

Spring 2012

# generous helpings

houston  foodbank  
Filling pantries. Filling lives.

Southeast Texans  
of All Ages are  
Thankful for You



stories of your gifts making a difference...see inside

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## YOU'RE GIVING BACK TO THOSE WHO'VE GIVEN SO MUCH



**Brian Greene**  
President and CEO

Dear Friend,

With 2012 now well underway, I wanted to make sure to thank you once again for your extraordinary support and generosity last year. Most notably, in 2011 you helped the [Food Bank](#) make the move to our new home, allowing us to distribute more food this past holiday season than during any other holiday season in the Food Bank's history. I'm so grateful that you've been there to stand with us as we've grown, and that we can continue to count on your support.

I say it often because it's true that we simply couldn't do the work of feeding hungry southeast Texans without you. And this year is no exception. Your ongoing commitment to those in our community who aren't as fortunate is a testament to your character and compassion.

As the problem of hunger continues to grow, one population that is being dramatically affected is southeast Texas senior citizens. As baby boomers age and begin to retire, there will be more people living on fixed incomes than ever before. Many recent retirees have lost savings because of the poor economy over the past few years and are now experiencing financial struggles they never dreamed of.

Those of our neighbors who've contributed so much in their lifetimes – especially the elderly – shouldn't have to make impossible decisions about how to spend their fixed incomes like whether they should pay their utility bills, go to the grocery store or fill a prescription.

Fortunately, you're helping make these choices just a little bit easier by giving to the Houston Food Bank. Your gifts translate into nourishing food for someone who might not otherwise have a meal.

This issue of Generous Helpings is devoted primarily to senior citizens whose lives you're helping to improve everyday. Please take a few moments to read the stories of gratitude and transformation in the following pages.

Thank you for all you do to make southeast Texas a better, more vibrant home for all of us – young and old.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian Greene".

# “We greatly appreciate the help”

“We weren’t rich, but we were able to survive,” says Christine of her and Harold’s life before retirement.

Both Christine and Harold worked full-time in their younger years, she as a licensed vocational nurse and he as a shipping clerk. They say they never really had any financial trouble before retiring. But now that they’re older and living on a limited fixed income, it’s become even harder to make ends meet.

Harold says he’s lucky to be in good health, but Christine struggles with several age-related medical conditions. She has to take nine medications everyday, and the prescription co-pays really add up.

Fortunately, even though they can’t always afford enough

healthy food at the grocery store, Christine and Harold still have a full, balanced meal to count on every weekday at the Senior Center of Walker County. This [Houston Food Bank](#) partner agency in Huntsville serves high quality, nutritious meals that are especially beneficial for Christine, who has to really watch what she eats to stay healthy. She admits that if it weren’t for the meals at the senior center, she and Harold would probably only be able to afford cereal and sandwiches for every meal.

“It’s good, nourishing food we get here,” says Harold, with gratitude. “It’s very beneficial – it’s tremendous because we’re low income.”

In spite of financial hardships,

Christine and Harold are in good spirits. They both smile easily and are glad to have each other more than anything. They feel grateful that their Social Security checks are enough to cover their bills and their rent for the apartment they live in near the senior center. And they can’t say enough about how thankful they are to have a place to go and fellowship with other seniors while they enjoy a hot meal.

“We greatly appreciate the help,” says Christine. “We would be even more financially stressed if we didn’t have this place to come to.”

Senior Center of Walker County Executive Director Frank Ivory says that lunch at the senior center is the only meal a lot of the seniors will have that day.

“If you only knew how much people depend on this food. It really helps the community,” says Frank. “A lot of seniors really benefit from what we get from the Houston Food Bank.”

And that benefit is a direct result of your generosity. On behalf of southeast Texas seniors who are living better lives because of your compassion, thank you.



# Your Gifts Feed Southeast Texans of All Ages



Seniors have balanced meals, thanks to you.

You're helping parents feed their families.

Children are being nourished, with your help.

You provide groceries for neighbors in need.

Kids are full and focused, thanks to you.

## THANK YOU

### RUN FOR FOOD



Congratulations to our Run for Food Team Members who successfully completed this year's Aramco Half Marathon and Chevron Marathon. With your help this year, we raised a record-breaking number of meals for people in need. GO TEAM!

