

# BLESSING: Feeding the Gulf Coast event presents 500 families with holiday meals

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more now than in previous years.

“With substantial setbacks due to hurricanes and COVID-19 that occurred this year, it has disrupted what was the normal life for all of us,” said Ledger. “A traditional Thanksgiving meal provides a sense of relief and stability for so many families struggling to make ends meet this year. We are thankful for the opportunity to provide a way for families to celebrate the season and reduce some of the uncertainty this year has created for them. We are also grateful for the donation of food from Southeastern Grocers to make this happen.”

The event took place at the City Church of Mobile and according to FTGC officials, the 500 families that attended the program received approximately 20 pounds each for a total of 17,500 pounds of food that was distributed that day. Each family received products used to create the sides for a typical Thanksgiving meal, such as mashed potatoes, stuffing, green beans and more. Each family also received their choice of a 10- to 12-pound turkey or chicken.

Officials also noted this was the second year that Feeding the Gulf Coast has partnered with Southeastern Grocers to host a Thanksgiving giveaway in Mobile. Due to the pandemic and recent hurricanes the number of people along the Gulf Coast to be in need reportedly increased from one in every six to one in every five individuals who are facing hunger. The statistics also note that one in every three children along the Gulf Coast are now facing hunger.

Amanda Young, director of media relations for Feeding the Gulf Coast, said it is her opinion that one of the most important differences



Volunteers — including Winn Dixie Regional Vice President Lynn Rushing at far right — give out Thanksgiving meals in Mobile.

the food program is providing is to allow families a sense of relief from the current situations of their lives.

“I think we all are craving some normalcy in our lives right now and the holidays are where some of our fondest memories are made,” Young said. “We know many people are faced with the uncertainty of how to provide a traditional holiday meal this year, many for the first time. We’re so blessed to be able to relieve one stressor by providing a holiday meal to families in need in our community.”

According to Young, the need for food has increased drastically this year with the COVID-19 pandemic as compared to previous years. Food insecurity for adults saw an increase of nearly 20 percent, increasing from 128,740 individuals during pre-COVID to 158,870 currently. In regards to children, Young reported there was nearly a 28 percent increase in food insecurity, which was an increase in a total number from 40,640 up to the current of 54,110.

Young said assistance for the public is still avail-

able and persons in need are asked to visit the Feeding the Gulf Coast website at [www.feedingthegulfcoast.org](http://www.feedingthegulfcoast.org).

to receive information pertaining to how families and individuals can receive assistance. Individuals can

also call (888) 704-FOOD.

“Under this feature on the website, individuals can enter their address to find

food pantries, soup kitchens, distributions and child meal sites nearest them,” Young said. “They can also get assistance with applying for benefits like SNAP and Medicare.”

Feeding the Gulf Coast serves a 24-county area spanning the Florida panhandle, south Alabama and south Mississippi. In 2019, the food bank distributed over 24 million meals to over 400 church pantries, soup kitchens, and other nonprofit organizations throughout its service area. The food bank also operates multiple hunger-relief and nutrition programs, including Summer Meals, Afterschool Meal, Backpack, Disaster Relief, Mobile Pantry and Produce Drop Distributions and Nutrition Education. Feeding the Gulf Coast is a United Way member agency and a member of Feeding America.



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