

Hunger Solutions Guide for the Faith Community

Created by the

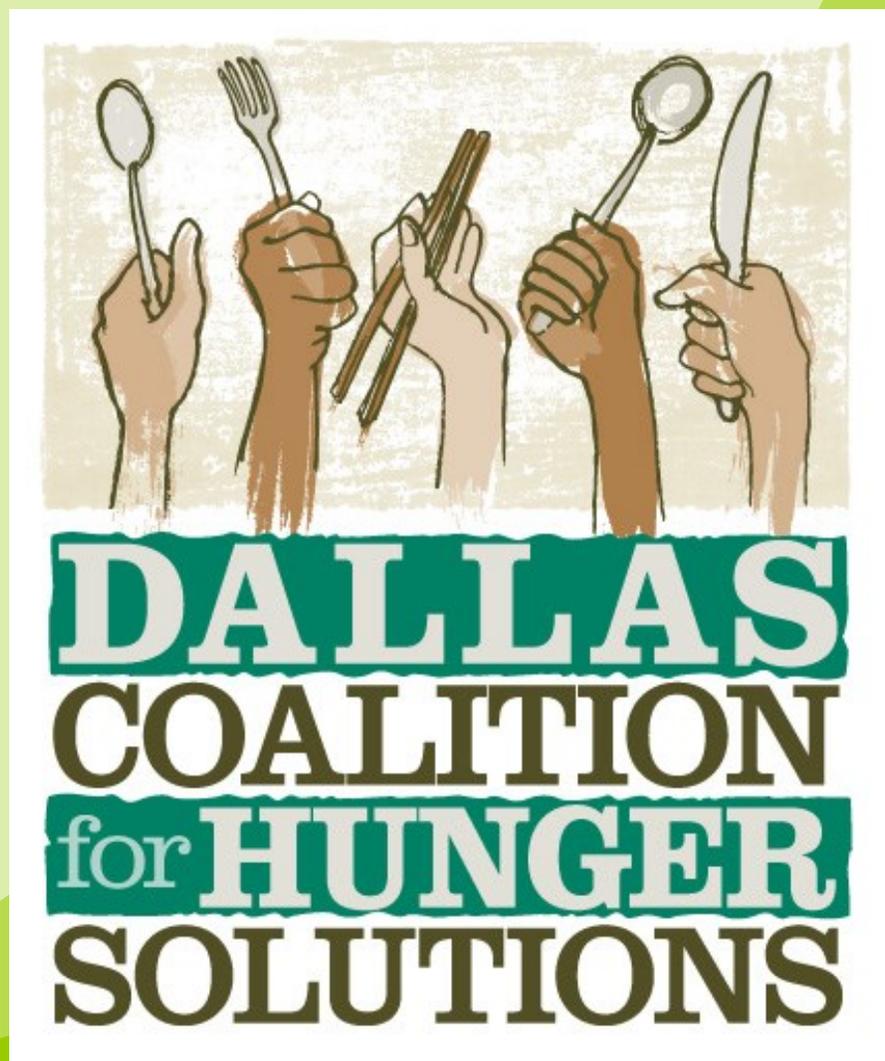


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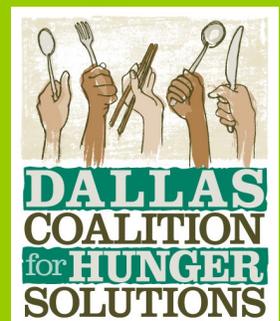
Introduction

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About DCHS

The Dallas Coalition for Hunger Solutions (DCHS) is a coalition of organizations and individuals committed to making Dallas County food secure. The mission of DCHS is to empower residents to gain equal access to healthy food. DCHS is chaired by U.S. Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson, and is also led by the North Texas Food Bank, FEED 3, the Dallas Baptist Association, the Episcopal Diocese of Dallas, Sonia White Consulting, GROW North Texas, and the Texas Hunger Initiative.

For more information about DCHS, contact Wyonella Henderson-Greene at Wyonella_Henderson-Greene@baylor.edu or 214-367-3771.



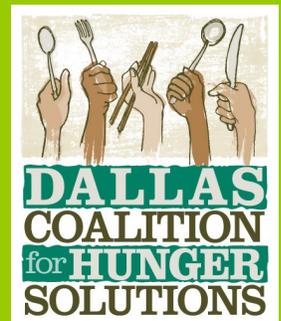
Introduction

More than 1 in 5 adults and more than 1 out of 4 children in Dallas County are food insecure and at risk of hunger. These statistics represent hundreds of thousands of individuals who struggle every day to obtain enough food to get by. For this state of affairs to exist in our community is unacceptable and unnecessary.

The faith community can play a major role in finally putting an end to food insecurity and hunger. We need every congregation to take action to ensure that children, families and seniors have the food and nourishment they need to flourish.

In this guide are six tested, effective solutions to the problem of hunger that your congregation can implement. These solutions take advantage of existing programs and resources in the community. They generally require limited financial commitments from your congregation. But they can make a very substantial impact on hunger.

This guide is designed for the use of congregations, but we encourage all who are concerned about hunger to utilize it as well.



Community Partner Program



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Overview

Brief Description

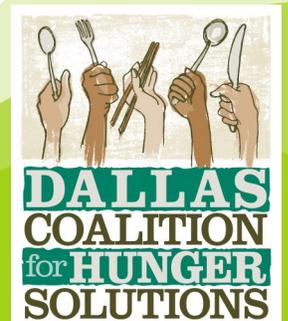
The Community Partner Program is a way for community organizations, including congregations, to assist low-income community members in applying for and managing their public benefits (SNAP, Medicaid, CHIP, etc.) via a web portal, www.yourtexasbenefits.com. The Community Partner Program is an initiative of the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) and is being promoted by the Texas Hunger Initiative, Texas Impact, and the Texas Association of Community Health Centers.