### TASTE OF THE TEXANS

Thanks to the Houston Texans and The Methodist Hospital for this year's successful Taste of the Texans event. This year, the event raised over \$105,768 for the [Houston Food Bank](http://HoustonFoodBank.org). Go Texans!



### SHARE YOUR HOLIDAYS



event sponsors that helped the Food Bank feed 62,062 individuals through this event!

Share Your Holidays was a great success in 2011, thanks to the thousands of community supporters giving their time, food and monetary donations. Thank you to ABC-13 KTRK, Chevron, Andrews Kurth, GE, Walmart, MillerCoors, and the many other

### SAVE THE DATE

#### CHEFS' DINNER

Chefs' Dinner will be held at the Houstonian Hotel, Club & Spa on Wednesday, April 4. Join us for a delicious multi-course dinner prepared by several of the finest chefs in Houston. For sponsorship information, contact [dnisenson@houstonfoodbank.org](mailto:dnisenson@houstonfoodbank.org).

### TASTE OF THE NATION



Taste of the Nation will be held at the Houstonian Hotel, Club & Spa on Sunday, May 6. Get ready to chow down and participate in the silent auction to support the fight against hunger! For tickets, visit <http://strength.org/houston>.

### STAMP OUT HUNGER

The National Association of Letter Carriers will be conducting its annual "Stamp Out Hunger" food drive on Saturday, May 12. Mark your calendar now and remember to leave nonperishable food items in a bag next to your mailbox to be picked up by your letter carrier and used to feed southeast Texans in need.

### EMPTY BOWLS



Empty Bowls will be held at the Houston Center for Contemporary Craft on Saturday, May 26. Empty Bowls is a grassroots effort by artists and craftspeople in cities and towns across

the country to feed the hungry in their communities. In exchange for a minimum \$25 cash donation, guests are asked to keep a bowl as a reminder of all the empty bowls in the world. For more information contact [dnisenson@houstonfoodbank.org](mailto:dnisenson@houstonfoodbank.org).

# Putting Compassion into Action



Patricia Taylor

Patricia Taylor is one of those special people who finds a cause she believes in and stays involved for a lifetime. We're so fortunate that hunger-relief in southeast Texas became her passion 20 years ago when she first learned about the work of the End Hunger Network, which is now a part of the [Houston Food Bank](#).

Having just retired from her job as an office manager, Patricia began searching for a way to spend her time that would be meaningful and positively impact her community. Hunger-relief became an instant calling. Before she knew it, Patricia's passion and dedication landed her in several leadership positions within the End Hunger Network.

Her work became invaluable, and Patricia was asked to join the staff to manage the Red Barrel program. She later managed volunteers for End Hunger Network, and when the organization merged with the Houston Food Bank, Patricia returned to her previous position as the Red Barrel program coordinator. At 75 years old, Patricia just retired from the Food Bank two months ago!

But just because she's retired again doesn't mean Patricia is finished with her service to the hungry in our community. She's

keenly aware that the problem is as prevalent as ever, and she plans to keep giving of her time as a volunteer once again.

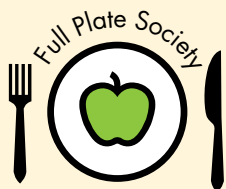
"You just have to get out and help other people," she says of her motivation. "You have to reach out in order to grow."

In 2009, Patricia was honored with the Barbara Falik Humanitarian Award for her tireless commitment to helping others. Even after such recognition, she remains as humble as ever and determined to get others involved in a cause that has come to mean so much to her.

"There are so many hungry people – you wouldn't believe it," says Patricia. "There are all sorts of different reasons why they don't have enough to eat. I think it's important to help the people you live beside in this city."

We look forward to experiencing Patricia's dedication to hunger-relief for many more years to come. Thank you, Patricia, for putting compassion into action and making a real difference for those less fortunate.

