

Going the Extra Mile: Overcoming transportation challenges and other barriers to nourishing food in rural communities

2022 RURAL CHILD HUNGER SUMMIT



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Going the Extra Mile - Panelists:

Alicia Linares, Director of Programs & Partnerships at the Central California Food Bank

Peggy Hamby, Food & Nutrition Director for Morgan County Schools in East Tennessee

Yolanda Minor, State Director for Mississippi Programs at Save the Children



Housekeeping

- This session is being recorded.
- All recording will be available after the event.
- Closed captioning and language translation is available.
- Please enter all questions into the Q&A box. Questions will be collected and answered by our panelists in a post-summit email.





Alicia Linares, Director of Programs & Partnerships at the
Central California Food Bank

Hunger in Rural Central California

The Fresno region produces a large portion of the nation's agriculture, yet the area is home to some of the highest rates of food hardship in the U.S.

- **Fresno County** food insecurity rate: 14.7% (144,790 total); child food insecurity rate: 22.0% (61,680 total) *3rd worst food hardship rate in U.S.*
- **Tulare County** food insecurity rate: 15.6% (71,990 total); child food insecurity rate: 23.0% (32,950 total)

Food insecurity is worse in rural areas due to higher rates of poverty and limited geographical access to full-service grocery stores

Food distribution in Mendota, CA



Barriers to Food Access

Families with children living in rural towns in Central California face additional barriers to food access

- **Restricted income** due to limited job opportunities in the area. Many families work low-paying seasonal jobs in agriculture such as dairies, packing facilities, and fields
- **Physical distance and limited transportation** to grocery stores near to home; instead, small rural towns are saturated with corner stores and fast-food restaurants

Fatima and child (pictured right) were waiting in their car for a food distribution to start at a rural elementary school last summer. Fatima's husband works at the local dairy, while she stays home to care for their 3 children. They are struggling to afford enough food for their family on one income but can't afford childcare so that Fatima can work too. There is only one small market in their town, so she usually has to travel to bigger towns nearby (about 20 miles away) to go grocery shopping



Addressing Rural Child Hunger

Central California Food Bank addresses child hunger in rural areas by operating various food distribution programs in partnership with local schools and community organizations. Support from volunteers and the community makes these possible.

- **School Pantries** offer bimonthly drive-through or walk-in style food distributions for students and their families
- **BackPack Programs** at rural schools provide a bag of food for children to take home on Fridays
- **Summer Feeding Sites** bring a pop-up pantry to the most rural areas during the summer months in partnership with local elementary schools
- **Neighborhood Market Program** provides fresh fruits and vegetables to low-income rural communities year-round

Volunteer bags food for families





Peggy Hamby, Food & Nutrition Director for Morgan County
Schools in East Tennessee

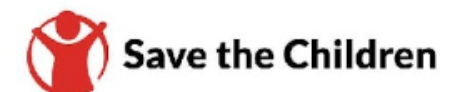
2022 Rural Child Hunger Summit

Gus the Bus - Mobile Feeding Unit

- **Mission before COVID:** Provide kids a safe, temperature-controlled place to eat and enjoy their nutritious summer meals. ***Fed an average of 40,000***
- **Mission During COVID:** Work through barriers and deliver as many meals as possible using the USDA waivers! ***Fed over 170,000***
- **Past year with COVID:** Gus the Bus allows us to travel throughout the county and take meals to people where they are. We stop at churches, parks, community centers, the fire department, and grocery stores.
- **Gus the Bus brings families joy**—it's like a field trip on wheels! Gus gives kids something to look forward to. We would have theme week, freebies, and I would dress up as I handed out the food to make Gus's visits more fun. Examples: Beach week, Farm to school, Superhero, and Favorite Character.
- **Gus the Bus brought the community together** for FREE food without the stigma, helping us reach all poverty levels. Volunteers from all areas reach out to help.



Summer Feeding



Gus the Bus Success Stories

- Mobile Feeding Bus increases program participation & awareness
- Opened doors for grants to enhance program & opportunities for local donations, especially with fresh produce boxes
- **Multiple uses:** Feeding bus, literacy bus, community outreach, visualization of program, year-round applications, and gained partnerships/relationships

Challenges

- Outgrew several locations and had to find others
- Labor and heavy loading
- Availability of product





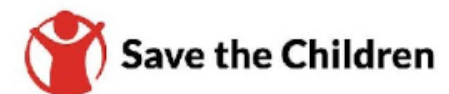
Yolanda Minor, State Director for Mississippi Programs at Save the Children

Food Insecurity in Mississippi

- **Mississippi has the highest rate of food insecurity in America.** In Mississippi, 700,000 people are facing hunger – 155,560 of them are children.
- **Mississippi also has the highest rates of poverty in the country.** Poverty and hunger are closely entwined.
- Additionally, restrictions limiting access to benefits, high healthcare costs, lack of grocery stores, low availability of nutritious food, lack of affordable housing, and institutional racism all contribute to these high levels of poverty and food insecurity that disproportionately impact marginalized racial groups



**1 in 4 children in
Mississippi face hunger**



Tallahatchie Farmers Market Partnership

- **Families in rural Tallahatchie County struggle with limited access to healthy food**, with the closest grocery store over 13 miles away, and flooding damaging local crops
- **Save the Children partnered with the West Tallahatchie Farmers Market** to provide 100 boxes every week to 400 families during the summer months
- **The food boxes included fresh produce from women-owned Foot Print Farms**. In addition to providing fresh produce, the Farmers Market distributed books and art supplies to families



Filling Backpacks & Hungry Bellies

- **Save the Children** partnered with a community center in northwest Mississippi to provide nearly 3,300 meals to children this past summer
- **The portions of the county this center serves are food deserts** – where a significant number of residents are more than 10 miles from the nearest supermarket in rural areas, and 1 mile for urban areas
- One mom, Kim, noted the meal program was a tremendous help for her family during times when they didn't have much food at home. ***“The extra food helps when you don't have it,”*** she said.





Q&A