



ACTION Pathways

BLUE CROSS BLUE SHIELD OF N.C. GRANT UPDATE

Success stories from Action Pathways, Inc. &
Second Harvest Food Bank of Southeast North Carolina



BALM IN GILEAD FAMILY COUNSELING SERVICES - FAYETTEVILLE

Dr. Vivian Rhone, founder of Balm in Gilead Family Counseling Services in Fayetteville, explains how the organization's food pantry volunteers prepare boxes for delivery to needy people in the area.

In 2019, Balm in Gilead Family Counseling Services distributed 325,562 pounds of food and provided 271,301 meals; in 2020, those numbers declined, due to the pandemic: 150,443 pounds and 125,369 meals. Although there were losses, this food pantry regrouped and rebounded, so they are still to be commended, said Second Harvest Food Bank Agency Relations Manager Cortez Phillip.

Balm in Gilead Founder Dr. Vivian Rhone was one of the recipients of several commercial freezers as part of the grant from Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina. "When we were offered these freezers, it was an answer to our prayers," Dr. Rhone said.

Prior to the pandemic, those served by Balm in Gilead were able to come in and "shop" at the facility on Doc Bennett Road, by Fayetteville Regional Airport.

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DR. VIVIAN RHONE
FOUNDER,
BALM IN GILEAD
FAMILY COUNSELING
SERVICES



Thanks to the grant from Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina and the partnership with Action Pathways, Inc. and Second Harvest Food Bank, Balm in Gilead Family Counseling Services is now able to stock its food pantry with fresh meat and vegetables. Volunteers now assemble food boxes with frozen chicken, shrimp, eggs and more.



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Adhering to social distancing guidelines meant that Dr. Rhone and her team of volunteers had to improvise— pre-packaging meal boxes and other items to distribute in a drive-thru format.

“The reason that [increased refrigeration capacity] is so important is that we’re able to serve more people,” Dr. Rhone said. “We can give them not just food in a box, but meals.”

When completed, the boxes weigh about 70 pounds, and provide enough items for a family’s breakfast, lunch and dinner for a week. Having increased capacity for refrigeration and freezing means that the boxes can include fresh meat and produce, not just canned items and non-perishable goods.

After all, there’s only so much canned corn or peas a person can eat, Dr. Rhone joked.

Every person who receives assistance from Balm in Gilead is vetted to ensure that they receive the items and services they need most. “The main thing I’m hearing now is, ‘I never thought I’d have to get help from a food bank,’” Dr. Rhone shared. “When people call and ask, ‘Do you have food to give away?’ you can hear in their voices how much they hate to ask. It just tears me up.”

But being able to help those who need it most is why Dr. Rhone started her ministry in the first place. “Partnering with Action Pathways is a big part of what we do,” she said. “Just having an organization like this to partner with is a huge blessing.”





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GRACE MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH - LUMBERTON

Grace Missionary Baptist Church of Lumberton in Robeson County has partnered with Second Harvest Food Bank of Southeast North Carolina since 2017.

"The initial plan was to be able to shop and feed the families of our church because most are senior citizens, widowed and disabled," said Pastor Douglas Campbell. "We also wanted to help those in need in the community. Our organization was able to provide 20 families an adequate supply of food to last a month (feeding approximately 100 people)."

At that time, the church had only one refrigerator and one freezer.

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We have attained success because of the work put forth by everyone and by the aid of the refrigeration units and the nutritional foods that have been obtained through Mrs. Cortez Phillip and Second Harvest.

GRACE MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH STATEMENT

The church quickly realized the need for more refrigeration in order to continue helping feed the community. Second Harvest Food Bank Agency Relations Manager Cortez Phillip informed the church that it could participate in federally funded The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP).

"We were more than eager to accept," Campbell said. "Our church had to purchase two chest-type freezers to be able to continue in our efforts. The TEFAP Program allowed us to feed 40 more families (approximately 140 people)."

