THE LINK

YOU'RE PREPARING STUDENTS FOR A BRIGHT FUTURE!

FALL 2015
Dear Friend,

As Oklahoma students settle into another school year, many are happy to see the return of free and reduced-price school meals. This important lifeline ensures children — no matter what their family’s financial situation may be — have access to regular breakfasts and lunches that keep them growing strong.

But even with this added help, there are still students at risk of going hungry on evenings and weekends. Unexpected medical expenses, layoffs and other financial struggles can make healthy groceries seem like a luxury to many families. Fortunately, there’s a solution — and you’re a big part of it.

Through your support of the Regional Food Bank, you provide comfort, in the form of food, through school food pantries and other Food for Kids programs. These efforts help ensure each student in Oklahoma has the opportunity to get the nourishment he or she needs to stay on track at school and in life.

In this fall issue of The Link, you’ll read stories that show the true impact your generosity is making every day — stories about students like Sean, a middle schooler in rural Oklahoma who helps provide for his family with access to a school pantry. You can read more about how your support has made a difference in his life on page 8.

I can’t tell you how much your compassion and partnership mean to the hungry children and families we serve together. Thank you for working to create a hunger-free community.

“THE BEST WAY TO FIND YOURSELF IS TO LOSE YOURSELF IN THE SERVICE OF OTHERS.”

— MAHATMA GANDHI

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Antonique, 6, is starting first grade at Will Rogers Elementary in Ardmore this fall. She lives with her mother — a counselor — and her older sister, Alexis.

As a single parent, Antonique’s mom isn’t always able to afford the nutritious food her daughters need. The free school meals help, but it’s still difficult to provide her kids with weekend breakfasts, lunches and dinners on a tight budget.

This school year, thousands of children from struggling families are at risk of going hungry when the cafeteria is closed. But thanks to you, there’s hope.

Every Friday, before Antonique goes home for the weekend, she’ll have a little extra help through the Regional Food Bank’s Backpack Program. This program, which provides backpacks full of nutritious and kid-friendly food, helps nearly 20,000 children every year. Instead of wondering when they’ll eat their next full meal, kids in our community have the comfort of good, nutritious food over the weekends, and it’s all thanks to you.

Little Antonique says that without the Backpack Program, “I’d be sad and hungry and bored...I’d have no ENERGY!”

When students return to school, they have a lot to worry about — getting to know their new teachers and classmates, homework, extracurricular activities and much more. With your help, hunger won’t be on that list for thousands of boys and girls in Oklahoma this year.

For Antonique, your generosity means more energy to learn, play and grow. She may be young, but she understands that it’s caring friends like you who make sure she doesn’t go hungry on the weekends when there’s not enough food at home. Antonique is especially grateful for the applesauce you help provide — her favorite backpack food by far.

“Thank you for giving us food!” she says, with a big smile on her face.
Thank You to Our Partners

Feeding Hope Food Drive
Thank you Oklahoma for your support of the Feeding Hope and Letter Carriers’ Food and Fund Drive in May! Presented by Devon Energy Corporation and sponsored by Accenture, Chesapeake Energy Corporation and the Cresap Family Foundation, the event raised enough food and funds to provide more than 8.1 million meals. Hundreds of Oklahoma businesses, post offices and community partners joined in the fight against hunger.

Devon Employees Stuff the Truck
More than 600 Devon Energy employees helped the Regional Food Bank on May 19 by sorting and filling pantry boxes with canned food donations during the seventh annual “Stuff the Truck” event in downtown Oklahoma City. The work done by Devon’s volunteers that day saved the Regional Food Bank $6,500 in labor costs and allowed us to distribute the food to families struggling with hunger quickly and efficiently.

Workplace Giving
The Combined Federal Campaign, State Charitable Campaign and Heart of the City Campaign are just around the corner. To support the Regional Food Bank, please mark designation code #67922 (CFC) or #9220 (SCC and HOTC). To establish a workplace giving campaign at your company, contact Melanie Anthony at 405-600-7114 or manthony@regionalfoodbank.org.

The Great American Milk Drive
YOU CAN HELP! With a simple click of a mouse (MilkLife.com/give) or text message (text “Milk” to 27722), you can help get much-needed milk donated to a family who does not have regular access to milk. Donations are designated to local food banks by the donor’s billing zip code.

Save the Date

Hunger-Free Summer Match | Through August 31
All gifts to Food for Kids through August 31 will be matched, up to $50,000, thanks to Top of the World, David Gorham and two anonymous families. Please give today to help us meet the match!

Hunger Action Month | September
This national promotion encourages Oklahomans to get involved in the fight against hunger by holding food drives, donating time or resources and becoming advocates for hunger relief. To learn more, visit oknsfoodfights.org.

Oklahoma’s Own Ride Against Childhood Hunger September 13
Join News 9’s Stan Miller for the fifth annual motorcycle ride to raise funds for Food for Kids. Visit News9.com/stansride for more information!

Edible OKC’s A Place at the Table | September 17
Join Edible OKC magazine for a special screening of A Place at the Table at 6 p.m. Before the screening, enjoy complimentary drinks and appetizers. Tickets are $35 and can be purchased at oknsfoodfights.org/a-place-at-the-table. All donations benefit the Regional Food Bank.

Kendra Scott Giveback Day | September 24
Join us from 5 to 8 p.m. at Kendra Scott in Classen Curve. Twenty percent of purchases will be donated to the Regional Food Bank!

Governor Mary Fallin’s Fifth Annual Feeding Oklahoma Drive | October 1 – 31
The statewide, month-long food drive benefits the Regional Food Bank, the Community Food Bank of Eastern Oklahoma and partner agencies across the state. To learn more, visit feedingoklahoma.org.