The Need

SNAP (the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, previously called Food Stamps) is a crucial program that helps low-income families put food on the table. SNAP reduces food insecurity, helps move people out of poverty, and increases child nutrition and health while also boosting the local economy. Unfortunately, in 2011, 223,000 people were eligible for SNAP, but not receiving benefits. Of this total, it is estimated that at least 20,000 were over age 65. All together there was nearly \$355,000,000 in unused SNAP benefits in Dallas County. These resources could have been used by seniors, families, and children to prevent hunger.

There are two primary reasons these benefits are not being accessed. First, many low-income families and seniors are not aware that they are eligible for benefits. Additionally, applying for benefits can be challenging either because of difficulty getting to the nearest HHSC office or because of problems filling out the complex application. Organizations that serve as Community Partners can help break down these barriers to access so that low-income community members can obtain greatly needed public benefits that reduce hunger as well as increase health.

Sources: Texas Food Bank Network, The Senior Source



Community Partner Program



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The Solution in Action

How It Works

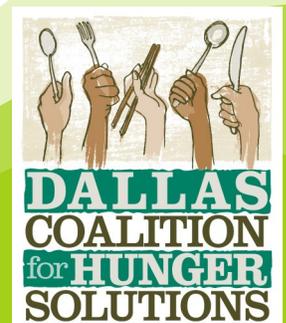
The Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), the state agency that oversees public benefits that help people pay for food as well as health care, has developed an on-line portal, www.yourtexasbenefits.com, where people apply for and manage their own benefits. Using this website streamlines the application process, saving taxpayers money and improving the experience for applicants. The Community Partner Program can play a major role in assisting many low-income people access needed benefits.

How Your Congregation Can Be A Community Partner

Congregations and other community organizations can serve as Community Partners, by providing a public computer at which people can use YourTexasBenefits.com and/or providing staff or volunteers to help people fill out the on-line application. There are two levels of Community Partner participation:

Self-Service Site: As a Self-Service Site, faith-based congregations would offer a computer(s) with internet access for individuals to apply and manage their benefits on their own using www.yourtexasbenefits.com. Providing a printer and scanner is preferable but optional. HHSC would provide free promotional materials. Congregations would have the flexibility to determine the days and times computer availability is offered.

Assistance Site: As an Assistance Site, congregations would provide a computer(s) with internet access, printer/scanner (optional but preferable) and provide trained volunteers or staff to serve as “navigators” in assisting community members in using www.yourtexasbenefits.com. Individuals providing assistance must get consent forms from those receiving assistance giving them permission to view confidential information while helping them use the website. Congregations determine the hours and availability of staff/volunteer assistance.



Community Partner Program



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Getting Started

How Your Congregation Can Be A Community Partner

There is no cost to being a Community Partner other than providing a computer with internet access and, for an Assistance Site, staff or volunteers. Each Community Partner receives a regular report from HHSC on how many people have applied using the organization's computers. For Assistance Sites, HHSC provides on-line training modules to train staff or volunteers in helping people use www.yourtexasbenefits.com.

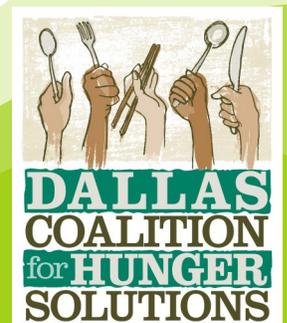
For congregations, becoming a Community Partner allows them to help community members access needed public benefits that can significantly reduce hunger, as well as build relationships with people to help them in other ways.

How to Get Started As A Community Partner

- Contact the Texas Hunger Initiative Dallas Regional Office:
 - ⇒ For congregations north of I-30, contact Marc Jacobson at Marc_Jacobson@baylor.edu or 214-367-3765
 - ⇒ For congregations south of I-30, contact Denise Grant at Denise_Grant@baylor.edu or 214-367-3768

They can provide additional information and guidance throughout the application process.

- Complete Online Interest Form: Interested congregations will need to fill out an on-line interest form at www.TexasCommunityPartnerProgram.com. *In filling out your interest form, please indicate that you heard about the program from the Texas Hunger Initiative and Texas Impact.*



Community Partner Program



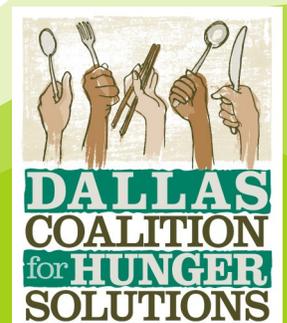
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Getting Started (cont.)

- Provide Two Letters of Support: If the congregation is not listed on the Texas 2-1-1 call-in referral service, two letters of support will be requested from other organizations or churches in the community that the organization has been involved with.
- Complete Enrollment Packet Including Memorandum of Understanding: After reviewing and approving your interest form and letters of support, HHSC will send an Enrollment Packet via email that will include a copy of a non-financial Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and several other required forms. The MOU lays out the terms and responsibilities of the congregation and of HHSC.

In completing these forms, organizations will be asked to assign a staff person to serve in the role of Site Manager. The Site Manager is responsible for being the point of contact with HHSC as well as overseeing the program. Organizations will also be asked to indicate on the forms the days and hours assistance will be provided either as a Self-Service Site or an Assistance Site.

- Ensure Navigators Get Trained: Before Assistance Sites can begin helping people, the Site Manager must ensure that volunteers or staff members who will be Navigators complete the on-line training modules. These comprise approximately 3.5 hours of material and can be found at www.TexasCommunityPartnerProgram.com.
- Begin Assisting People In Accessing www.yourtexasbenefits.com!



Community Partner Program



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Case Study

Axe Memorial United Methodist Church, Garland, TX

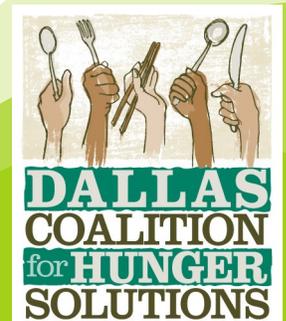
Program Overview

Axe Memorial Church has been in operation as a Community Partner for several months, with Pastor Minor serving as the Site Manager. He and several volunteers serve as navigators, providing assistance to people in using www.yourtexasbenefits.com. He sees their role as serving as a point of “first contact” for those who do not know all the information or documents they must have to apply. When patrons do not have all the necessary materials, they can simply come back to the church rather than having to trek to an HHSC office and are “saved a trip downtown.”

