



SERVINGS

News from the East Texas Food Bank

2026 Fall Newsletter

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From a Backpack of Food to Harvard University



For many East Texas children, Friday afternoon means more than the end of the school week. **It means uncertainty about where their next meal will come from.**

That's why our BackPack Program exists. Through the program, thousands of children receive nutritious food each weekend. For students like Catie, that support can help shape an entire future.

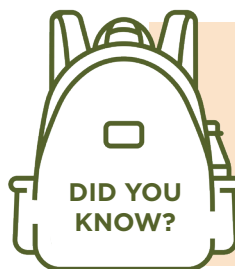
When Catie attended elementary school in Tyler, she and her four sisters received backpacks filled with cereal, canned food, fruit cups, milk, juice, and snacks every Friday. Those bags carried far more than just food. They brought comfort, stability, and hope into a home that needed all three.

"We looked forward to receiving the food," Catie recalls. "Every Saturday morning, we would watch cartoons while eating our fruit cups and snacks. These nutritious meals played a huge role in how I performed in school, because having enough to eat is the first step toward thriving academically and creating a better future."

The program also eased pressure at home. "It helped my mom because she only had to focus on preparing one major meal since we already had other food," she shares. "Without this program, weekends would become something to dread rather than anticipate."

Today, Catie's story is a powerful reminder of what we can accomplish together as a community. This spring, she graduated from Tyler ISD's Early College High School and earned a scholarship to attend Harvard University this fall, where she plans to pursue a career in law.

When a child has enough to eat, remarkable things can happen. A gift of \$150 from you today can provide a child with a backpack of food every weekend throughout the school year, helping them stay nourished, focused, and ready to reach their full potential. Just ask Catie!



Last fiscal year, our BackPack Program filled 150,000 backpacks with food, helping more than 7,500 children have enough to eat over the weekend. Thank you for helping make this life-changing support possible!

Pick Your Team for the Spread the Love Peanut Butter Drive!

The rivalry is real, and the stakes couldn't be more meaningful! We're proud to host the third annual Longview vs. Tyler Spread the Love Peanut Butter Drive (Sept. 1-24), rallying both cities in a friendly but fierce battle against hunger during Hunger Action Month.

Every jar collected goes directly to our pantry partners, landing on shelves where neighbors facing hunger, including countless children, can access nutritious food. Peanut butter is a great source of protein and nutrition, and one of the most beloved foods a child can find in a bag of groceries.

You can purchase peanut butter through our online portal or drop off jars locally to help fill East Texas pantry shelves this Hunger Action Month. Choose your team and join the fun today!



Choose your team — Longview or Tyler — and purchase jars through our online portal at EastTexasFoodBank.org/pbdrive or find out where you can drop off the peanut butter you purchase. The winning city will be announced at the end of September.

CORPORATE PARTNER SPOTLIGHT



A Special Message From Our Chief Development Officer

Happy Hunger Action Month!

This month is a time when communities across the country come together with a shared purpose: to ensure no one faces hunger alone. It's a powerful reminder that ending hunger isn't something one person or organization can do alone. It takes all of us.

The good news is that we're all able to play an important role. Whether it's volunteering your time, donating food to a local pantry, or making a financial gift, each act of generosity helps us take one step closer towards ending hunger in East Texas. A few hours spent serving helps give meals to hundreds of families. **A simple \$10 donation provides 50 meals to those who need them most.**

East Texans care about our neighbors and will bend over backward to help those in need. Because people like you step up, children have meals after school, seniors receive nourishment and care, and families find stability during difficult times.

Hunger Action Month isn't just about raising awareness. It's an invitation to take steps toward building a stronger, healthier community. **Thank you for being a part of our mission to Fight Hunger and Feed Hope in East Texas.**

Tim Butler
Chief Development Officer, ETFB



For many years, Southside Bank has been a steadfast and passionate partner in the fight against hunger — and their commitment runs far deeper than a line on a balance sheet. Since the bank opened its doors in 1960, they have been committed to helping the individuals, businesses, and nonprofits of their Texas communities thrive and prosper.

“Southside Bank believes that strong communities are built through relationships, service, and investing in people,” said Steven Campbell, Southside Bank Senior Vice President and Director of Corporate Relations & Communications. “When families, schools, and nonprofits are supported, it empowers them to live with greater stability and opportunity.”

Our mission to fight hunger and feed hope resonates with Southside Bank. “No family should have to wonder where their next meal will come from,” added Campbell. “Food insecurity affects our neighbors across and throughout East Texas. Supporting the ETFB’s mission means helping create healthier and more hopeful communities and families.”

This partnership goes beyond donations. Their team rolls up their sleeves and volunteers alongside us, because they understand that true community is built neighbor to neighbor.

Thanks to support from organizations like Southside Bank, we’re able to provide nutritious meals, address food insecurity, and strengthen communities across East Texas. Thank you for your generosity and partnership!

FEEDING MOUNT VERNON AND FRANKLIN COUNTY, ONE MEAL AT A TIME



On a cold spring morning in Mount Vernon, the line outside the Community Food Bank of Franklin County begins to form before the doors open. Some arrive with walkers, some with tired eyes, and others with the quiet dignity of people who never imagined they would need help.

Since opening in 1996, the food bank has become more than a pantry. It has become a lifeline — a place where neighbors catch one another before they fall.

