Your gifts connect seniors with nutritious food!
Dear Friend,

I am thrilled to be starting my first full year at the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma. In the past few months, I have had the opportunity to hear from supporters, clients, and partners about the significant impact of the work we do. It has been an honor to learn the personal stories and connections to our mission that permeate our community.

The need is great and our programs have never been more crucial. Thanks to the generosity of people like you, we met and exceeded our $1.2 Million Holiday Match and were able to provide more than 18 million meals this winter! I want to thank APMEX.com, the Cresap Family Foundation, Chesapeake Energy Corporation and each of you for joining in this exciting campaign and making a difference in the lives of those who struggle with hunger in our state.

Feeding others is an act of love and it is part of our culture to come together to share a meal. In the same way that you and I want to make sure our families have the food they need, Oklahomans in need of food assistance hope for the same.

During the winter months, it’s essential to remember the seniors in our community who have paved the way for the rest of us. Their fixed incomes force them to choose between a warm home, medication, and nutritious food. Your partnership is the only way that we’re able to ensure their nutritional needs are being met.

In this issue of The Link, you’ll meet Martha, who has used her passion for cooking to share a love of food with her family for generations. You are improving the lives of Oklahomans one meal at a time. Thank you for your support!

Gratefully,

Katie Fitzgerald
Chief Executive Officer
Your gifts mean so much to our neighbors facing hunger. Whether they’re challenged by a temporary hardship or facing more serious, long-term obstacles, Oklahomans can take comfort in the generosity of friends like you.

Many older adults in our community — like Martha and her husband, Jesus — have unique difficulties due to their age.

All her life, Martha has had a passion for cooking. She prepared all kinds of meals for her children while they were growing up, and now she loves making her signature dishes — including chiles rellenos, enchiladas and roast beef — for her grandkids. She was able to work at a restaurant in Oklahoma City for many years and fondly remembers her days toiling in a hot kitchen.

Unfortunately, her work became a challenge after Martha developed a hernia. One day, her boss told her she couldn’t keep up with the pace of the busy job and fired her.

Martha was devastated. Not only did she have to leave a job she truly enjoyed — she lost essential income. With just Jesus’ low-wage hourly income to depend on, the couple has been struggling to make ends meet.

Due to her limited income, Martha hasn’t been able to afford the surgery her condition requires before she is able to rejoin the workforce.

Situations like Martha’s are why your gifts matter so much. With your support, the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma is able to distribute nutritious food to partners like Cross & Crown Mission, near Martha’s home. In addition to a wide variety of nutritious groceries, Cross & Crown provides legal aid, medical services, a youth center, summer and after-school feeding, housing and job training.

Martha couldn’t be more thankful to have your help, and she was eager to share her gratitude with you.

“Thank you!” Martha says as she wipes tears from the corners of her eyes. “Thank you for everything and God bless you.”
Save the Date

Chefs’ Feast | March 23
The 30th annual Chefs’ Feast will be held March 23 from 6 to 9 p.m. at the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum. This food and wine tasting event benefits the Regional Food Bank’s Food for Kids programs. To reserve a patron table or purchase tickets, visit www.chefsfeast.org or contact Natalie Wood at 405-600-3174 or nwood@regionalfoodbank.org.

Jersey Mike’s Free Sub Day | March 29
On March 29, metro-area Jersey Mike’s stores will be donating proceeds from sales to fight childhood hunger. Last year alone, $50,000 was raised for Food for Kids.

Feeding Hope and Letter Carriers’ Food and Fund Drive | April and May
The Letter Carriers’ Food Drive is Saturday, May 13! Fill a plastic bag with canned food and put it by your mailbox for your letter carrier to pick up. The Feeding Hope community food and fund drive runs from April 24 to May 26. For more information, contact Natalie Woods at 405-600-3174 or nwoods@regionalfoodbank.org.

Thank You to Our Generous Partners!

Holiday Match Campaign
Our heartfelt thanks go out to APMEX.com, the Cresap Family Foundation and Chesapeake Energy Corporation for making an impact in the fight against hunger by matching every dollar donated to the Regional Food Bank between November 15 and January 15, up to $600,000! Because of your generous outpouring of support, more than $3.6 million in total was raised!