The Process

- Axe Memorial filled out an interest form expressing interest in being an Assistance Site Community Partner in April of 2013. Because they are listed on 2-1-1 they did not need to submit two letters of support.
- They were approved by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission as a Community Partner in May and received a non-financial Memorandum of Understanding to complete and turn in.
- By the end of July, HHSC had provided Axe Memorial with the organization log-in that they could use to start helping people access www.yourtexasbenefits.com and be able to track that usage.
- After training church members as navigators, Axe Memorial started providing assistance. They provide assistance during the same hours that their church’s food pantry operates, which is Tuesday and Thursday from 9 am - 12:30 pm.
- The church also tries to always have a trained navigator around the offices during the off hours, in case someone requires assistance.
- The number of people seeking assistance has been relatively small. To date, clients they have assisted have either learned about the opportunity through the food pantry or found them through the www.TexasCommunityPartnerProgram.com website.

Contact Pastor J.I. Minor, pastorminor@axeumc.org,
(972) 278-2175



Summer Meals



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Overview

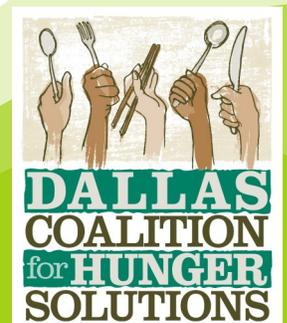
Brief Description

The Summer Meals program is a federally funded USDA child nutrition assistance program implemented through the Texas Department of Agriculture. It is designed to help feed children and teens during the summer break who normally receive free or reduced priced meals at school during the school year. The Texas Hunger Initiative is working in Dallas County to provide support to the program to make it more effective at meeting the needs of children.

The Need

Summertime should be a time for happiness, friends, family, food and fun, but for those children and families who rely on school breakfast and lunch, the summer is an especially difficult time. In Texas, nearly 1.9 million children are food insecure, not always knowing where their next meal will come from. In Dallas County, more than one in four children lack a regular food supply and are at risk of going hungry. Of the 2.8 million students that participate in free and reduced priced meals during the school year in our state, only 12 percent participate in Summer Meals, according to the Texas Department of Agriculture. Not only is the summer the time of greatest risk for child food insecurity and poor nutrition, but also family food budgets have to be stretched even further.

**Data from Feeding America, Map the Meal Gap Report*



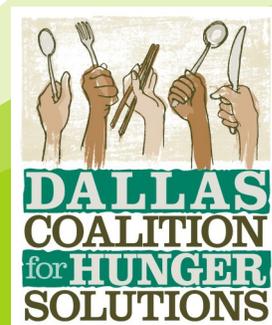
How it Works

Through the Summer Meals program, approved Summer Meals “sponsor” organizations serve meals to children, ages 18 and under, at over a thousand approved sites throughout Dallas County. Sites include churches, recreation centers, boys and girls clubs, schools, apartment complexes, parks, YMCAs and libraries. The meals must meet USDA nutrition guidelines in order to provide children with healthy nutrition, and many sites offer the participating children and teenagers games and other enrichment activities. The Summer Meals program helps families save money and stretch their summer food budgets while giving children an opportunity to eat healthy meals and stay active in a safe and fun environment.

How Your Congregation Can Support Summer Meals Program

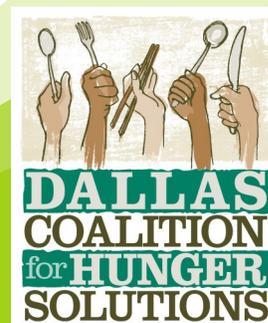
Congregations have a unique opportunity to assist with the Summer Meals Program. Participation can involve being a Summer Meals site but congregations can also “adopt” a site. Adopting a site entails providing volunteers to help the site be as effective as possible in meeting the needs of kids. Some volunteer needs at adopted Summer Meals sites may include:

- Helping to increase awareness about and participation in the Summer Meals program by distributing flyers at the apartments or homes surrounding a site.
- Serving meals to children and teens at the site.
- Participating in or providing games, arts and crafts, recreational play, reading and other enrichment activities before or after meals are served. Some sites currently offer limited activities and others lack any activities at all beyond the meal.



How to Get Started with Summer Meals Programs

- Contact Loretta Landry, Child Hunger Outreach Specialist at the Texas Hunger Initiative Dallas Office, at Loretta.Landry@Baylor.edu or (214) 367-3770. Loretta can provide guidance and support in helping your congregation “adopt” a site.
- Identify the Summer Meals site your congregation would like to adopt: Determine one or more geographic areas that would work best. This could be based on proximity to your congregation or a low-income neighborhood or region you wish to serve.
 - ⇒ If it is currently summer, you can find a site near you by visiting www.summerfood.org and clicking on the left “Eat Right, Find a Site!” tab. Enter the present date and your desired address or zip code when searching for a site. Each site listing should provide the site name and address (church or school for example), the sponsor’s name, email address and phone number, as well as the site’s dates of operation and meal days and times.
 - ⇒ If summer has yet to begin, Loretta Landry at the Texas Hunger Initiative can help you locate a likely site in your desired area and provide you with contact information for the site coordinator.
- Contact the site: It is recommended that a leader from your congregation contact the site coordinator to express interest in a particular program. The site coordinator can assist you with next steps that best suit your organization and the needs of the site. Note, that background checks will likely be required.



Watermark Church, Dallas, TX in partnership with CitySquare, a Summer Meals sponsor

Program Overview

Watermark Church has partnered with CitySquare, a Summer Meals sponsor and anti-poverty organization, for many years on a variety of initiatives, including supporting their Summer Meals program.