Among those waiting patiently is Kris, now 90 years old, her gentle smile undimmed by hardship. Her husband suffered a stroke, and now the couple’s Social Security check disappears quickly under the mounting weight of medical bills and everyday necessities.

For Kris, the food bank is the difference between making it through the month and facing impossible, heartbreaking choices.

“This pantry is a lifesaver,” she says. “Groceries are so high now. We can’t buy all our food at the store like we used to.”

NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS

For Sharon, the Deep East Texas Resource Center (DETRC) in Lufkin is more than a place to pick up groceries. It's a community built on compassion, dignity, and hope.

As both a volunteer and a neighbor receiving food assistance, Sharon has experienced firsthand the powerful impact the center has on families across East Texas. Sharon cares for her disabled sister and visits the DETRC regularly for groceries and support. But she also gives her time helping others who walk through the doors. She says the atmosphere inside the center feels more like family than a food pantry.

"We see a lot of people struggling," Sharon said. "But we love helping each other. Everyone is so loving here and wants to take care of each other."

While neighbors wait in line, conversations often turn into encouragement. People pray for one another, share stories, and offer support during difficult seasons. Sharon says those connections help remove the embarrassment many people feel when asking for help.

"It's a place where you feel respected," she said. "You leave ready to face life's challenges because people truly care."

This spring, the DETRC celebrated five years of serving residents in Lufkin and surrounding communities.

"This past year, we served 1.4 million meals from our Lufkin location," said David Emerson, CEO. "Neighbors receive not only nutritious food, but the dignity they deserve."

Thanks to compassionate friends like you, the center provides groceries, benefits assistance, and access to resources that help neighbors build brighter futures. Thank you for making this important work possible.



FOOD BANK FACT

In addition to our Lufkin location, we also operate resource centers in Longview, Tyler, and Texarkana.



Inside, dedicated volunteers are stacking canned goods and arranging fresh produce. Treasurer Len Lowry explains that every box on the shelves exists because someone cared enough to give.

"We are 100% dependent on donations," he shares. "People think the government supports us, but it doesn't."

That generosity is staggering in its reach. Last year alone, the pantry distributed 116,000 pounds of food, serving about 150 households each month. Volunteer Robert Taylor sees the deeper impact of his service every week.

"Some neighbors have lost spouses, retirement, or hope. We help them know they're not alone."

That is the true mission here — not to merely fill a box, but to restore dignity and remind every neighbor who walks through that door that their community stands with them.

The Community Food Bank of Franklin County is one of our many partner pantries. **One meal at a time, your generosity helps fund food, hope, and dignity for neighbors in Franklin County and throughout the 26 counties we serve.**



TAX LAW CHANGES BENEFIT DONORS

As you begin planning your charitable donations for the holiday season, we wanted to let you know about some important tax changes. Even if you don't itemize your deductions, you can now deduct up to \$1,000 as an individual or \$2,000 as a married couple for charitable giving.



How does this benefit me financially? This change directly reduces your taxable income, potentially lowering the amount of taxes you owe.

For example, a married couple in the 22% tax bracket who gives \$2,000 could save about \$440 in taxes, making the true cost of their gift only \$1,560, while still providing the full \$2,000 impact to organizations like the East Texas Food Bank.

Additionally, we welcome gifts of appreciated stock, land, or other assets. If you donate a capital asset that has been held for more than 12 months and has increased in value, you avoid paying capital gains tax on the appreciation.

For example, if you bought stock for \$5,000 and it's now worth \$10,000 and you choose to donate it, you'll avoid paying capital gains tax on the \$10,000 gain.

Now is the time to understand how these upcoming tax changes will help you maximize both the impact and tax efficiency of your giving. Visit EastTexasFoodBank.org/taxchanges to learn more!

ROLLED OATS AND PEANUT BUTTER COOKIES

Ingredients

1 ripe banana
4 tablespoons unsalted butter (1/2 stick)
1/3 cup sugar
1/2 cup peanut butter
1/2 cup whole wheat flour

2/3 cup oats
1/3 cup light brown sugar, packed
1 large egg
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/2 cup all-purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon baking soda

Instructions

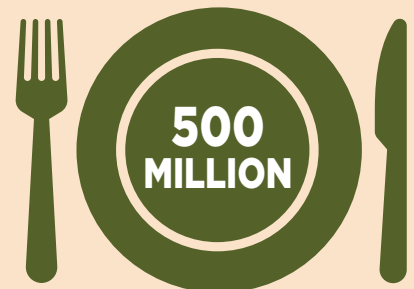
1. Preheat oven to 375°F. Mash the banana with a fork. Cut the butter in half, then heat it in a microwave-safe bowl for 10-15 seconds to soften. Be careful not to melt butter.
2. In a large bowl, mix butter, banana, and sugar. Add peanut butter and brown sugar. Continue mixing until completely combined. Add egg and vanilla until smooth. Add flours and baking soda. Mix until smooth. Stir in oats.
3. Scoop dough with a teaspoon and roll into a ball. Place dough balls on a baking sheet. Flatten the dough with a fork in a criss-cross pattern.
4. Bake for 8-10 minutes, or until lightly browned.
5. Allow the cookies to cool. Then remove from the cookie sheet. Serve and enjoy!



ETFB CORPORATE SPONSORS



ETFB Milestone



meals served
since 1988



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