

# OUR HUNGER HEROES

**K**aren Fuller has been with Community Link Mission for two years. She has seen a recent increase in the number of clients, including many young families, single moms, recently unemployed, disabled and seniors.

*“I think they wouldn’t eat if they couldn’t come here for help,”*

says Karen. “A lot of young families come in and tell us they have nothing else.”

70% of their food comes from Tarrant Area Food Bank. “We couldn’t make it without them,” Karen says. “We wouldn’t be able to.”

In the summer, the need for food increases.



One mother hadn’t eaten for days in an effort to save food for her children. Young moms are faced with serious problems when their kids are home and can’t take part in the free/reduced lunch program at school.

“We love getting fresh produce,” Karen says. “A lot of clients can not afford fresh produce.”

It’s the little things that help. Clients really love getting frozen blueberries. One woman said that coming to the pantry is the bright spot of her husband’s month. Both the woman and her husband Billy are disabled and rely on Community Link Mission for help.

*“The leadership and training TAFB provides helps us keep our doors open,”*

Karen said. “They are such a valuable resource. I can find answers. They know how to do it. I’m grateful for them.”

**H**.O.P.E. Farm has partnered with Tarrant Area Food Bank for the past 15 years to provide meals for its after school programs.

Shawn Thrasher oversees two programs that serve boys ages 5 through 17 who live with their mothers in fatherless homes.

Shawn explains that the boys need the hot meals in the evening to succeed in other areas.

*“For many, this is the only hot meal that they will eat between lunch and breakfast the next day.”*

“We will eat and then work on homework and recreation,” he stresses. “This food fuels them to concentrate on studies and participate in evening exercise.”

Shawn recalls a story about two kindergarten boys who did not get breakfast at home and relied on free lunch at school. They came to H.O.P.E. Farm very hungry.

“They would eat everything that we put in front of them and then some. Dinner was a highlight of their day!”

Many boys stated that H.O.P.E. Farm meals are the first complete dinner that they have ever eaten. Not only do the boys learn about the nutritional value of the food served, but they also learn proper etiquette at the table.



*“We are thankful that we can provide these meals to our youth,” Shawn says. “It’s a tremendous benefit to our program.”*



**C**arolyn Wilson, 85, is one of the many seniors who benefits from Handley Meadowbrook Senior Center, open Monday through Friday to provide food for neighbors in need.

She eats lunch at the Handley Meadowbrook Center daily and selects a bag of groceries every couple of weeks. “It’s an effort for me in the kitchen,” Carolyn admits as she describes the task of preparing meals at home.

Despite her good health, preparing hot meals every day is physically demanding. If it were not for the center, Carolyn says she would only eat cereal or bologna sandwiches. “The center’s food is hot and nutritious,” says Carolyn. “And I know what is going into my body because they post the ingredients and nutritional information on the calendar.”

*“The senior center is a refuge for me. I’m grateful for groceries and hot meals from the Food Bank.”*

Shirley Collins, the director of Handley Meadowbrook Senior Center, cares for many widows and widowers like Carolyn. Thanks to donations, Shirley is able to hold events like Produce Day, where fruits and vegetables are highlighted. On Fridays, seniors ride the Red Cross Bus to the center to take home groceries. Recipients give back and express their gratitude by volunteering once a month at the Food Bank.

Many clients stress that the food significantly improves their lives.

“I’m grateful for what you are doing,” Carolyn says. “I’m blessed to have you as my guardian angel.”