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Food for the Mind

A NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTH TEXAS FOOD BANK

PROUD MEMBER
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NETWORK



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The South Texas
Food Bank

Main Office:

1907 Freight St.
Laredo, Texas 78041
Tel: 956.726.3120

Mailing Address:

P.O. BOX 2007
Laredo, TX 78044

Website:

southtexasfoodbank.org

South Texas Food Bank Celebrates 25th Anniversary in 2014



The South Texas Food Bank is celebrating 25 years of “missionary work” in Laredo. The STFB hits the silver jubilee mark in 2014 in one of the most crucial missions in today’s society – feeding the hungry.

“It is not often a non-profit organization is 25 years old,” notes STFB executive director Alfonso Casso. “With our economy still not where it should be, our neighbors continue to struggle with the most basic need of all – food.”

The Food Bank board, currently headed by president Annie Dodier and president-elect Anna Benavides Galo, is planning monthly 25th anniversary activities leading up to the “actual December birthday.” One of the first “monthly” activities is a city and county-wide food drive February 14 to March 14; and, then a Sort-A-Thon on March 15

through the 23rd. For information on the food drive and sort-a-thon, call STFB development director Cindy Liendo at 744-4439 or via e-mail at: cliendo@southtexasfoodbank.org.

Just over 30% of Webb County residents live below the federal poverty line, which is almost double the state average of 16-plus percent. These are hard-working people who don’t make enough money to sustain their families. The South Texas Food Bank, located at 1907 Freight at Riverside in west Laredo, is the safety net and a beacon of hope for for the thousands who live under the guise of “food insecurity.”

The H-E-B grocery chain helped launch the then Laredo-Webb County Food Bank in December of 1989 with Laredo civic leaders organizing a board of directors. Original board members remain – Erasmo Villarreal and Odie Arambula. Galo Garcia, joined the board two years later. He’s also still part of the board.

In its infancy, the Laredo-Webb County Food Bank, was a subsidiary of the Rio Grande Valley Food Bank in McAllen, distributed one million pounds of product per year to the unemployed, under-employed and those living on fixed incomes.

Nine years ago it became a member of Feeding America’s 202 network food banks, as it grew into the South Texas Food Bank, which now serves an eight-county area that is one of the most impoverished in the nation: Jim Hogg (Hebbronville), Zapata, Starr (Rio Grande City-Roma area), Dimmit (Carrizo Springs), Maverick (Eagle Pass), Val Verde (Del Rio) and Kinney (Brackettville).

The STFB is also part of the 20-member strong-Feeding Texas and is a United Way agency. It is also funded by other grants and local fundraisers. In 2013, the food bank distribute almost 10 million pounds and ranks ninth among Feeding Texas food banks. ●

STFB Opens a Total of Five Kids Café sites in 2012 and 2013



City and county elected officials joined Hector Noyola, Boys & Girls Club of Laredo Director and the STFB staff at the grand opening of the new Boys & Girls Club of Laredo -Northwest Kids Café site.

In 2012 and 2013, The South Texas Food Bank opened five new Kids Café sites boosting the program program to 19 sites.

Four out of the five new Kids Café sites are located outside Webb county: Eagle Pass, Carrizo Springs, Zapata and San Ygnacio.

“Kids Cafe, a national program of Feeding America, is one of the nation's largest free meal service programs for children and provides nutritious food to hungry children in safe and nurturing environments,” said Dr. Jesse Olivarez, Kids Cafe Program Coordinator.



With the help of Shell Oil, the food bank was able to open a Kids Café site in Carrizo Springs.

“According to The Center on Hunger and Poverty, it shows that the program not only fights child hunger by providing free meals to youth, but it also serves as a critical support system for families.”

These new sites impacted the total number of meals served: an average of 421,162 meals were served last year.

“Many of these children come from families that struggle to make ends meet and simply cannot always cover the cost of housing, medical care, utility bills, car payments and food. In fact, more than one-third of low-income families often must choose between paying rent and buying groceries,” said Olivarez.

The Kids Café site in Eagle Pass officially opened on September 17, 2012 and is located at the Seco Mines Community Center.

On May 14, 2013, the food bank opened their new site in Carrizo Springs at Carrizo Springs High

School.

These two sites are sponsored by Shell Oil.

Thanks to the Guadalupe & Lilia Martinez Foundation and Zapata County, on May 7, 2013 two Kids Café sites were officially opened: one at the Boys & Girls Club of Zapata in Zapata, TX ;and, the second one at San Ygnacio Elementary School in San Ygnacio, TX.

And, just before the 2013 ended, the fifth and last Kids Café that the South Texas Food Bank opened was at the Boys & Girls Club-Northwest in Laredo, TX on December 4.