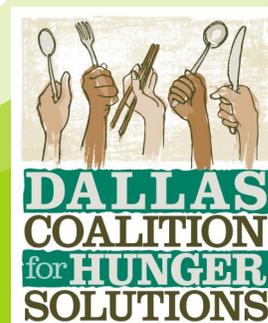
In previous years, Watermark has assisted CitySquare by distributing flyers around the neighborhoods of various Summer Meals sites. This publicity has been essential for letting kids know about food and activities available at each site.

In the summer of 2013, Watermark “adopted” two apartment sites and provided volunteers to support those sites. Volunteers signed up to serve summer meals every Thursday afternoon. Volunteers also had the opportunity to completely create their own programming for the children at the site including puppet shows, games, arts and crafts, and songs. This was a way for more volunteers to be involved while offering fun activities for the children. Often volunteers would stay slightly longer than CitySquare’s staff in order to provide extra enrichment for the kids.

CitySquare has had other faith-based groups, including youth groups, that have created week long “summer camps” at various sites. These groups would, for example, adopt a site for one week and provide up to three hours of planned programming. The camps included various activities such as Vacation Bible School camps, sports, reading, or arts and crafts.

Contact Benson Hines, External Focus Coordinator, Watermark Church

bhines@watermark.org, (214) 239-8815





Brief Description

Crossroads Community Services (CCS) is the urban outreach ministry of First United Methodist Church of Dallas. CCS provides both food and clothing to those who visit its downtown Dallas location. In 2012, CCS provided over 15,000 people with more than 2.1 million pounds of nutritious food.

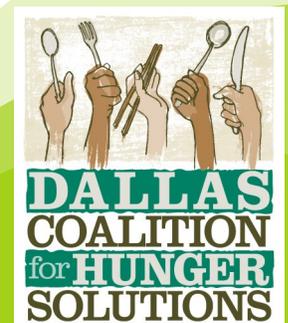
In 2006, CCS began development of an innovative network of **Community Distribution Partners** (CDP) to address the nutritional needs of the mentally, physically, and transportation challenged. CCS serves as a “hub,” obtaining nutritious foods from the North Texas Food Bank. CDP are the sites or “the spokes of the wheel” that have volunteers and/or staff who pick up the food (from CCS) and distribute it to clients at their location. This distribution approach increases efficiency of food distribution in high-need areas by leveraging existing community resources.

The Need

The U.S. Census Bureau reports that 437,000 individuals in Dallas County are living at or below the poverty level, defined as \$23,050 for a family of four. Often the same people who struggle to put food on the table are overweight or obese. CCS works to address what seems to be a paradox—coexisting food insecurity and rising obesity.

One cause of the paradox is that many food-insecure people live in food deserts, neighborhoods in which the residents lack access to affordable, nutritious foods that make up a healthy diet. Because many of these residents lack reliable means of transportation, they are more likely to consume the cheaper, less healthy foods available near them.

There are many food pantries available in Dallas to help low-income community members when their food budget gets stretched. Unfortunately, not everyone has the means to travel to those food pantries and not all food pantries have an adequate supply of healthy foods.



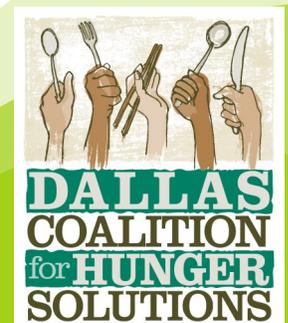


How It Works

Crossroads Community Services incorporates best practice approaches in its food bank. They provide a significant amount of meals so that low-income community members do not have to visit multiple food pantries to get the food they need. They also provide a nutritious balance of food. In fact, in 2005, CCS became the first agency in the nation to match the amount of food aid provided from each food group with an individual's age, gender and activity level as recommended by the USDA's MyPyramid. In 2010, CCS was named the *Model Agency of the Year* by the North Texas Food Bank for innovation and volume of food delivered.

By becoming a Community Distribution Partner (CDP), community organizations can access the innovations and food resources of CCS to help community members, who either because of distance and lack of transportation or because they are mentally or physically-challenged, cannot visit local food pantries. CDPs are especially good for reaching pockets of food insecure individuals who are not otherwise getting assistance. Instead of starting up another food pantry or spending significant funds shopping for food to donate, community organizations can get access to deeply discounted and nutritious food through CCS that they can distribute on a regular basis to the low-income community members they are working with.

Currently, Community Crossroads Services has 53 sites including Dallas Housing Authority sites, community centers, places of worship, and other non-profit agencies. CCS is seeking additional Community Distribution Partners (CDP), particularly with faith-based organizations who want to impact hunger in their community and can organize volunteers to make a difference.

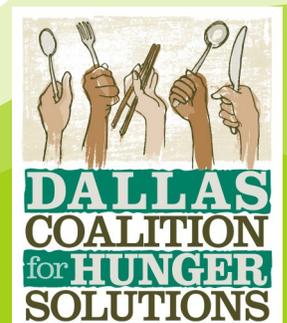




How Your Congregation Can Be A Distribution Partner

Your congregation can become a Community Distribution Partner and serve nutritious food to needy families in your neighborhood. You would need to provide food a minimum of once per month, but could provide it as often as weekly. You would pre-register individuals to receive food using the CCS intake and food ordering system (which identifies individual-specific food needs based on the USDA's MyPyramid). Then on your predetermined food distribution days, your congregation would have volunteers or staff pick up the food from CCS and take it back to your location to distribute. The food is purchased by your congregation from CCS at a deeply discounted rate, lower even than the cost of getting food from the North Texas Food Bank.

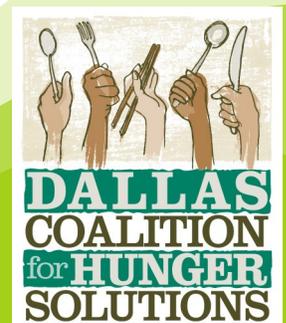
CDPs are also asked to host educational workshops on a variety of topics like nutrition, meal planning, goal setting and emotion management, which are provided by the NTFB and CCS.





