



## Supporting a Healthy Mississippi in Time of Need

### Providing Support to Food Banks Across Mississippi

Healthy nutrition is an important part of everyday well-being, and COVID-19 is amplifying the need for individuals to have access to healthy foods. With a vision of a healthy Mississippi, the Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation is providing generous grant funds to food banks that support 400 food pantries across the state. Through these grants, over 3.2 million nutritious meals will be provided for Mississippians in 82 counties.

The Foundation’s partnership with Mississippi food banks ensures that food is procured, distributed to local pantries, and made available to children and adults who need nutritious foods to thrive. For all Mississippians impacted and in need of food, the Foundation is responding and connecting to those in need with grant support to Mississippi food banks.

Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation

#### Vision

A Healthy Mississippi

#### Mission

Provide targeted grants to fund health programs and initiatives to improve the health of Mississippians

#### Strategic Focus

- Communities
- Schools

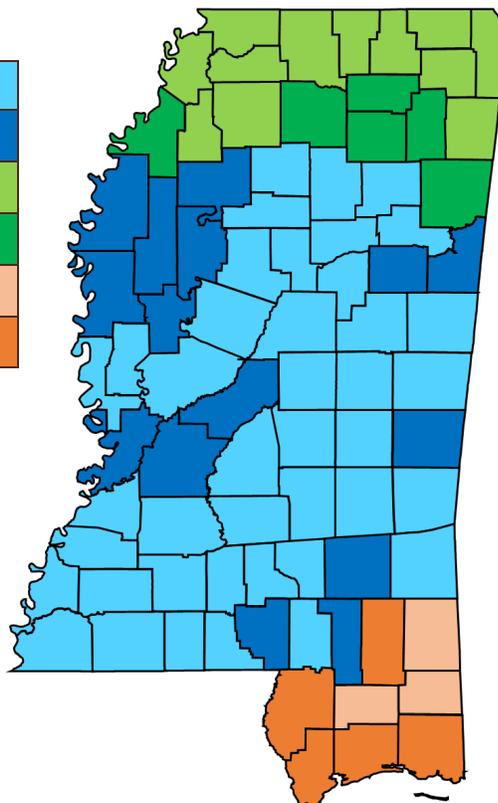
#### LEGEND

Mississippi Food Network	
Mississippi Food Network   Extra Table	
Mid-South Food Bank	
Mid-South Food Bank   Extra Table	
Feeding the Gulf Coast	
Feeding the Gulf Coast   Extra Table	

#### COUNTIES SERVED

Mississippi Food Network	56
Mid-South Food Bank	18
Feeding the Gulf Coast	8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>82</b>

*The three food banks listed above serve 400 food pantries in 82 counties. These efforts are supplemented by Extra Table in 27 counties.*



“The Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation proudly supports Mississippi’s Communities. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, the Foundation is supporting food banks across the state so that Mississippians will have access to healthy foods.”

*Sheila Grogan,  
President,  
Blue Cross & Blue Shield of  
Mississippi Foundation*

# Over 3.2 Million Meals Provided to Mississippians

As a result of a generous grant provided by the Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation to four food banks, over **3.2 million meals** are being served to Mississippians. The Foundation's partnership with Mississippi Food Network, Mid-South Food Bank, Feeding the Gulf Coast and Extra Table ensures that food made available to Mississippi's children and adults who need nutritious foods to thrive during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Through the Foundation's partnership with **Mississippi Food Network**, many children's bodies and minds are being fueled with a bag of food – a bag of hope. The foods are all child friendly and can be prepared by the children themselves, if their parents are at work.



*Image courtesy of Mississippi Food Network*

Arionna Miller is one of the children Mississippi Food Network serves in **Grenada**. Arionna would usually attend an after-school program where she would receive a snack. Due to COVID-19, the after-school program

is closed; however, the program's employees are distributing bags of healthy snacks and breakfast items to the children's homes. Arionna said, "I am very thankful for my bag of snacks, especially my cereal for breakfast."



Two grandmothers from **Sunflower County** who play significant roles in raising their grandchildren, recently found it difficult to obtain food for their families. They must travel approximately 45 minutes to a grocery store to buy food, but due to COVID-19, the grocery store has limited hours and supplies. While waiting in their vehicle to receive boxes of food at a mobile food pantry, the two ladies explained to Mississippi Food Network, "The food we are getting today helps ease some of the burden of providing food for our families."

A citizen of **Laurel**, Bunny Reed has a good outlook on life, despite the fact her family is facing COVID-19 and the aftermath of the Easter tornadoes. Like many Mississippians, she worries we are facing a new normal for an undetermined amount of time with

COVID-19 and how some people, for the first time in their lives, do not have food. As Mrs. Reed got in her car to pick up her food from Mississippi Food Network, she stated, "This food helps me have a little more peace of mind knowing everything will be alright."

"Our mobile pantries provide more than food right now – they also provide an opportunity for people to interact with others, all while following the social distancing guidelines," said Marilyn Blackledge, Director of Community Affairs, Mississippi Food Network. "Although observing social distancing and wearing gloves and masks are challenging for our staff and volunteers, giving a smile to people facing food insecurity is rewarding, even from behind the masks."



*Image courtesy of Mississippi Food Network*

Many individuals being served through the Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation's partnership with **Extra Table**, are seniors and the disabled.

*(Continued on page 3)*

(Continued from page 2)

Most weeks more than 1,800 meals are prepared and delivered to seniors living on the **Mississippi Gulf Coast**. One meal recipient remarked, “These healthy meals are heaven sent!”

During Mother’s Day weekend, Extra Table provided healthy meals, snacks and beverages to seniors living at Wesley Manor in **Hattiesburg**. Mary Kim, Director, Wesley Manor, was thankful for the “wonderful difference the food made in so many lives.”

Martha Allen, Executive Director, Extra Table, said of the Foundation, “Your generous gift is possibly the most timely gift Extra Table has ever received.”

In partnership with the Foundation, volunteers with **Feeding the Gulf Coast** act as the hands and feet of the organization’s efforts. These passionate volunteers dedicate many hours to helping feed south Mississippi. “We want to honor them as often as possible because our work truly is not possible without them,” said Cyndy Baggett, Vice President of Development and Marketing.

Jourdan Hartshorn recently began volunteering with Feeding the Gulf Coast and quickly became one of the organization’s biggest advocates. Volunteering at a mobile pantry in **Wiggins**, Jourdan spoke to a food box recipient who told him, “This is my first time coming to pick up food for my household. I was working but work stopped due to COVID-19.”



Image courtesy of Feeding the Gulf Coast

## Foundation Funds 50 Gardens in Mississippi K-12 Schools



Image courtesy of Hills Chapel School

The Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation’s *School Garden Model* fully integrates into the fabric of participating schools and the academic experience of every student. In a school garden, students become farmers, scientists, mathematicians, historians, poets, chefs and horticulturists making the full learning experience more relevant and engaging. The *Model*, developed in partnership with Pontotoc Middle School, outlines best practices for Mississippi schools interested in edible garden education programs and sustainable agriculture supported by Foundation grant funds. The *Model* also describes how teachers can use gardening to help students learn patience, cooperation, teamwork and social skills with opportunities to taste fresh produce and gain extra outdoor exercise. As of May 2020, the Foundation has funded 50 school gardens in K-12 public and private schools across the state. For information on how your school may receive Foundation grant funds to implement a school garden program, send a request to [Foundation@bcbsms.com](mailto:Foundation@bcbsms.com).

For additional information about the Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation, please visit our website at [www.healthiermississippi.org](http://www.healthiermississippi.org).