and a dedicated group of Pioneers were filling bags of food for hungry children at the Food Bank each month. Now the Pioneers even sponsor *Food 4 Kids* in two elementary schools. Sharon says she and her fellow volunteers are so glad to know they have a small part in helping combat the problem of childhood hunger in our community.

"When I first heard that one out of five children goes to bed hungry at night, I just thought, 'that's probably a [realistic] number,'" she says. "But then I realized that was in Oklahoma, not the world. It just broke my heart. Our Pioneers are so blessed to help."

Sharon encourages others to give back to the community in any way they can, no matter how old they are.

"Even if it's just a short amount of time, there are so many places to volunteer," she says. "Once you've tried it, you'll be hooked! And who knows – you may need a helping hand one day, too."

We are so very grateful for dedicated friends like Sharon and her fellow Pioneers, as well as our many other volunteers and community leaders who help make our work possible.



SAVE THE DATE!

Feeding Hope and Letter Carriers Food Drive

Don't forget to leave a sack full of nonperishable food items by your mailbox for your letter carrier to pick up on SATURDAY, MAY 10TH! If you miss your letter carrier, you can drop your food items off at any Metro area McDonald's or Wal-Mart.



Planning for the Future Probate is the legal process that changes asset ownership from your name to your heirs. If you have a will, your assets must still go through probate. To avoid probate costs, delays, and invasion of privacy, you may want to consider a revocable living trust.

If you would like more information about how a revocable living trust might work for you or have other estate planning questions, please contact us. There is no charge and you are under no obligation for utilizing our free professional services. Simply contact Damon King at (405) 972-1111, ext. 113 or email plannedgiving@regionalfoodbank.org.