How to Get Started as A Distribution Partner

- Contact CCS: Congregations interested in becoming a Community Distribution Partner can contact Jennifer Johnson, Community Distribution Partner Coordinator, at (214) 560-2511 x 402 or jjohnson@fumcdallas.org.
- Determine the details of serving as a Distribution Partner: Schedule an appointment with the above contact to walk through the specifics of the process and how your congregation can best work with CCS. Some details to consider may include:
 - ⇒ Determining an appropriate site location (typically the location of your congregation, but potentially an alternate site). Site must have or obtain enough refrigerator/freezer space to accommodate product received.
 - ⇒ Determining the need in the community near the site location.
 - ⇒ Establishing how many clients your congregation might serve.
 - ⇒ Determining the number of volunteers needed to serve food to clients.
 - ⇒ Identifying how often you will provide food (1 to 4 times a month) and the amount of food to be provided (you will need to determine whether to provide enough food for 12, 15, 21, or 30 healthy meals per person).
 - ⇒ Figuring the cost required to purchase the necessary food.
- Recruit volunteers to help with pre-registration as well as pick up, transport and distribution of food
- Pre-register individuals who are in need of food assistance
- Pick up food from CCS on your designated distribution days and then hand out at your site
- Host nutrition and other classes for food assistance recipients through CCS and NTFB





The New Room/Feed Lake Highlands, Dallas, TX

"We are a diverse community, and hunger is a real foe. We must all work together to battle it." Jill Goad, executive director, Feed Lake Highlands

Program Overview

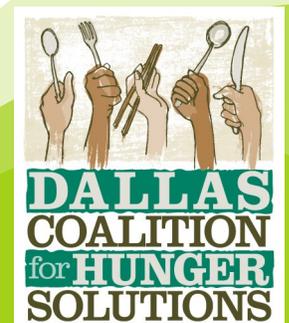
Feed Lake Highlands is the food distribution ministry of The New Room, a worshiping congregation of Lake Highlands United Methodist Church. Feed Lake Highlands served its first clients as a CCS Community Distribution Partner in February 2012. They provide food to a maximum of 120 families per month. Many of the families reside in the 12 apartment communities situated nearby. Several veterans visit The New Room for food, also. All clients are pre-registered; this is not a program for walk-in clients.

The Community Distribution Partner program is a good fit for Feed Lake Highlands because The New Room has limited space with almost no room for food storage.

The Process

Getting started:

- An associate pastor and Feed Lake Highland's director met with staff of CCS and completed CCS's application process and training.
- The ministry purchased a few items needed, such as a second freezer and reusable bags for the groceries.
- Feed Lake Highland's staff trained the ministry volunteers. The volunteers also participated in online training offered by the North Texas Food Bank.
- Volunteers registered families who wanted to participate in the food program. The clients agreed to a covenant, and they were encouraged to participate in at least one life skills class, offered by Feed Lake Highlands, every six months.

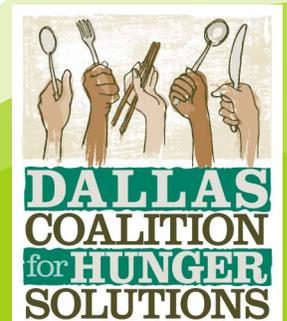




On food distribution days:

- Volunteers pick up the food before noon at Crossroads Community Services in downtown Dallas and deliver it to The New Room.
- Volunteers package the food in the early afternoon to get it ready for the late afternoon distribution on the same day.
- At the distribution time, friendly volunteers greet the pre-registered clients at the door and check them in.
- Volunteers visit with clients as they wait in a comfortable sitting area, or they can shop at a small clothing room.
- While clients are waiting, they may learn more about a specific health or nutrition issue and have the opportunity to get their blood pressure checked. They also receive information about The New Room's financial literacy program or other learning opportunities.
- Once their food is packaged, a volunteer helps them take the food to their vehicle.
- All the food is distributed. No food is stored overnight.

Contact Jill Goad, jgoad@lhumc.com, (214) 497-3292



Cooking Matters



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Overview

Brief Description

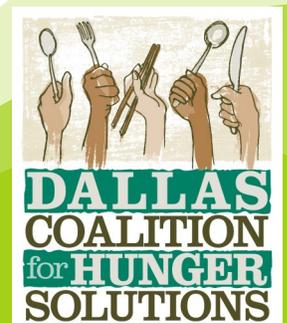
The Cooking Matters program is a six-week course that teaches participants to shop smarter, use nutrition information to make healthier choices and cook delicious, affordable meals. Cooking Matters is a direct service program of Share Our Strength offered locally through the North Texas Food Bank. It is dedicated to empowering low-income individuals and families with the tools necessary to maintain a healthy diet on a limited budget. Cooking Matters believes that providing individuals with these essential skills and knowledge promotes self-sufficiency and long-term solutions to hunger.

The Need

Millions of low-income families are considered food insecure. They struggle every day with an extremely limited budget for food. They often depend on food pantries and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to help put food on the table. Even with that assistance it can be hard to prepare meals that are both affordable and nutritious.

In many cases, low-income families rely on the low nutrition, high carbohydrate foods that are cheap and convenient. Eating mostly these types of foods can lead to malnutrition and poor health. Childhood obesity and diabetes are two common consequences. In fact, rates of severe obesity were approximately 1.7 times higher among low-income children and adolescents than the general child population.

Source: Food Research and Action Center, The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition



How It Works

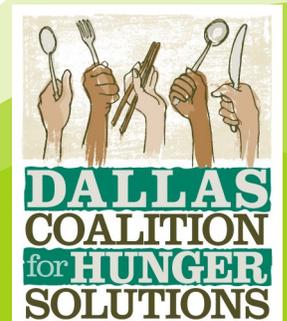
The North Texas Food Bank offers six-week Cooking Matters courses to adults, teens, kids and families. Each six-week course has 10-15 participants who must attend all 6 once-a-week 2-hour classes. At least fifty percent of participants must be low-income. Adult participants take home a bag of groceries at the end of each week's class so they can prepare meals for their families.