## LEAVE A LEGACY WITH THE FULL PLATE SOCIETY



The Full Plate Society is an honorary society recognizing individuals who have included the Houston Food Bank in their estate plans through a will, trust, life insurance gift or other planned gift. To help you as you plan for a way to preserve your resources and values and pass them on to your family and community, the Houston Food Bank now offers a free **Personal Estate Planning Course**. This is a home-study course designed to help you achieve a smart, effective legacy plan that meets your philanthropic and financial goals. To sign up, please contact Amy Ragan at 713-547-8629 or [aragan@houstonfoodbank.org](mailto:aragan@houstonfoodbank.org). You can also find answers to some of your gift-planning questions at [houstonfoodbank.org](http://houstonfoodbank.org) – just follow the link to "Donate" and click on "Donate Money," then click on "Gift Planning/Wills." As long as there are hungry people in our community, the Houston Food Bank will be here to serve them – and your commitments will allow us to continue fighting hunger for years to come.

Volunteer by visiting  
[houstonfoodbank.org](http://houstonfoodbank.org)  
or contact Volunteer  
Services at  
713-547-8609

# “...your donations are appreciated more than you know.”

Never in their 23 years together have Robert and Marsha been in such a difficult situation.

Robert was laid off and out of work for six months, only able to find odd jobs in the interim. He was glad to get full-time work with a temp agency, but his hours there have recently been cut back. He drives 120 miles a day round trip just to get there, which costs him at least \$50 a week in gas.

Marsha has also been looking for work nonstop and is really discouraged that she can't find a job, especially because her family doesn't have any health insurance. Robert and their teenage son are thankfully healthy, but Marsha had a stroke in 2006 and needs expensive medications. She admits she usually doesn't take them because she can't afford to fill a \$120 prescription every month.

Their son is working when he's not studying and both Robert and Marsha routinely give plasma to earn a little bit of money, but it's still not enough to offset their loss of income.

Without any other options, Robert and Marsha had to seek help to put food on the table for their family. Thankfully, they found the help they were looking for at Restoration Assistance Ministries, a [Houston Food Bank](#) partner agency. Here

they receive free, nutritious food to take home when their cupboards are empty and they can't afford a trip to the grocery store.

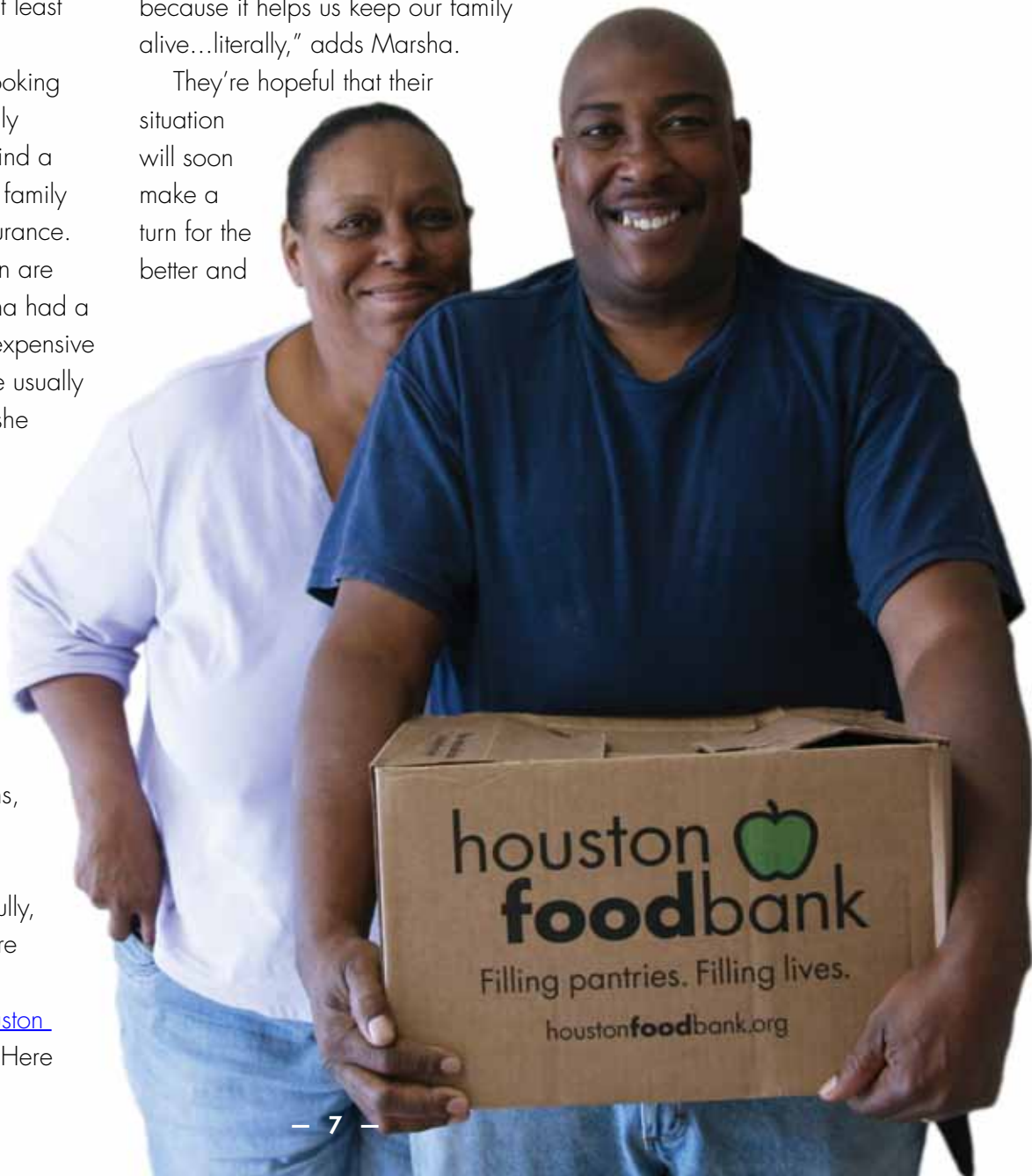
Robert says they only come when they absolutely have to, but when they are in need, it's a huge help.

