



LOAVES & FISHES

Groceries for Neighbors in Need

THE FISHNET

Our mission is to provide a week's worth of nutritious groceries to people within our community facing economic hardships.

Which Would You Choose? Heat, Lights or Food For Your Daughters?



Juanita Reed & daughter Kinara

Juanita Reed has a degree from Johnson C. Smith University and works as a substitute teacher for children with special needs for Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. When we met recently, she was on leave as she recovered from a hip replacement.

She came to the Loaves & Fishes pantry at Holy Comforter with one of her four daughters. Kinara, 19, is studying at CPEC and wants to become a nurse. Juanita's three other daughters are 15, 14 and 8. One has epilepsy.

For Juanita, 45, it's a matter of deciding what she can spend money on. **"Nowadays, you have to choose between food and gas, food and lights,"** she says, **"and you have to keep the utilities on."**

That's what has brought her to seek help. Says Kinara: "People think you're just trying to get free stuff. But most of us work; most of us are doing the best we can."

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Even though Juanita often isn't sure where her family's next meal is coming from, she has trust that "somehow, things are going to work out."

That's where Loaves & Fishes comes in. With enough groceries to prepare 21 meals for each of them, Juanita won't have to wonder or worry about choosing between keeping the lights on or feeding her daughters.

"This is a totally unforeseen thing that will definitely stress our budgeted line item for food."

Beverly Howard,
Executive Director

Impact of Food Stamps To Be Felt

With recent changes to food stamp benefits even more people may be forced to make hard choices. As a result of the changes enacted in January, as many as 16,000 Mecklenburg Co. residents could lose their food stamps and will only be eligible for benefits three months every three years. We are expecting this to impact Loaves & Fishes as early as April, increasing the number of those seeking help to make ends meet.

For more information about the changes and what to expect, go to www.loavesandfishes.org/foodstamps

The Most Wonderful Time

It was a busy but wonderful holiday season here at Loaves & Fishes! **Hundreds of schools, businesses and neighborhoods held food drives to help feed hungry neighbors in need.** Here are just a few highlights of the outpouring of your generous support.



- 50 employees from **Mayer Brown** raised \$4,700 which they used to purchase 3,000 lbs. of Thanksgiving staples for hundreds of family feasts.
- The **Hillside Holiday Hunger Drive Through** collected 22,000 lbs. of food during the beautiful holiday light display on

Hillside Ave.

- The 13th annual **WFNZ Street Turkeys** provided hundreds of turkeys for our clients' holiday meals.
- The **Harris Teeter Harvest Feast** campaign raised over \$33,316 in contributions.
- **Share Charlotte's Giving Tuesday CLT** campaign raised a staggering \$4 million for 108 local non-profits including Loaves & Fishes.
- **Publix** continued with their monthly delivery of a truckload of donated food to our warehouse.
- **103.7 WSOC-FM** hosted the **2016 Stout Pull** at **Coyote Joe's** collecting \$3,756 for Loaves & Fishes.
- The annual **A Can if You Can Girl Scout Food Drive** in north Mecklenburg Co. collected 9,113 lbs. of food for our pantries in Davidson and Huntersville.
- **Babson Capital** and its employees donated \$9,750 at Thanksgiving.



Shay Merritt & Valerie Crockett

Ch...Ch... Changes

Lots of changes this year at Loaves & Fishes! First we said goodbye to **Valerie Crockett**. Chances are if you have volunteered at Loaves & Fishes in the last 13 years, you talked with Valerie.

As the Volunteer & Food Drive Coordinator, Valerie managed over 4,000 volunteers in our warehouse, pantries and phone center. Valerie retired in January but she isn't going far having already signed up to volunteer in the First Presbyterian pantry!

As one door closes, another one opens and we are thrilled to welcome **Shay Merritt** as our new Volunteer and Food Drive Coordinator. Shay brings over 10 years nonprofit experience with Second Harvest Food Bank and Charlotte CROP Hunger Walk.

Thank you, Valerie and welcome, Shay!

Sometimes all it takes is a match...

to brighten someone's day and feed a neighbor in need.

Thanks to a challenge from **Lori and Eric Sklut** to match up to \$25,000 in donations to Loaves & Fishes, many days will be brighter for thousands of local families.

You stepped up to the challenge by donating **\$130,797** which will mean **353,505 meals, enough to feed 16,833 people for a week!**



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Putting Together My Wish List



Beverly Howard

After more than 27 years as Executive Director of Loaves & Fishes I will be retiring in June. When I informed the Board of Directors last summer the year looked endless. Now it's down to weeks. For my last newsletter article I wanted to leave you with my hopes and dreams for Loaves & Fishes in the coming years.

I hope our generous community will continue to support the work of Loaves & Fishes. Who sits in the Director's chair is of little importance compared with the activity in our 20 food pantries. The real work of Loaves & Fishes occurs in the daily interactions between our faithful volunteers and the folks in our community who turn to us for help. The week's supply of nutritionally balanced food is important, but never discount the benefit of the warm conversation or the spontaneous hug that are also part of the pantry encounter.

I hope that Loaves & Fishes will continue to meet the need of hungry neighbors. When I came onboard in 1988 we provided food for 20,000 people. And we had enough donations – food and money to meet that need. In 2012 we provided food for 126,000 people – and again had donations to meet the need. We take great pride in saying we have never turned a hungry person away because we didn't have enough food. I hope that never changes.

Those are hopes I have, yet my dream is even bigger. I dream of a time when we, as a country and as individual people, find ways to change the vicious cycle of generational poverty and racism that is so prevalent today. Until that happens, I pray Loaves & Fishes will be there for those who need help – it could be anyone of us.

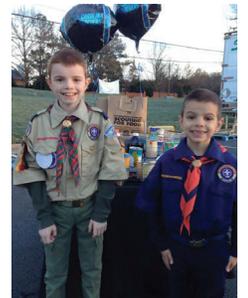
I leave you my best wishes and prayers for Loaves & Fishes,
Beverly

Donate Before You Dab!

Scouting for Food
and United Methodists
join forces to Beat Denver
in the Super Bowl Food Challenge!

Scouting for Food is THE Super Bowl of food drives for Loaves & Fishes and once again the Mecklenburg County Council of Boy Scouts scored BIG by collecting over 270,000 pounds of food. This year, with Scouting for Food scheduled the day before the Super Bowl, "**Donate Before You Dab**" became the Scouts' rallying cry!

The food drive gained momentum when the United Methodists in Denver challenged the **United Methodists in Charlotte** to a friendly super bowl food drive, and that's when things got really interesting! In addition, Bissell Co.'s Ballantyne Corporate Park challenged their employees to Keep Pounding. All in all, Charlotte *crushed* Denver in the food challenge but the real winners are our neighbors in need!





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648 B Griffith Road
Charlotte, NC 28217

Return Service Requested

Non-Profit
Organization
US Postage
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Charlotte, NC



When it comes to food donations have you ever wondered what Loaves & Fishes could use most?

- Canned Meats
- Canned Fruit
- Canned Pastas
- Cereal
- Powdered Milk
- 100% Fruit Juice

May 14 - Stamp Out Hunger NALC Food Drive

Volunteers are needed to drive mail routes collecting food donations or to sort food at various postal locations. Contact Volunteer & Food Drive Coordinator Shay Merritt at shay@loavesandfishes.org to volunteer.



May 8 - Mother's Day

Honor mom by providing groceries for a family in need. Simply fill out the enclosed envelope or donate online at www.loavesandfishes.org