The courses are team-taught by a volunteer chef and nutrition educator and cover meal preparation, grocery shopping, food budgeting and nutrition. Additional volunteers also serve as grocery shoppers and classroom managers. Volunteers in each of these four roles work together to make each class successful.

How Your Congregation Can Participate

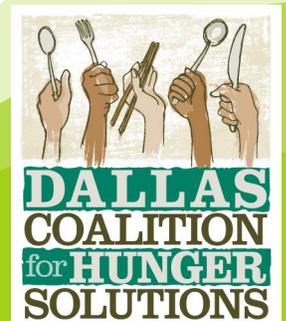
Congregations can host a six-week Cooking Matters course, either for adults, for families, for teens or for kids. Congregations are encouraged to provide volunteers to serve as grocery shoppers and classroom managers, in addition to providing space for classes. Kitchens are helpful but not required. Minimum requirements to hold a class are: trash can, electrical outlet, hand washing station with soap and towels, tables/counters, and chairs.

If a congregation member has a culinary or food industry background he or she could serve as the volunteer chef, and if a congregation member has nutrition or dietetics experience he or she could serve as nutrition educator. The curriculum for the courses and teaching instructions will be provided to all such volunteers.



How To Get Started Hosting a Cooking Matters Course

- Determine if there are interested participants: Identify whether there are low-income adults, teens, or kids interested in participating in the Cooking Matters program. If the congregation already has a food pantry or other service program that would be a good source of participants. Alternatively, the congregation could draw from its own members or partner with a local apartment community or service agency.
- Determine if the congregation has space to host based on the requirements listed above.
- Coordinate with the Cooking Matters staff at the North Texas Food Bank (NTFB): Assign a congregation member or staff person that will serve as the site coordinator to communicate with NTFB. Then contact the Cooking Matters staff at NTFB at nutrition@ntfb.org to get an application for hosting a course. Fill out the application and return it to nutrition@ntfb.org. Upon receipt a member of the Cooking Matters staff will contact you to set up a meeting to confirm your congregation's ability to successfully host a course.
- Identify volunteers: Find people in your congregation who would be willing to volunteer to help support and/or teach the course. A Cooking Matters staff member can provide you with volunteer job descriptions for each position.
- Schedule the course: In communication with a Cooking Matters staff member, identify an available time for holding the course. This is usually a few months in the future. The staff member will then work with you to facilitate the planning of the course, including holding an orientation for all volunteers.



Emanuel Lutheran Church Community Center, Dallas, TX

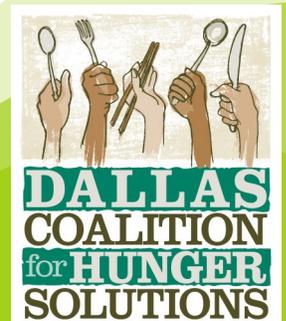
Program Overview

Emanuel Lutheran Church holds a Cooking Matters course for families during the summer time. Participants are mostly low-income, Hispanic families who receive food from the church's food pantry. Two people attend per family, one adult and one child. There are seven families for a total of 14 participants. The course is very hands-on, with even the children helping with cutting up vegetables and cooking. The course was held in Spanish because that was the primary language of the participants.

The Process

- The church noticed that many of the people receiving food at the food pantry were dealing with obesity and other health challenges so they decided to find a course that could help teach nutrition education.
- A church member contacted the Cooking Matters team at the North Texas Food Bank and filled out an application, sharing information on who, where and what. That church member, Pat McDonald, became the site coordinator.
- A Cooking Matters staff member made an appointment with Pat to visit the facility and make sure it was suitable. The church has a non-commercial kitchen.
- The course was scheduled for the summer time in between a church summer reading program and a back-to-school carnival.
- Cooking Matters staff provided flyers for the church to use in promoting the program and finding people interested in participating.
- Because Emanuel Lutheran is a very small church, Cooking Matters provided all the volunteers for the program. Cooking Matters also purchased all the groceries for the program.
- The church was required to have a staff person at the facility during the course and to have babysitting available for families if needed. Children participating in the course must be age 6 or older.
- Cooking Matters staff and volunteers set up the room, did a pre-test and after-test with course participants, and cleaned up the room afterwards.

Contact Pat McDonald, Emanuel Lutheran Church
Community Center, (972) 279-8714



Family Garden Initiative



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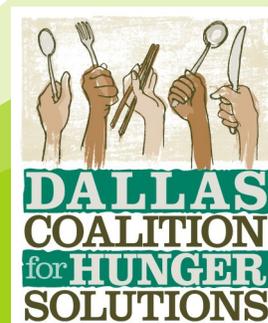
Overview

Brief Description

The Family Garden Initiative (FGI), based in Ohio, is a Christian-based, community outreach organization that provides fresh food to families in need through building gardens and providing garden education in local communities (www.familygardeninitiative.org). Through the training and equipping of local congregations and social organizations, FGI and its partners empower children, adults and families to improve their nutrition through gardening at their homes and apartments.

The Need

For most low-income families who have very tight budgets, fresh produce is usually the first item cut from the shopping list in favor of low cost, less nutritious foods. In addition, inner city conditions rarely offer the ability to garden by traditional means because of poor soil (or no soil), minimal space and lack of water access necessary to sustain a large outdoor garden. As a result, adults and children living in low-income urban environments are often not exposed to growing fruits and vegetables and may not be aware of the nutritional value of healthy foods.