"Without the Food Bank, I don't know how we'd make it," says Robert. "The Food Bank is essential because it helps us keep our family alive...literally," adds Marsha.

They're hopeful that their situation will soon make a turn for the better and

that they won't have to rely on the kindness of strangers much longer. But until that happens, they couldn't be more grateful for the supporters like you who make it possible for them to receive much-needed help.

"Be assured that your donations are appreciated more than you know," says Marsha. "Thank you."



# “It’s hard out there for senior citizens and this has really helped us.”

The past few years have been riddled with a series of illnesses, accidents and financial struggles for 78-year-old Inez and her 80-year-old husband James.

Both have suffered heart attacks and have diabetes, among other health problems. And it’s a real challenge for Inez to get around after breaking her hip a few months ago.

Things weren’t always difficult for the couple, who moved to Houston in 1952 to raise their four children. Both Inez and James worked hard in their younger years and never needed help to support their family. But when they finally reached a time when they simply couldn’t work any longer, their financial situation declined quickly.

Now, with a limited fixed income and so many medical expenses, they really struggle to pay the bills.

“We’ve used up all our savings,” says Inez.

She adds that they’ve had to make the difficult choice between buying medicine and food...and that often she tries to stretch out her

prescriptions by cutting her pills in half. She knows it’s not good for her health to only take half-doses, but she doesn’t know what other choice she has. Times are especially difficult during months of extreme weather in the summer and winter when utility bills skyrocket.

Inez says that if it weren’t for the help they receive from the food pantry at South Union Church of Christ, a [Houston Food Bank](#) partner agency, she has no idea what they’d do. Her gratitude for you is immeasurable. Nearly all the food at the food pantry comes from the Food Bank, which means you’re directly responsible for providing the nutritious fruits, vegetables and other healthy staples that keep Inez and James going each day.

“Thank you, thank you, thank you very much!” says Inez,

enthusiastically. “It’s hard out there for senior citizens and this has really helped us. I appreciate it!”

Knowing there is food available at the pantry when their Social Security checks run out gives Inez and James enormous peace of mind. They can now focus more on their seven grandchildren and enjoying their golden years together.

You truly make a difference in the lives of our community’s senior citizens. Thank you!



**houston**   
**foodbank**  
Filling pantries. Filling lives.



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[houstonfoodbank.org](http://houstonfoodbank.org)

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