From there, the organization grew again, serving more than 60 families through the TEFAP program, as well as an additional 25 families through its food pantry and 120 people monthly with its soup kitchen in 2019.

"Then, like everyone in the world, life was altered because of the pandemic. Somehow, though, God still saw the need to the feed those in need," Campbell said. "During the pandemic we have been able to serve 100 families through our TEFAP Program."

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Even with the pandemic, Grace Missionary Baptist's numbers grew in 2020. In 2019, the church served a total of 80,586 pounds of food, and provided 67,155 meals to the Lumberton community. In 2020, those numbers increased to 109,223 pounds and 91,019 meals.

In a prepared statement, the church stated: "It has been said success is not given, but earned. There is only one way to attain it, and that is to put in the work. Grace Baptist fully understands there's a tremendous commitment through time, effort and hard work to operate the food bank, but God has been faithful to see us through. Through God, from prayers, supplication and guidance from Pastor Douglas Campbell, we have attained success because of the work put forth by everyone and by the aid of the refrigeration units and the nutritional foods that have been obtained through Mrs. Cortez and Second Harvest. Our success here at Grace Baptist Missionary Church continues the way we started: being humble and blessed by God."



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SANDHILLS FAMILY HERITAGE ASSOCIATION- SPRING LAKE/ HARNETT COUNTY



ABOVE: Patricia Moore, food distribution member of Johnsonville AME Zion Church in Cameron, shows off the commercial freezer her church's pantry was able to install, thanks to a grant from Blue Cross Blue Shield of N.C. AT LEFT: In addition to its food pantry, operated through Sandhills Family Heritage Association, the church is able to provide a diaper bank for both infants and adults.

Sandhills Family Heritage Association, based in Spring Lake, is dedicated to serving rural African-American communities in the Sandhills of North Carolina. That includes a food pantry, operated out of Johnsonville AME Zion Church in the small town of Cameron, in Harnett County.

That pantry was a recent recipient of a grant from Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina, administered through Action Pathways, Inc. and Second Harvest Food Bank of Southeast North Carolina.

"On behalf of Sandhills Family Heritage Association, I want to thank Second Harvest Food Bank and the generous donor who made it possible for our organization to get a commercial freezer for our food pantry in Harnett County," said executive director Ammie Jenkins. "This act of generosity has increased our capacity to add meats and frozen foods to help people in need of food assistance. Because of this gift, we are able to provide frozen foods to seniors, children, and families of all races who are hurting during the pandemic."

"This gift has increased our food distribution tremendously," added Patricia Moore, a member of the food distribution team at the church. "Before we got this freezer, we had to really limit the perishable foods we gave out. We even had to turn some donors away."

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AMMIE JENKINS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
SANDHILLS FAMILY
HERITAGE
ASSOCIATION



Patricia Moore, food distribution member of Johnsonville AME Zion Church in Cameron, and Pamela Marks, food distribution coordinator with Sandhills Family Heritage Association, work together with members of the church to help feed the needy in Harnett County.

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Before we got this freezer, we had to really limit the perishable foods we gave out. We even had to turn some donors away.

PATRICIA MOORE
FOOD DISTRIBUTION COORDINATOR

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Moore added that the need had increased dramatically during the pandemic. "It really allows us to add to the nutritional value of the foods that we provide," she said.

Pamela Marks, food bank coordinator for Sandhills Family Heritage Association, said that grant funding has also helped the organization expand its pantry reach. "We've partnered with the AME Zion district, and are expanding to 12 new pantries, after they're all able to go through the appropriate training. So, after that, we will have 13."

The partnership with Second Harvest Food Bank and Action Pathways has also allowed the pantry to offer non-food items, such as clothing, toys, toiletries and hygiene items. "We are so grateful to Second Harvest for opening us up to non-food items as well," Moore said.

The church has started a diaper bank, in addition to its food pantry, which stocks diapers for newborns, infants and toddlers, as well as diapers for senior adults.

"A lot of people don't realize how expensive diapers are," Marks said. "So if we're able to help someone get those at no cost, we want to do that."