Family Garden Initiative



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The Solution in Action

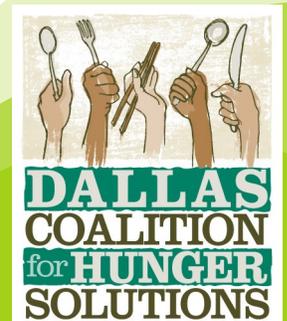
How it Works

The Family Garden Initiative uses unique methods to meet the need by providing a complete urban garden to low-income families so that they can learn how to grow fresh fruits and vegetables. Each garden provided to a family in need contains: 8 GardenSoxx (16 sq. ft. total), plants and seeds, watering can, *Care Guide* and *Recipe Book*. GardenSoxx is a unique and portable organic gardening system comprised of a mesh bag filled with soil and compost. Each garden of 8 GardenSoxx is designed to produce enough food to feed a family of 4 for one year, although with additional plants and seeds the GardenSoxx will continue producing for two years. The type of plants and seeds provided are customized according to region and local culture. Local community organizations partner with the Family Garden Initiative to obtain complete garden sets and organize garden distribution, including set-up and training, to the homes and apartments of low-income families.

How Your Congregation Can Participate

Congregations are the primary type of organization that the Family Garden Initiative partners with to distribute gardens. The program is designed to be simple and centers around a standard donation of \$50 to supply one family a garden. Congregations identify individuals or families who would benefit from a garden, then deliver the gardens generally during a one or two-day service event.

Most projects tend to be 30-50 gardens or more and are typically distributed at one time. (FGI will work with organizations wanting to provide fewer gardens). FGI guides each project through all steps of program development and execution, but generally is not on site during distribution. Congregations interested in starting a local FGI project are responsible for their own funding for the gardens.



Family Garden Initiative

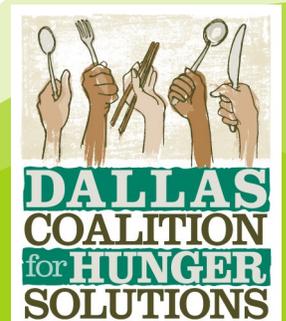


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Getting Started

How To Get Started with Family Garden Initiative

- Contact Family Garden Initiative: Alex Marks is the Director and can be reached at (440) 305-0344 or alex.marks@familygardeninitiative.org.
- Designate Project Manager: Churches or other organizations looking to start a project will need to designate a project manager. This is the point person for all stages of the program (Local FGI Project Manager). Through ongoing conversation, conferencing via phone and video, and dialog, FGI will assist and coach throughout the entire process, customizing where necessary to fit specific needs.
- Select Target Area, Neighborhood and Recipients: A target area or neighborhood should be identified, as well as the potential recipients of the garden. Suggestions include:
 - ⇒ Identify a group of families in need that your congregation may currently be serving, either directly or through a partner organization.
 - ⇒ Develop a partnership with a nonprofit agency that has clients who would benefit from a garden. For help identifying a potential partner agency, contact Wyonella Henderson-Greene, Coordinator of the Dallas Coalition for Hunger Solutions, at Wyonella.Henderson-Greene@baylor.edu or 214-367-3771.
- Identify Funding Opportunities: Identify 2-3 potential funding opportunities depending upon the number of gardens and required financial commitment. These funds typically come from an organization's operating budget but might also include donations from the community, businesses or through partnerships among churches or organizations working together to commit funds to the program.
- Solicit Volunteers: Identify volunteers to assist the effort of distributing the gardens. This can be done on a single day or during a weekend. Adults as well as children can assist in this effort.



Church of the Open Door, Elyria, Ohio

Program Overview

Church of the Open Door is a large congregation in Elyria, Ohio that has been implementing the Family Garden Initiative for several years, delivering hundreds of gardens to individuals and families. The Family Garden Initiative is now an ongoing ministry of the church and is fully integrated into the heartbeat of the church.

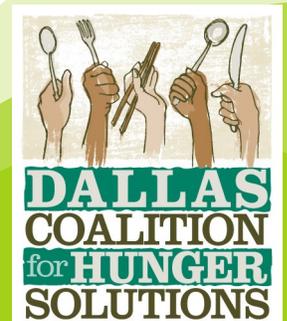
The Process

Start-up:

- Church of the Open Door (COD) learned about FGI through the efforts of Alex Marks, the founding Director.
- Church of the Open Door decided that this would be a wonderful project for their congregation and the community, so they assigned a point person to begin the process with ongoing assistance from FGI.
- COD began to contact multiple agencies in the area to determine needs (i.e. Salvation Army). This was a way for them to involve other organizations while at the same time acquiring a list of individuals and families who would benefit from a garden.
- Once the list was acquired, those interested needed to complete an application (now online) in order to “qualify” and ensure interest in receiving a garden.
- FGI worked with COD and connected them with local community suppliers to provide the GardenSoxx, seeds, plants and watering cans.

Getting the Congregation Involved:

- Once the list of garden recipients was finalized, COD began the process of informing the congregation and raising money to support the gardens.
- Their philosophy was to communicate to the congregation three ways to get involved: Pray, Give or Serve. This was a way to encourage the entire congregation to get involved in the ministry in some way or another.
- Specifically, members were asked to pray for the future recipients, donate money (“sponsor” a garden) and/or serve through assisting in collecting and distributing gardens.



Family Garden Initiative



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Case Study (cont.)

Getting the Congregation Involved (cont.):

- During worship, COD provided business cards with a garden recipient's first name and members were asked to pray for the recipient and to consider other opportunities to get involved. In addition, watering cans were left in the church at various locations for members to donate cash or write a check and place in the watering can. Volunteer sign-up lists were also provided.
- Money raised for the gardens came primarily from the congregation; however, community organizations also donated money for the initiative.

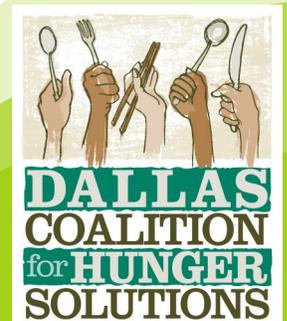
Service/Delivery Day:

- Once enough money was raised to purchase 250 gardens, a day was established when volunteers from the congregation would gather and deliver the gardens to each recipient family.
- A staging area (i.e. church parking lot) was designated where the GardenSoxx would be initially delivered from the community supplier.
- On the day of delivery, COD trained volunteers on setting up the gardens, planting seeds and/or plants and presenting the *Garden Care Guide*.
- Many volunteers also assisted by providing large vehicles and trucks to transport the gardens.
- COD assigned volunteers to garden recipients and provided detailed routes for delivery. Each garden delivery, set-up and instruction took on average 15-20 minutes.