Give for Good Campaign
Our deepest gratitude goes out to Devon Energy and its employees for their amazing generosity during this year’s Give for Good campaign. Devon Energy matched employee giving and presented the Regional Food Bank with a combined $1.02 million contribution to help fight hunger in Oklahoma. Thank you!

Feeding Oklahoma Drive
Governor Mary Fallin’s seventh annual Feeding Oklahoma Drive, which ran Oct.1 through 31, exceeded its goal of raising 2 million meals. In total, the drive raised $303,991 in donations and 1,327,766 pounds of food, which provided 2.6 million meals for Oklahomans struggling with hunger. Thank you!

Students Against Hunger Food Drive
Through this drive, more than 175 schools in central and western Oklahoma raised more than 200,000 pounds of food and $66,300, which provided over 502,000 meals. Thank you to everyone who participated! The Students Against Hunger food drive was presented by the Oklahoma County Bar Association — Young Lawyers Division, Devon Energy Corporation and Chesapeake Energy Corporation.

New Mural in the Volunteer Center
Recently, metro artist Jason Pawley donated his time and talents to the Regional Food Bank. Through his latest mural “Full Circle,” Pawley’s bright and colorful art drives home the message of the community coming together to give back and help others. Thank you for inspiring our volunteers, Jason!

Thunder Player Enes Kanter Fights Hunger
Thank you to OKC Thunder player Enes Kanter for his “Score Against Hunger” campaign, which raised donations for Food for Kids.

Lyric Theatre
Thank you to Lyric Theatre and its patrons for donating more than $20,000 to the Regional Food Bank as part of its annual Christmas Carol production.

Whataburger and OKC Thunder Drive
Thank you Whataburger, the OKC Thunder and fans who donated during the holiday season. In total, $25,463 and 300 pounds of food were raised.

Turkey Toss!
A total of 1,862 turkeys were donated to the Regional Food Bank by INTEGRIS Health and their employees as part of their annual Thanksgiving Turkey Toss. This generous gift provided 1,551 meals for hungry Oklahomans.

Downs Family Christmas Light Ministry
Thank you to the Downs Family Christmas Light Ministry in Norman for shining a lot of light on hunger during the holidays! A generous 9,444 pounds of food and $33,019 were raised this past season.

Bank of America’s Give a Meal Campaign
A special thank you to Bank of America for their annual 2:1 match campaign. Over 270,000 meals will be provided through this year’s Give a Meal Campaign!

Terra Verde Students Provide Backpacks
We want to thank the students at Terra Verde Discovery School, Beverly’s and the community for helping fight childhood hunger in Cleveland County. Through this partnership, over $30,000 has been raised since 2013, which has helped to provide backpacks full of nutritious food for students in need for an entire school year.

Thank you for helping neighbors in need!
“I’ve never asked for anything, and I didn’t at first,” Lou Ann says.

Before her husband found a stable job in welding, the couple had a hard time providing balanced meals for their two children, Mike, 11, and Samantha, 15.* Lou Ann says it was difficult to ask for help, but with kids to feed and a limited income, she knew she had to be proactive.

Lou Ann reached out to her church and learned about the Food & Resource Center of South Central Oklahoma, which opened in Ardmore this past fall. Lou Ann joined other volunteers in cleaning out the Center’s building before its grand opening, and was relieved to have a place to go for help.

Giving her time to the Food & Resource Center was such a great experience that she stayed on as a regular volunteer during food distributions. The rest of her family has since joined Lou Ann’s effort — Mike likes to bag groceries and Samantha helps clients during the intake process.

Every day, your gifts to the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma are used to help our neighbors facing financial challenges get back on solid footing. And many of the people you help serve are paying your generosity forward — Lou Ann says she’s seen a lot of folks like her who receive food also sign up to be volunteers.

Now that her family’s situation has improved, Lou Ann reflects on their time of need with ample gratitude for friends like you. Your support was a comfort during some her most challenging days.

“It’s very relieving,” she says of the Food & Resource Center. “It took a lot of stress off knowing I had something to put on the table.”

