Hoping for a Happy Holiday

Being a working mom is hard. Donna tries her best to provide for her daughter, Willow, but after rent, utilities, insurance, and groceries, she still has trouble making ends meet. She recently was planning to trade Willow’s doll-house for some needed clothes, but unfortunately her car wouldn’t start — yet another bill to pay.

“I think it’s the battery,” she said.

Willow added that she wished she could charge a car battery as easily as she charges her mom’s phone.

Donna occasionally gets food from an area pantry to help make ends meet. She was excited last year to get a turkey, potatoes, and other food at a truck-to-table mobile pantry in Sikeston the Tuesday before Thanksgiving week.

“I want fruit, like apples, oranges, and watermelon,” Willow said as they waited in line at the pantry.

After they received the food and were leaving, Willow held up an apple and orange she was delighted to have, and didn’t mind that there would be no watermelon for Thanksgiving.

“Thank you for helping those in need. This is a Thanksgiving blessing,” Donna said.
Your Donations Make the Holidays Brighter for Others

The holiday season is family time for many of us. We gather together, and adults catch up on the past year's happenings while the cousins play. The cornerstone of the day is when families and friends gather around the table for the holiday feast. We share traditional dishes and anticipate the first bite of that meticulously carved turkey or ham. By the end of the meal our stomachs are full, but there is still room for grandma's pumpkin pie. The perfect meal caps off another holiday of joy and treasured time with loved ones.

Unfortunately for many of our neighbors, this is something they see only on television. Their holiday meal is like each meal they've eaten throughout the year, perhaps for many years. Piecing together whatever they can from their tight grocery budget along with the food available from their local food pantry, their holiday isn't picture perfect. Mom and dad choose between paying for gas to get to grandma's house or paying the electric bill. They may have had medical bills that meant they couldn't afford a turkey this year. These are dilemmas many southeast Missouri families face.

Although the holidays can be grim for many, your generous gifts give them hope. Your gift during the holiday season may seem small, but it gives others a reason to be thankful and know someone cares. Names they will never know or faces they will never see, but they know you are there. They are grateful your gift has helped them provide a meal for their family. They feel blessed to have caring neighbors like you in their communities.

Likewise, we are blessed to have you as friends of Southeast Missouri Food Bank.

Wishing you and your family a happy holiday season.

Joseph Keys
CEO of Southeast Missouri Food Bank

Donate and Earn a Tax Credit

You can earn a credit on your Missouri taxes when you invest in Neighborhood Assistance Program (NAP) tax credits through SEMO Food Bank.

We were approved for $150,000 in tax credits through the program, which allows corporations, farm operations, people with rental property, and other types of businesses to receive a tax credit equal to 50 percent of their charitable donation to the food bank.

The food bank will use the funds to purchase a new refrigerated truck and healthy produce for mobile truck-to-table food pantries in various locations throughout the 16 counties we serve.

Call Lisa Church at 573-471-1818 or email lchurch@semofoodbank.org for more information on feeding the hungry and saving on your Missouri taxes.
When Kayli Rolen, 22, walked into First Baptist Church Celebrate Recovery food pantry in Perryville, she was looking for food for her three children ranging in age from four months to five years. "We need it mainly for the kids," Rolen explained. "I'm a stay-at-home mom. This food helps a lot."

The food helps stock the family's pantry and gives them options for meals. "It's a lifesaver," she stated. "Sometimes, we had to live off of hot dogs and Ramen noodles."

Volunteers at the food pantry quickly gathered items for Rolen while her older children played. "Their smiles are great to see," Rolen said. "It's amazing to have food pantries like this. I don't know what I would do without it. The volunteers are awesome. The donors are awesome too. If I could have more time, I would love to volunteer with them."
Pantry Helps Grandmother Feed Children

With her cheerful presence and sense of humor, LoLo Cooper isn’t a person you will easily forget. Cooper is a regular visitor to the Good Neighbor Pantry in Sikeston. In fact, she has her own nickname there.

“They call me Miss Cooper or Chicken Coop,” Cooper said and laughed.

Even though Cooper laughs, she knows that times are tough and food is hard to come by. Cooper has a big family to feed with multiple kids and five grandchildren added in to the mix. On top of that, neighborhood kids show up at her house, so she feeds them as well.

Cooper loves to cook and enjoys making soul food and BBQ when she can. She said she is “old school” and knows how to survive, but sometimes she needs a little help. She is very thankful for pantries as they help her and other families throughout the community.

“The Good Neighbor Pantry helps a lot, and God bless them.”

Former Pantry Client Shares Joy as Volunteer

Yolanda “Cookie” Wright moved to Perryville from Charleston, S.C., and has made a home for herself helping others.

While growing up, her family often needed a little extra support. She said those were the moments God was preparing her to give to others.

“As a child, the Lord had been preparing me,” Wright said. “Some children would come by my house as a kid, and I would help them out. I would give them my clothes if they need it.”

Wright needed food assistance when she first moved to Perryville so she visited First Baptist Church Celebrate Recovery food pantry and found her calling.

“I came here for food one day,” she said. “I talked to the volunteers here and wanted to do the same. I have been volunteering ever since.”

Wright said volunteering brings her joy, and she shares that joy with every child and adult who walks through their doors.

“I know where they are because I’ve been there,” she said. “It’s not about where we are. It’s about where we can be and where we can go with everyone. All the struggles I have had, I am thankful for the help. They’ve prepared me.”

Leave a legacy of more smiling faces and less hungry tummies. Ask us how to include Southeast Missouri Food Bank in your estate planning. Contact Lisa Church at (573) 471-1818.