If you would like more information about Kids Café sponsorship, call Dr. Jesse Olivarez at (956)-726-3120. •



Shirley Gonzalez, Martinez Foundation Trustee, cuts the ribbon at the official opening of the Kids Café sites in Zapata and San Ygnacio.



Eagle Pass elected officials and Shell Oil representative Julie Sacco were part of the ribbon cutting ceremony for Eagle Pass's first Kids Café site.

South Texas Outreach Foundation donates refrigerated vehicle



Board president Annie Dodier and board members gathered around the truck for a photograph with South Texas Outreach representatives Billy and Gloria Dickinson.

The South Texas Food Bank received a \$115,000 refrigerated truck from the Laredo-based South Texas Outreach Foundation on Wednesday, Dec. 11, 2013.

The truck was parked outside the Commerce Bank on Saunders prior to the food bank's monthly board meeting.

The food bank will use the vehicle to deliver and pickup refrigerated and frozen product for distribution.

This is the fourth grant from the South Texas Outreach Foundation in as many years. The foundation also previously donated a box truck and a grant twice for food product for STFB feeding

programs that included Kids Café, the elderly and veterans.

"The South Texas Outreach Foundation has been a blessing to the thousands of food bank clients," executive director Alfonso Casso said. "We are extremely grateful."

Board president Annie Dodier and board members gathered around the truck for a photograph with South Texas Outreach representatives Billy and Gloria Dickinson.

After the presentation, the Dickinsons joined the food bank board for the luncheon meeting.

More Outstanding Donations

We are very grateful for the diverse donations we received in 2013. Unfortunately, we don't have enough space to include all of them, but here are a couple:



H.E.B. Stores made donated a truckload of mashed potatoes and cereal to the STFB. The amount of product donated equals to: 125,000 meals of mashed potatoes and 37,500 cups or meals of corn flakes.



La Fleur Transportation donated a van to the food bank. The donation was made possible in part by Texas State Rep. Richard P. Raymond. Left to Right: Marilda Gonzalez and Bryant Byler (Le Fleur Representatives); Alfonso Casso (STFB Executive Director); State Representative Richard P. Raymond (D-Laredo); Doug Howland and Aide Brooks (STFB Board Members); and Cindy Liendo (STFB Development Director).

Love CAN Stop Hunger City-Wide Food Drive

Donating one **CAN** of food
CAN make a difference



Food bank representatives have been approaching community businesses and organizations seeking support for the City Wide Food Drive which is scheduled for February 14 - March 14, 2014.

The theme is Love CAN Stop Hunger.

The food bank made presentations at the Webb County Commissioners Court Meeting and the City of Laredo's City Council Meeting.

"We went before the County Commissioners Court and City Council to

ask them for their support in this food drive by asking if all County and City departments could participate by placing a food drive collection bin in their offices," said Cindy Liendo, STFB Chief Development Officer.

Liendo, who worked closely with the STFB board in the planning of this event, also stated that this food drive is not only about collecting food items, but also about creating awareness about the realities of hunger in our South Texas communities.

"The goal of this food drive is not only to collect as much food as possible, but also we hope that this event will create community awareness about the very real and grave hunger problem that exists in Laredo," Liendo emphasized.

"Many people don't want to believe or accept the fact that there is a hunger problem in our country or in our community, but there is. There are families

and senior citizens who more often than not have to make the decision whether to use their money to buy food or to pay for medications."

Liendo said that she hopes that the community will embrace the theme of the food drive and be as creative as possible.

"We are asking all participating organizations to create their own collection bins. They can make their bins as unique and as attractive as they wish. However, if they choose not to build their own, we can provide them with a bin," added Liendo.

To sign up or for more information, call Cindy Liendo at 956-726-3120 or send her an electronic message at: cliendo@southtexasfoodbank.org

This city-wide food drive is one of the many activities planned for this year in celebration of the food bank's 25th anniversary. •

Feeding America lauds South Texas Food Bank for hunger study

The South Texas Food Bank received high praise from Feeding America for its contribution to the Hunger in America Study conducted from April to August 2013. Feeding America-affiliated food banks like the South Texas Food Bank led the study.

The HIA study was headed by STFB agency coordinator Elia Solis along with staff members and a handful of Laredo volunteers. Solis was recognized by STFB executive director Alfonso Casso at the September monthly meeting of the South Texas Food Bank board at Commerce Bank.

"Challenging," was the key word used by Solis describing the study that

included interviews of clients at the distribution and feeding sites of the eight-county area the food bank serves. She added, "One day we were in Del Rio and the next day in Rio Grande City. But it was rewarding to secure their stories. Some places it took us two hours and others six hours."

