

just don't forget about us:

The Story of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and their Impact on SHFB



On September 29, 2005 Southern Louisiana was forever changed. Hurricane Katrina followed by Hurricane Rita permanently altered the 23 parishes served by the Second Harvest Food bank of Greater New Orleans and Acadiana (SHFB) SHFB is facing an unprecedented challenge to distribute food throughout the region with fewer agencies and greater need. While the population of New Orleans is estimated to only be two-thirds of what it was prior to the disaster the food bank is serving 38 million more pounds in the eighteen months since Katrina and Rita hit.

To quote Natalie Jayroe, the President and CEO of SHFB, "our current situation is the equivalent of running a Super Wal-Mart out of a space the size of a 7-11". With increased food distribution and fewer agencies SHFB is concerned that all of the emergency food need is not being met through current channels of distribution. The following report is an analysis of the current situation of SHFB agencies, food distribution, and programs.

"our current situation is the equivalent of running a Super Wal-Mart out of a space the size of a 7-11"



How have the demographics of Southern Louisiana changed since Katrina and Rita? This is one of the most important questions facing SHFB as it continues into the future. The face of poverty has changed almost as drastically as the landscape of Louisiana. The safety net for vulnerable populations has been eroded leaving fewer agencies to serve more people. It is important for SHFB to maintain strong ties with the communities hardest hit by the disaster and the agencies that serve these areas.

History

December 9, 1982 was the first day of the newly incorporated Second Harvest of Greater New Orleans. The Social Apostolate of the Archdiocese of New Orleans decided to add emergency food to their services already offered. Through many donations by the Social Apostolate and other organizations in the city Second Harvest of New Orleans was up and running, by July 1983 the food bank had 23 agencies receiving product. In 1984 Second Harvest of New Orleans became an official affiliate of the America's Second Harvest National Network. This same year Second Harvest of New Orleans distributed more than 50,000 pounds of food per month to 79 agencies.

By this time Second Harvest was outgrowing their donated warehouse space and began to search for a new permanent location. The staff of the national network had advised Second Harvest of New Orleans that they needed a space with approximately 10,000 square feet. This size would be sufficient to meet the need of the service area. Through several donations and support by various foundations Second Harvest of New Orleans purchased a new warehouse on January 10, 1985. By September Second Harvest of New Orleans had become a full member of America's Second Harvest National Network allowing them larger donations through the network. The end of 1985 saw Second Harvest of New Orleans distributing 100,000 pounds per month.

Second Harvest was on a fast track and throughout the first decade of its existence the food bank experienced rapid growth and constant expansion. In 1989 Second Harvesters of New Orleans merged with another local emergency food distribution agency, "The Food Bank for Emergencies of Greater New Orleans, Inc.". Second Harvesters Officially became Second Harvesters Food Bank of Greater New Orleans, Inc. With this merger programmatic activities began to take a larger role in the food bank's fight against hunger.

It was time for yet another move for Second Harvesters Food Bank of Greater New Orleans. In 1991 Second Harvesters moved into their present location. It was thought at the time a facility with 25,000 square feet would be more than adequate for future expansion of the food bank. As of 1994 this expansion had allowed the food bank to distribute 5 million pounds of food a year. Distribution rates increased for the next decade until 2004 when the food bank distributed 14 million pounds of food to 23 parishes in southern Louisiana from the Mississippi state line to Texas.

In 2005 Second Harvesters became known as the Second Harvest Food Bank of Greater New Orleans and Acadiana. With the continued growth, plans were made to open a new warehouse facility in the western parishes of the food bank's service area. The warehouse opened in Lafayette in December 2006.

Before this warehouse could be opened, however, Hurricane Katrina made a visit to SHFB's service area, followed a few weeks later by Hurricane Rita, offering a one-two punch to the area served by SHFB.





SHFB Prior to Katrina

In 2005 America's Second Harvest sponsored a study, *Hunger in America, 2006*. This study gave a national picture of hunger in the United States at the time, but also was a tool for local food banks to survey their agencies and the clients served. In the local report, *Hunger in America 2006; Local Report Prepared for The Second Harvest Food Bank of Greater New Orleans and Acadiana*, it was estimated that SHFB served 62,800 different clients weekly. Annually SHFB serves 248,700 different clients. It was estimated that SHFB served 297 different agencies at the time of the survey in spring of 2005.