Hope’s Harvest | November 5
Learn more about the Regional Food Bank and how you can help fight hunger in Oklahoma at a special one-hour luncheon. For more information, please call Rebecca Huron at 405-600-3154 or email rhuron@regionalfoodbank.org.
As a new school year begins, students are anxious and excited to reconnect with friends and get back to their favorite school activities. Faith, 13, couldn’t wait to get back on the basketball court at Lone Grove Middle School in southern Oklahoma.

While Faith is in class, her dad is home caring for her two younger sisters, ages 2 and 4. Her mom works full-time at a local casino to provide for the family. With only one income, it was a struggle to make ends meet during the summer — especially when the time came to buy groceries.

Although Faith’s parents have some relief now that she’s back at school, it’s still a challenge to put enough food on the table during evenings and weekends.

Sheri Medcalf is a counselor at Lone Grove and started the school pantry in 2013. She got to know Faith’s family in the aftermath of a house fire a while ago, and she says they are incredibly grateful to have help with food. Through the pantry, Faith is able to take home nutritious foods that will give her energy to excel in the classroom — and on the basketball court.

“We have a lot of kids who just don’t have access to food,” Sheri says. “Their nutrition directly corresponds with their learning. [The pantry] has really been a great program.”

One day, Faith hopes to be professional basketball player like her favorite Oklahoma City Thunder player, Kevin Durant. And thanks to your support, she has a healthy start to make this dream a reality.

Ms. Medcalf sees firsthand how much the school pantry benefits kids like Faith — she knows your support is truly changing young lives, and she wants you to know how thankful she is to be able see students thrive.

“What you do makes a huge impact for students and their families,” she says, with sincere gratitude.

Leaving a Legacy of Generosity

As the need for our services continues to grow across Oklahoma, your support has never been more vital. There are many ways to continue supporting the Regional Food Bank’s mission — now and in the years ahead. One of them is to join the Full Plate Society. As a member of this special group, you’ll be in the company of the Regional Food Bank’s most committed donors who have chosen to include us in their legacy plans.

For more information about this or other ways to leave a legacy gift, please visit our estate planning page at regionalfoodbank.org/Fight-Hunger and click on the “Financial Planning” information box.
Devon Energy Corporation is committed to helping the Regional Food Bank fight hunger in Oklahoma. Over the years, the company and its employees have supported families and individuals in need through generous financial contributions, volunteerism, event sponsorship and more.

Ben Williams, vice president and chief information officer at Devon, says the company’s efforts are possible only with the help of its generous team members. Each year, the employees’ dedication to hunger relief is demonstrated through their enthusiastic support of campaigns like the Feeding Hope & Letter Carriers’ Food Drive, which is sponsored by Devon Energy.

During this past May’s Feeding Hope campaign, Devon employees came together to raise funds to fight hunger. Their creative efforts included a miniature golf course made out of canned food, bake sales and floor vs. floor fundraising challenges. As Feeding Hope came to a close, the Regional Food Bank was awarded a very generous $1.2 million gift — a combination of employee donations and corporate matching funds. That’s a $100,000 increase from last year’s record-setting gift!

As they’ve done in years past, volunteer team leaders at Devon oversaw the company’s annual “Stuff the Truck” event following the collection of food from the community-wide Letter Carriers’ Drive. In the course of a single day, employees completed shifts to sort and package donated items for our neighbors in need. The result was nearly seven truckloads filled with more than 300,000 pounds of nutritious food ready for distribution to Regional Food Bank partner agencies across Oklahoma.

Hunger is a serious problem in our state, and companies like Devon show what can be accomplished when we all work together.

Thank you to Ben and everyone at Devon Energy for your pivotal role in the fight against hunger in Oklahoma. Your significant efforts bring hope to families, seniors and children struggling with hunger.

**Speak Up for Child Nutrition!**

Every five years, Congress reexamines child nutrition laws. Help ensure members know that child hunger is a problem and that constituents want to strengthen next year’s Child Nutrition Reauthorization. Passing a strong bill will help reduce hunger, promote access and improve the health of children throughout the country.

Calling Congress is easy! You can dial Feeding America’s toll-free number, **1-888-398-8702**, enter your ZIP code and be automatically directed to the office of your Senator and Representative.

The Advocacy and Public Policy Department was made possible through a generous grant from MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger.
When he grows up, Sean, 12, says he wants to join the military so he can protect people — just like his dad does. To do that, he’ll need to be healthy and strong. But at his house, the nutritious food he needs to grow isn’t always available.

Even though both his parents work, their family budget can’t always stretch to include enough groceries for Sean and his siblings.

Thankfully, your support of the Regional Food Bank gives Sean’s family hope. That’s because your gifts help stock the food pantry at Tomlinson Middle School in Lawton, where Sean just started eighth grade. The pantry’s shelves are filled with the healthy staples kids need to thrive. Sean appreciates the help his family receives while his parents work to get on firmer financial footing.

“If we didn’t have the [school] pantry, we’d be hungry,” he says, matter of fact.

Through your gifts, you’re ensuring kids like Sean are able to come home and prepare meals for themselves — no matter what their family’s financial situation might be. This means so much to Kelly Mims, Sean’s school counselor and coordinator of the school food pantry.

Kelly says the majority of the kids at Tomlinson Middle School qualify for free or reduced-price school meal programs. With your help, every child in need of a nourishing meal after school and during the weekend will have access to nutritious food through the 142 school pantries supported by the Regional Food Bank.

With the children and parents she serves in mind, Ms. Mims is so grateful for friends like you. She sees every day how children at risk of hunger have the chance to begin each day stronger, healthier and ready to learn.

“It’s an amazing service,” Kelly says with tears in her eyes. “Thank you so much.”