Helping Solis at the survey sites were South Texas Food Bank staffers Dr. Jesse Olivarez, Amy Guardiola, Pancho Farias, Miguel Zuniga, Leo de la Garza and Gloria Moreno. The volunteers were headed by Americorps Vista volunteer assigned to the food bank this year, Sarah Lamm of Wash-

ington D.C. The other volunteers were Laredoans Jackie Verastegui, Reymundo Saldana, JoAnn Otero, Olga Tellez, Connie Peche and Kiara Sanchez. Verastegui is a student at TAMIU and Saldana, a student at the University of Texas. Otero is a retired public school teacher-counselor now at St. Peter Memorial School; and Peche, an LISD retiree. Tellez is the pantry coordinator for Templo Alfa Omega in Laredo; and Sanchez is a sophomore at Rice University. Casso said the study "will provide a lot of data on poverty and food insecurity to help with information for grants and other funding." Results of the study are due in April. •

Empty Bowls VII Honors the Lamar Bruni-Vergara Foundation

The South Texas Food Bank staff, headed by executive director Alfonso Casso, and board of directors, led by president Annie Dodier, emphatically said, “Thank you, thank you, thank you” to all who supported this past year’s Empty Bowls VII fundraiser at the Laredo Energy Arena.

The event took place Friday, August 23, 2013 and featured a concert by Starship Band and recognized the Lamar Bruni Vergara Trust and trustees J.C. Martin III and James Pearl for their contribution to the food bank mission of feeding the hungry.

“Thanks to all our generous sponsors, donors, staff and numerous volunteers, Empty Bowls VII was a great success,” said Dodier. “*Mil gracias* on behalf of the thousands of families that the South Texas Food Bank serves in the eight counties we service.”

The Lamar Bruni Vergara Trust and trustees J.C. Martin III and James Pearl were recognized for their contribution to the South Texas Food Bank mission of feeding the hungry. The South Texas Food Bank,

then known as the Laredo-Webb County Food Bank, opened its doors in 1989 at a small 3,000-foot warehouse at the old Laredo Air Force Base. It moved to a 10,000-foot facility three years later still at the old air base. The South Texas Food Bank mission to serve the needy continued to expand and in 1996, grant money from the Lamar Bruni Vergara Trust and its original trustees the late J.C. Martin Jr. and Judge Solomon Casseb bought and renovated a 36,000-foot warehouse for the food bank at 1907 Freight Street. Nestled in west Laredo, the corner of Freight and Riverside, one block south of Calton Road, the sign brightly notes, Lamar Bruni Vergara South Texas Food Bank. The Lamar Bruni Vergara Trust has its footprints on Laredo’s landscape in generous support of religious, health, social justice and educational needs.

Lamar Bruni Vergara was born in 1910 to Annie Reiser Bruni



and Louis H. Bruni. She died on April 16, 1989. Coincidentally, the South Texas Food Bank had its start just eight months later in December, 1989.

“We were very excited and humbled to have this fantastic opportunity to publicly thank the Lamar Bruni-Vergara Foundation and its trustees at the Empty Bowls event,” added Dodier. “There are simply not enough words to express how grateful we are for their support of the south Texas Food Bank.”

Besides the recognition ceremony and concert, the event featured its staple silent artwork auction. The auction was curated by STFB resident artist, Pancho Farias. •

South Texas Food Bank Programs

- Adopt-A-Family
- Commodity Supplement Food Program (CSFP)
- SNAP (Food Stamps) Outreach
- Food Pantries
- Kids Café
- Veterans’ Food Outreach
- Tex-Cap-TEFAP
- Ranchers for the Hungry*
- Food Rescue*

* Food Donation Programs

The South Texas Food Bank serves EIGHT COUNTIES:

- Webb
- Zapata
- Jim Hogg
- Dimmit
- Val Verde
- Kinney
- Maverick
- Starr

For more information, call the food bank at: (956) 726-3120 or visit:

Food for the Mind Newsletter Contributors

Alfonso Casso, Jr.
STFB Director

Cindy Liendo
Chief Development Officer

Salo Otero,
STFB Marketing Director

Angie Osterman,
STFB Online Media Coordinator

2012-2013 South Texas Food Bank Partners & Supporters



Beaumont Foundation of America
Build-A-Bear Workshop
Bethany House
Boys Scouts of America - Laredo
City of Laredo
Combined Federal Campaign
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Keep Laredo Beautiful
Kenedy Memorial Foundation
KGNS-TV
Lamar-Bruni Vergara Foundation
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Laredo Center for the Arts
Laredo Chamber of Commerce
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Laredo I.S.D.
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Laredo Job Corps
Laredo Medical Center
Laredo Morning Times
Meadows Foundation
Methodist Specialty Hospital/
Texas Transplant Institute
Sam's Club
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Foundation
Stripes
Target

Texas Food Bank Network
United I.S.D.
United Day School
United States Department of
Agriculture
United Way of Laredo
Univision (KLDO)
Wal-Mart
Webb County
Zapata County

Our Funding

The South Texas Food bank is a 501(c) 3 Tax Exempt organization.