In fiscal year 2004 SHFB distributed more than 14.2 million pounds of food to agencies in their service area. At the time of the survey 210 agencies were interviewed. The survey showed product from SHFB was going to at least 368 programs. Of which, 16 were kitchens, 25 were shelters, 132 were pantries, and 195 were non-emergency food programs. Most agencies, 71%, believed they had an increase of clients since 2001; 34.8% of agencies had to turn away clients in the year prior to spring 2005.

Of the clients served, 76.4% lived in a household with an income 130%, or less, of the federal poverty level. 79% of clients had applied for food stamps in the past year, 33% of those who had applied were ineligible because of income. About half of all clients were receiving food stamps in spring 2005. Of those receiving food stamps the average number of weeks for which food stamps lasted was just 2.8. Less than 5% of clients had received some other form of assistance in the previous two years.

The need for emergency food certainly existed in the area SHFB served. The question was whether or not SHFB was meeting all of the emergency food needs of the community. Suburban or rural clients made up just 20% of those who were served by SHFB. This can be attributed to two factors, the size of the population in urban areas such as New Orleans and a disconnect between the food bank and the rural western region of SHFB's service area. The western region is overwhelmingly rural and with the expansion of SHFB to include a warehouse in Lafayette the percentage of suburban/rural clients served should see an increase.

With all of the increases in capacity and armed with a survey giving SHFB staff a good idea of their service area and what the needs were the food bank was ready to move into 2006 continuing along the historical path of growth to meet the increased needs of the area. That is until August 29...

