

COMMUNITY DISH

Holiday 2018



You Give Our Neighbors Something
to Celebrate: Healthy Food!

MEMBER OF
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AMERICA**

Dear Friend,



I cannot tell you how excited I am for the holidays! I always look forward to the tamales, time with my loved ones and the bright spirit that is always so evident across our community at this time of year.

Caring people like you are hosting food drives, bringing their families to volunteer at the [West Texas Food Bank](#) and coming together to show their gratitude through service. These efforts are truly inspiring — and greatly needed.

It is no secret that the cost of living in West Texas has grown enormously. Rent prices in Midland and Odessa have spiked more than 34 percent over last year — a far greater increase than any other region of the country. And, unfortunately, individual and family incomes are not keeping pace with cost.

Living expenses have pushed many families to our rural areas, which are not much more affordable and require greater commutes to work, grocery store and a food pantry, if needed.

These problems are unique to West Texas, but West Texans are uniquely generous. I continually draw encouragement from the compassionate community support I have the chance to see every day. I could not be more grateful for your partnership.

Please read through this special holiday issue of *Community Dish* to learn about the impact your gifts are making this holiday season. Flip to page 4 to meet Sabrina and her family, who are getting back on solid financial footing with your help.

Every balanced meal you help provide solves hunger for someone. Thank you for bringing joy to our hungry neighbors this holiday season.

Happy Holidays,



LIBBY CAMPBELL
Executive Director

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You Share Hope with Struggling Families

After many years of hard work and raising a family, Jeanette should be relaxing and enjoying her golden years. Instead, she is on the job hunt.

You see, Jeanette stepped up to take in her young granddaughter, Camila, 2, when her parents were no longer able to care for her. Little Camila has a bright smile that lights up the whole room, and her grandmother just loves having so much time with her. But chasing around a 2-year-old — and providing for all her needs — has been challenging at her age.

Jeanette hopes to find an office job where she can earn a steady paycheck, but without access to transportation, her

options are very limited. She has applied for SNAP benefits, but in the meantime, her niece told her she should reach out to her local [West Texas Food Bank](#) partner agency: New Hope Food Pantry in Midland.

Thanks to your support, Jeanette can visit New Hope when she cannot afford a trip to the grocery store. She is especially grateful for the fresh produce available at the pantry. Camila loves fruits and vegetables, and her grandma is happy to see her eating healthy. Jeanette has diabetes, so it is especially important for her to have access to good, nutritious food.

“This is really helpful for those who are in need,” she says of the pantry. “As things get better for us, I hope that one day we can give back.”

“This is really helpful.”



Connie Drager

Connie Champions Hunger Relief in North Odessa

An Odessa native, Connie Drager is passionate about her community's well-being. She used to volunteer with the [Food Bank's](#) old facility on 8th Street, and when she moved back to the area in 2013, she knew she wanted to get involved in local hunger relief again.

“Our church helped sack bags for the Food 2 Kids backpack program, and my heart just knew I had to connect with the Food Bank,” Connie remembers.

Her church congregation wanted to do more to help alleviate hunger in North Odessa, so Connie and her pastor reached out to the Food Bank to talk through options. They decided the best way to help would be to host the Mobile Pantry at their church.

Connie gives her time at the Mobile Pantry regularly and says it brings

Jeanette and her granddaughter, Camila, 2, share grateful smiles at New Hope Food Pantry in Midland.



Your generous gifts are making the holidays bright for local families like Jeanette's. Thank you for joining in this special season of sharing!

her joy to be able to bond with the people she serves as well as fellow volunteers. A third grade teacher at Reagan Magnet Elementary, her goal is to raise awareness about the Mobile Pantry in the school system so more families can access healthy food.

Because of her experience in the classroom, Connie knows how vital regular, balanced meals are to children's learning and development.

“I have seen the difference in a child's attitude toward learning because they have food in their stomach,” she says.

Thanks to Connie and her fellow church members' commitment to sharing nutritious food, many Odessa children and families have enough to eat. Thank you for your dedication to hunger relief in our community!

Sabrina's Family Gives Thanks for You

Sabrina and her husband, Oscar, are raising their two daughters — Mexihca, 9, and Marisol, 12 — in Big Spring. They are a close and active family. The girls love the outdoors and riding their bikes, and Oscar does hard labor in construction.

We had the opportunity to talk with Sabrina while she waited in line at Isaiah 58, a West Texas Food Bank partner near the family's home. She told us they had been getting by just fine while she was working. Unfortunately, Sabrina had to leave her job due to health issues. She is looking for work, but the family is struggling.

"At times Oscar and I will do without, ensuring that the kids' needs are met," Sabrina says.

No parent should ever have to miss a meal so that their children can eat. Because you choose to give, Oscar and Sabrina have peace of mind knowing they will not have to sacrifice their health and well-being to provide for their kids.

Marisol and Mexihca love to join their mom at Isaiah 58 and pick out some of their favorite foods, like apples and oranges. The pantry will be a big help during the holidays — your generosity means the family will get to sit down to a special meal together. For that, Sabrina is especially thankful.

"We are very grateful for this gift of food," she says to friends like you. "This has helped us out a lot when we haven't had much."

Having enough to eat seems so simple, but it could not be more important — especially for children. Thank you for growing strong West Texas families!

Hunger Action Month and Permian Basin Restaurant Week

September was Hunger Action Month (HAM), where people across the country raised awareness and took action to fight hunger. The West Texas Food Bank kicked off HAM at the Rockhounds game on a rainy Saturday with a check presentation from H-E-B. Our two facilities were lit up orange, the color of HAM, on Hunger Action Day. The month ended with our second annual Permian Basin Restaurant Week. Diners enjoyed three-course menus at local restaurants, and 20 percent of each meal's price was donated to the Food Bank. We appreciate everyone who decided to dine out for good!

Many thanks to these participating restaurants:

Zucchi's Ristorante
The Legendary Barn Door Steakhouse
The Garlic Press
Venezia Restaurant
Opal's Table
Cochineal

2,000 Seniors to Receive Supplemental Food

In October, the Food Bank began the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP). The program's goal is to improve the health of adults at least 60 years of age by supplementing their diets with nutritious USDA foods. In cooperation with our partner agencies, we will share 2,000 CSFP boxes with registered seniors across our 19-county region.

With the skyrocketing cost of living, our senior clients on fixed incomes are in need more than ever before. Thank you to the Texas Department of Agriculture for approving the West Texas Food Bank to participate in this program. And special thanks to Encana Corporation for donating boxes!

Mexihca, Marisol and their mom, Sabrina, are excited to take home groceries from Isaiah 58 in Big Spring.