Your compassion is a lifeline to Oklahomans facing hunger. Thank you for all you do!

* Names changed for privacy.

Plan on the Future
Continue what you’ve started...and consider a planned gift to the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma. When you make a gift through a will, trust or bequest, you can make a lasting impact beyond your own lifetime. You may be surprised at the many different ways you can leave a legacy with the Food Bank, including gifts of stock, mutual funds, real estate, beneficiary designations and more! For more information, visit our estate planning page at regionalfoodbank.planmygift.org.
It’s always inspiring to see the creative ways our partners take up the fight against hunger. Our friends at Devon Energy Corporation have supported the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma for many years through financial contributions, regular employee volunteerism and their annual “Stuff the Truck” event. Beyond those efforts, individual Devon associates have come up with their own initiatives.

About eight years ago, Mark Matalik, a drilling manager with Devon for nearly 13 years, set up an animated light display in his yard to bring cheer to his neighborhood. Now 28 houses over a two-block radius participate in the annual display — and use the lights to support hunger relief in their community.

The light show is free to the public but requests food donations for the pantry at nearby Putnam City West High School, a partner of the Regional Food Bank’s Food for Kids program. Although the area appears rather affluent from the outside, a few years ago, student football players were so malnourished they passed out on the field. Their coach began to understand the cause of their fatigue and took steps to establish the school pantry.

Each winter Mark and his neighbors collect 2,000-3,000 pounds of food for distribution through the school pantry. Mark has loved Christmas lights since he was a little kid and is thrilled about how they’ve brought joy to his community and hope, in the form of food, to hungry students and their families.

Mark also supports the Regional Food Bank through workplace giving at Devon and helps with employee food drives. He was especially impressed with the scale of its operation when he toured our distribution facility.

“They opened my eyes about how much they do in the community,” Mark says of his visit. “When you look at how efficiently the Food Bank is run, that’s one of the reasons I think it’s a really good charity to support.”

We’re so grateful for Mark’s innovative endeavor to use one of his favorite holiday traditions to help Oklahomans at risk of hunger. Thank you, Mark, and all our friends at Devon!

**Tax Check-Off**
If you would like to donate a portion of your State Income Tax return from Tax Year 2016, be sure to fill out form 511-G (Donations from a Refund) and check the box marked “Oklahoma Food Banks.” Your donation will be used to help provide food to the more than 1 in 6 Oklahomans who struggle with hunger on a daily basis. Donations will ensure the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma and the Community Food Bank of Eastern Oklahoma can provide food for the hungry statewide. Thank you!

*The Advocacy and Public Policy Department was made possible through a generous grant from MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger.*
Oklahoma seniors — who’ve made our community what it is today — deserve to enjoy their golden years. But decades of physical labor have taken their toll on seniors like Cynthia.

Cynthia’s no stranger to hard work. She’s held jobs in landscaping, fishing, ice harvesting and more. She loved the active work, but now that she’s aged, she’s dealing with its consequences...

Cynthia had back surgery just a couple months ago — she broke a disc and has degenerative osteoarthritis in her lower spine. She’ll eventually need a hip replacement too, due to wear and tear. Only recently was Cynthia able to leave the house, and one of her first stops was the food pantry at Chisholm Trail Church of Christ in Duncan.

With her arthritis, moving around in winter is a challenge for Cynthia. But she desperately needed help with food. Her only income is from Social Security checks, and since her husband’s job is in lawn care, there’s not much work at this time of year. Plus, the couple just received a larger than normal utility bill.

“It’s tough on a fixed income,” Cynthia says. “I have copayments on my meds, too. By the middle of the month, we’re broke.”

But being able to visit the church pantry, a Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma partner, has made a real difference.

Because of her medical issues, Cynthia tries to eat healthy. Your support means she can fill her kitchen with fresh fruits and vegetables, lean meat and whole grains. She has so much appreciation for caring people like you.

“Thank you from the bottom of my heart,” Cynthia says. “You are so kind to give food to people who can’t really make it on their own.”

Thank you for changing the lives of our Oklahoma neighbors. You bring hope, in the form of food, to people of all ages!