Follow-up:

- As part of COD's garden application, potential recipients are informed up front that a volunteer from COD will be calling several times during the growing season to check on the recipients.
- Volunteers make calls to recipients 2-3 times during the growing season to see if there are questions, concerns or issues.
- The *Garden Care Guide* provided to families has proven to be a great resource. Contact information for FGI as well as other resources are included.

Contact Information: Pastor Dan Samms,
dan@opendoor.tv or (440) 864-1038



Meals on Wheels



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Overview

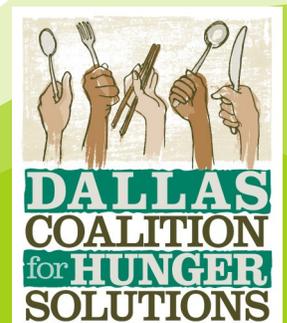
Brief Description

VNA's Meals on Wheels (www.vnatexas.org) provides nutritious, freshly prepared hot meals to Dallas County residents who cannot provide for themselves due to illness, advanced age or disability.

The Need

Many seniors are in desperate need of nutritious meals and human contact in Dallas County. In Dallas County there are estimated over 305,000 seniors (60+). Of this total, nearly over 33,000 are living in poverty and over 80 percent are at risk for hunger. Currently, VNA serves 5,000 meals either at home or at a senior center, yet many more seniors need these services. For many homebound elderly, sick, and disabled individuals, the difference between continuing to live in their own residences and moving into institutional care is a nutritious home-delivered meal.

In fiscal year 2013 (July 1 – June 30), VNA Meals on Wheels delivered more than 1.3 million meals to homebound clients. As the aging population continues to grow, so too will the need for home delivered meals to ensure that citizens receive a nutritious meal delivered by nurturing and caring volunteers.



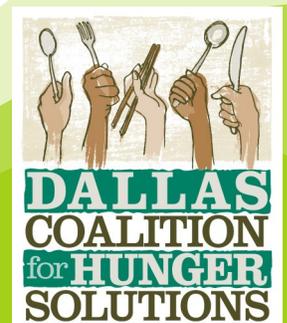


How It Works

Every **weekday** (including Thanksgiving and Christmas), VNA prepares fresh, hot meals in a state of the art kitchen. VNA Meals on Wheels relies on a team of approximately 300 daily volunteers to deliver meals to clients' homes. By delivering a hot meal and a friendly smile, volunteers help ensure that clients are safe and secure.

How Your Congregation Can Get Involved With Meals On Wheels

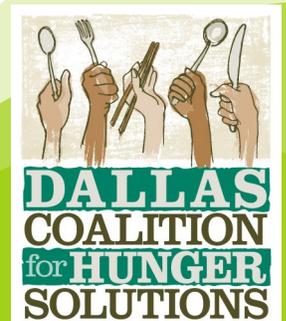
Congregations have the opportunity to get involved with Meals On Wheels by coordinating volunteers to assist with meal delivery. The level of involvement can be determined by the congregation and can begin with just a few volunteers. Typically, volunteers will choose a day of the month (minimum) and the Meals on Wheels staff will assist in determining the most appropriate routes for volunteers. All volunteers will be appropriately trained as well.



How To Get Started With Meals on Wheels

- Contact VNA: Contact Monica Reyes, Director of VNA Volunteers, at (214 689-2210) or reyesm@vnatexas.org. A representative from VNA will provide your congregation with more information on starting and maintaining a program.
- Designate a Coordinator: A Meals on Wheels Coordinator (volunteer or staff) should be designated from your congregation. Their role will be to coordinate volunteers, ensure appropriate training and maintain coordination of schedules and routes.
- Call for Volunteers: The coordinator may wish to distribute pamphlets and posters, or approach people on a person-to-person basis. An information session held for the congregation about the program is often helpful to garner interest about the program.
- Volunteer Training: Volunteers from your congregation *must attend a brief, one-hour training* – held twice a month at 10:30 a.m. on the first and third Thursday of each month. Training is held at VNA’s Meals on Wheels kitchen located at 1440 W. Mockingbird Ln., Dallas 75247 – just East of I-35 near Dallas Love Field. Training may also be provided by VNA staff at your location.

The training session will cover information such as where meals may be picked up, what geographical areas are available for delivery, how delivery is organized, the time commitment and about choosing to working alone or with a partner.



St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church Dallas, Texas

Program Overview

St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church in Dallas has been involved with Meals on Wheels (MOW) for over 20 years. Currently, they have approximately 180 volunteers who are coordinated through the church, including 50 who are non-church members (friends, family, etc.).

The Process

- The Meals on Wheels volunteer coordinator promotes the program on a regular basis through the church website, newsletters and other publications.
- People interested in volunteering must attend a volunteer training as specified by the MOW program.
- St. Michael's requires a minimum commitment of one day per month, yet many volunteers serve weekly.
- A route is next determined based on the volunteer's availability. It is recommended that volunteers work in teams of two, but it is not necessary.
- Volunteers are assigned to a route to deliver meals to MOW clients. This route and availability is determined by Meals on Wheels. St. Michael's, because of the number of volunteers, has established one route for all volunteers. They try to fill that route with volunteers to cover every weekday of every month.
- Volunteers first go to "pick-up" points (various locations) to gather the meals by 10a.m. prior to their delivery.
- The average time needed to pick up a meal and take to a MOW client is 1-1.5 hours.
- Ongoing communications with volunteers, including developing volunteer schedules, is an integral part of their process in order to keep the ministry running smoothly.

Contact Mary Barthelow, Volunteer Coordinator
(214) 528-5651 or mary.bar@sbcglobal.net