The food bank's food donations, resources, income and revenue sources come through diverse partnerships and collaborations. We also apply for and receive foundation grants and pursue diverse community fundraising opportunities.

We would like to extend our deepest gratitude to our members and to our funding partners and donors for their continued support. Without their commitment to fight hunger in South Texas, our mission to feed the hungry though collaborative means would not be possible.

For more information on how you can join the fight against hunger, contact Alfonso Casso, Jr., STFB Executive Director at (956) 726-3120 or at: acasso@southtexasfoodbank.org

MISSION STATEMENT:

To alleviate hunger in South Texas by collecting and distributing food through partner agencies and programs while creating awareness and educating the community on the realities of hunger.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Anita Zuniga Dodier, President
Anna Benavides Galo, President-Elect
Ed Sherwood, Treasurer
Erasmus Villareal, Secretary
Aide Brooks, Historian
Kevin Romo, Past President

BOARD MEMBERS:

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Danny Cuellar
Gaby DeLeon
Roberto Diaz
Galo Garcia
Doug Howland
Rodrigo Jaime
Pete Saenz
Romeo Salinas
John R. Solis
Tano Tijerina

Become Involved: Organize a Food Drive



Maverick, Dimmit, Val Verde, Kinney and Starr.

"Without the generosity of the community we would not be able to meet the increasing demands of our community's hungry," said Pancho Farias, Food Drive Coordinator

for the South Texas Food Bank, food in your organization, company, school or community.

The goal, range in size and duration of your food drive is up to the individual and/or organization.

"The food industry makes generous donations to the food bank, but the demand is such that we run out of certain important foods. This is why local food drives are extremely important to us," Farias said.

"To organize a food drive, just call and we will be more than happy to discuss with you the process of organizing a food drive: from setting a date(s) to establishing a collection goal to providing you with a list of preferred food products that the food bank might be in need of at that given time, among other things," concluded Farias

If you would like more information on how to, please contact Pancho Farias at 956-726-3120 or via e-mail at: pfarias@southtexasfoodbank.org during business hours: Monday through Friday from 8 A.M. to 5 P.M. •

Everyone has a role in the fight against hunger.

Take an active role in alleviating hunger by organizing a food drive in benefit of the South Texas Food Bank. Your efforts will help us meet increased demand for nutritious non-perishable foods.

By working with the Food Bank, the food you collect and donate will be distributed to your community and throughout the other counties that the food bank serves. Our service area includes: Webb, Zapata, Jim Hogg,

nator for the South Texas Food Bank.

"Any individual or organization can conduct a food drive. We welcome your help in collecting food for the needy," he added.

Some of the most popular food drives are those conducted by local schools, businesses, government entities, churches, and other civic organizations food drives, not to mention individual food donations.

What exactly is a food drive? A food drive is an organized effort to gather

A Small Serving of Humor:





THE SOUTH TEXAS FOOD BANK

P.O. Box 2007
Laredo, Texas 78044
www.southtexasfoodbank.org

Sort-A-Thon scheduled for March 15-23



STFB Warehouse staff always assist and supervise volunteers to ensure safety and correct food processing.

After the month-long Love CAN Stop Hunger City-Wide Food Drive, that will run from February 14 thru March 14, the food bank is going to host a week-long food sorting “marathon” - Sort-A-Thon.

It will be a week long volunteer opportunity for the entire community. The Sort -A-Thon will run from Saturday, March 15 thru Sunday,

March 23 at the South Texas Food Bank warehouse.

“We are looking for volunteers to help us sort and process the food donations that we are expecting from our city-wide month-long food drive,” said Cindy Liendo, STFB Chief Development Officer.

Different shift hours will be available: 8 A.M.—12 P.M. and/or 1—5 P.M.

“People can volunteer as little or as much as they want. There is no minimum or maximum amount of hours required” she added.

Liendo also reminds the public that volunteer work at the food bank counts as community service hours and reiterates the importance of signing up ahead of time.

“We welcome all volunteers,” she said, “but when at all possible, we would like to encourage calling ahead and signing up.”

“This will ensure that we have a designated task and work station(s) ready, especially for group volunteers or volunteers with special physical or medical needs. We want to ensure the most safe, pleasant and rewarding experience for all of our volunteers.”

Please call Cindy Liendo at (956) 726-3120 or send her a message to: cliendo@southtexasfoodbank.org to sign up or for more information.

The Sort-A-Thon is one of the many activities planned for this year in celebration of the food bank’s 25th anniversary. •

