



FEEDING *the* HUNGRY

Letter from the CEO

How has your 2021 been so far? After the roller coaster year of 2020, many of us have great expectations for 2021. Despite all of the hardships of 2020, I still feel a sense of overwhelming gratitude. The Food Bank of Northeast Arkansas distributed more than 8.5 million meals to people facing hunger in 2020. That's the most we've ever distributed in one year in our 37-year history!

This incredible accomplishment is because of you — our generous donors. You rose to the occasion and gave generously to ensure that your neighbors had food on their tables during a very difficult year. The lyrics of Jackie DeShannon's 1969 song *Put a Little Love in your Heart* keeps running through my mind. I've shared them with you below.

Your generosity has made the world a better place.



With Gratitude,

Christie Jordan

Christie Jordan



Think of your fellow man
Lend him a helping hand
Put a little love in your heart
You see it's getting late
Oh, please don't hesitate
Put a little love in your heart

Another day goes by
Still the children cry
Put a little love in your heart
If you want the world to know
We won't let hatred grow
Put a little love in your heart

Take a good look around
And if you're looking down
Put a little love in your heart
I hope when you decide
Kindness will be your guide

Put a little love in your heart
And the world will be a
better place
And the world will be a
better place
For you and me
You just wait and see

People, now put a little love
in your heart
Each and every day
Put a little love in your heart
There's no other way
Put a little love in your heart
It's up to you
Put a little love in your heart
C'mon and
Put a little love in your heart
You've got to open the love
in your heart





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For all the latest information,
visit our website at
FoodBankofNEA.org
We're very social!
Join us on:



@FoodBankofNEA

Swifton First Assembly of God

About 10 years ago, Swifton First Assembly of God operated an informal food pantry to meet the needs of the Swifton community. Now, a decade later, the church is stepping up again.

The church hosts distributions every other Wednesday. Church volunteers pick up food from the Food Bank of Northeast Arkansas in Jonesboro and bring it back to the church. More volunteers help unload the food, and the church's youth group works to pack up the food for distribution.

"I knew there was a need with COVID. We just didn't realize how big the need was," said Randy Smith, Church Secretary and Deacon for Swifton First Assembly of God. "At our last distribution, there were people there an hour and a half before, already parking and waiting."

As many of the COVID relief measures put in place by state and federal governments expired, the need in communities like Swifton increased. "We have seen quite a few single parents and then some elderly that are having hardships meeting their monthly needs," said Smith. "I think the biggest thing was when the unemployment and the extended food stamps — when that ended the need just kind of grew more."

Swifton First Assembly of God held their first distribution on September 30, 2020. In October alone, they served 74 households and 229 individuals; a sobering number when you consider that the population of Swifton is 735 people.

"When you consider that 31% of a town's population received food assistance in one month, it really puts the level of need in our area into perspective," said Christie Jordan, CEO for the Food Bank of Northeast Arkansas. "We are grateful to Swifton First Assembly of God for serving their community."

The church hosts distributions every other Wednesday. Church volunteers pick up food from the Food Bank of Northeast Arkansas in Jonesboro and bring it back to the church.



Swifton First Assembly of God

Construction begins on the new Life Center at Swifton First Assembly of God. Once completed, the Life Center will house the church's food pantry.

B.E.E.S Senior Citizens, Inc.

B.E.E.S (Busily Enjoying Everyday Seniors) Senior Citizens, Inc. has been helping seniors in Paragould for more than 45 years. This year, despite all its challenges, is no different.

During normal operation, B.E.E.S. provides transportation services, congregate meals, and social opportunities to senior citizens in Greene County. Activities like bingo, card games, bean bag baseball, Wii Bowling, and quilting would fill the days of seniors at the center. But since March 13, 2020, the center has only been able to allow staff into the building.

“None of us have lived through something like this before,” said Carol Fleszar, Executive Director at B.E.E.S Senior Citizens, Inc. “When we closed on that Friday, there were tears shed. They didn’t know what they were going to do for two weeks. We thought we were just going to be closed for two weeks.”

Although B.E.E.S. is still providing food and transportation services, the lack of socialization due to COVID has negatively affected many seniors.

“Isolation is not a good thing. It’s depressing to some of them (senior citizens). Some of them are losing a lot of their strength that they had because they aren’t up and moving around anymore like they were,” Carol said.

In the months since March, Carol and the staff at B.E.E.S. have come up with creative solutions to continue serving seniors. An island in the middle of the parking lot serves as a makeshift grab-and-go, where meals are served to seniors daily. According to Carol, anywhere from 45 to 50 seniors drive through each day.

“I have to tell you, I never thought I would see the day when I would get in my car, drive to the parking lot, make a circle, and get food, and that is now what I look forward to every day,” said one Senior B.E.E.S. participant.

Through generous donations, the staff at Senior B.E.E.S. have been able to provide some extra items to go with the grab-and-go meals – fruit, chicken noodle soup, paper goods, hot chocolate, peppermints, and Moon Pies. For now, participants enjoy their daily grab-and-go meals and their brief interactions with B.E.E.S. staff through their car window, but they hope for a day when they can safely eat with friends again at B.E.E.S. Senior Citizens, Inc.



Senior B.E.E.S. participant, Alberta Pillow, shows off one of the treats she received during a drive-through meal distribution.



Vehicles line up to receive food from B.E.E.S Senior Citizens, Inc. Since the COVID-19 pandemic started, B.E.E.S has hosted daily drive-through meal distributions where they serve anywhere from 45 to 50 seniors each day.



Senior B.E.E.S staff member, Joy Huckabee, hands out puzzles along with grab-and-go meals to Senior B.E.E.S participants during their daily drive-through meal distribution.





Fill the Food Bank

Thank you for making Fill the Food Bank 2020 an astounding success!

335,990 meals provided

Thank you to all who donated and volunteered!

Special thanks to Jonesboro Radio Group and KAIT8 for sponsoring Fill the Food Bank 2020



Congratulations to our Top 5 Competition Winners!

1. **Joe Verser** – 50,000 meals
2. **Summit Community Care** – 40,000 meals
3. **The Academies at Jonesboro High School** – 34,104 meals
4. **A-State Lambda Chi Alpha Fraternity** – 25,370 meals
5. **Jonesboro Police Department** – 16,400 meals



Joe Verser learns he is the Fill the Food Bank Top Five Competition winner live on Region 8 News. An anonymous donation made in Mr. Verser's honor provided 50,000 meals to the Food Bank of Northeast Arkansas.

MONTHLY MEAL MAKERS

BECOME A SOUPER HERO

by committing to end hunger in NEA with your monthly donation to the Food Bank of Northeast Arkansas

Visit FoodBankofNEA.org/donate to join the MMM Club



COVID-19 Dashboard



Meals distributed between March 1 and December 28, 2020:

7,203,440 meals



Households served between March 1 and December 28, 2020:

71,392 households



Number of individuals served between March 1 and December 28, 2020:

212,567 individuals