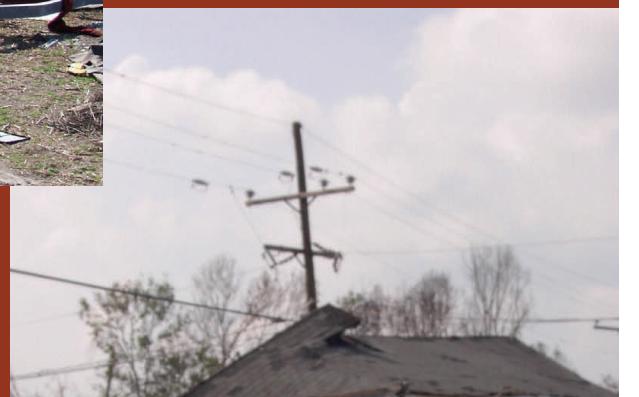


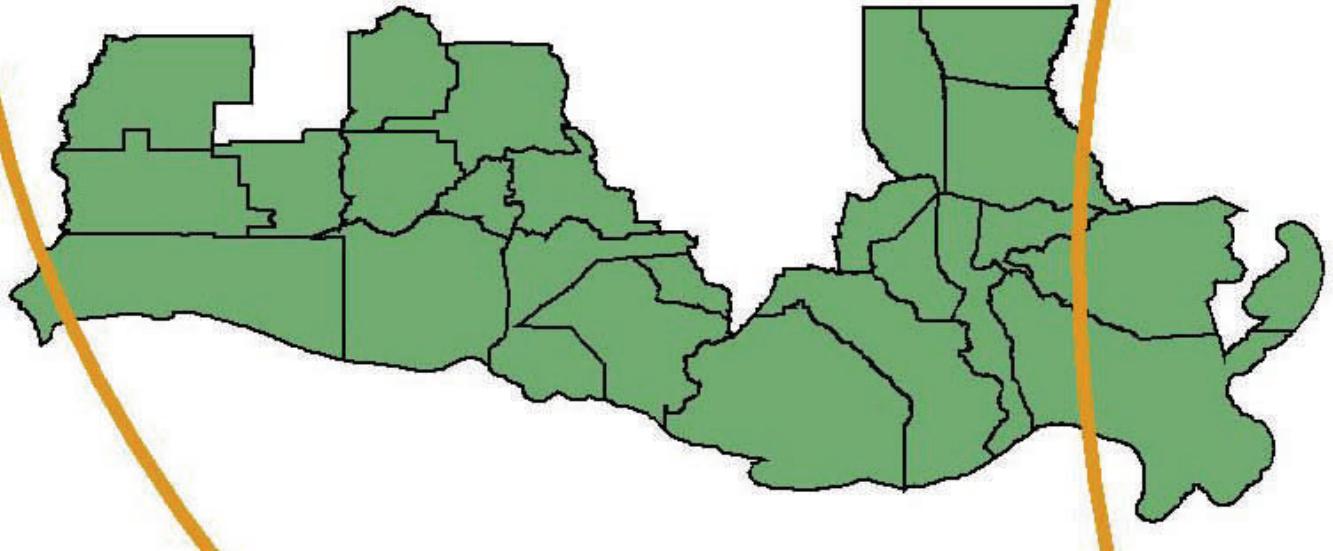


August 29, 2005

Up until this now infamous date, SHFB had been making dramatic strides in ending hunger. However, Katrina changed everything. Followed shortly thereafter by Hurricane Rita offering a second direct hit to SHFB's service area within an all too short three weeks. The response of the Second Harvest Network, especially the staff and volunteers of SHFB, was extraordinary.







Tracks of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita

Katrina Relief Response

In the confusing hours and days following Hurricane Katrina the staff of SHFB pulled together a skeleton crew of employees and volunteers, began working out of the offices of the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank, then later out of an old Wal-Mart building in Baker, Louisiana. While the Federal Government floundered, Second Harvest was one of the first responders to the disaster, providing food and water that would eventually be taken to such crisis points as the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center in downtown New Orleans.

During the first week following Katrina SHFB staff regrouped at the Baker site and began the arduous task of rebuilding their food distribution network. Agency relations spent endless hours trying to make contact with agencies. The warehouse staff fielded the truck-loads of donations and got food where it was needed. To compound the demands of working at the food bank in disaster distribution many of the staff had no knowledge of their own homes. Were all of their belongings flooded or looted? Or had they weathered the storm relatively unscathed? Worse still, many did not know about their families and beloved pets. With this in mind the America's Second Harvest Network pooled together and offered the staff of SHFB on a three week paid leave to attend personal matters.

The Second Harvest Network pulled staff from other food banks throughout the country to staff SHFB. Rodney Bivens, the executive director of the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma, was one of the first to arrive. Arriving just a few days after Katrina on 3 September 2005 he immediately set to work helping to secure housing, set up warehouse space in Baker, LA, and coordinating efforts with the three food banks in the area which were hit hardest. Within a short week after Hurricane Katrina hit SHFB had distributed over 2 million pounds of food through just 2 docks for receiving and distribution. The challenge was near impossible but with the help of America's Second Harvest and the network of food banks throughout the country SHFB was able to respond.

Stories regarding the dire need of many throughout the service area abound. Calls asking for enough food, water and personal hygiene products for 1,000- 8,000 families came with frequency many care to not remember. These requests, while in and of themselves are a dramatic example of the need in the area, were not for a few days or even a week. These requests came from whole cities that were unsure as to whether or not they would be back up and running within several weeks. One particularly touching story is about a couple of which the husband was dying of cancer. After trying several disaster relief agencies and getting referrals to many that were simply overwhelmed the couple was referred to SHFB. SHFB staff promised they would help this couple and even promised to let the referral agency know what had been done; even if SHFB had to hand deliver product to the couple.

Had God designated Metairie as the land of
“milk and honey” while New Orleans was
castigated into the depths of hell as a latter
day Sodom and Gomorrah?

In the words of Ali...Ali James Community Relations Coordinator

I left New Orleans on Sunday August 28 at 8:00 in the morning. It took us two hours to drive 12 miles to get onto the interstate. It took another 6 hours to drive to my parent's house in Mississippi – normally a 2 hour 45 minute drive. This is the primary reason that I never evacuate – I would rather take my chance with a storm than sit in traffic. But this one was different. I had never heard the weather lady tell me to put an ax in my attic if I planned on staying in New Orleans. She explained that 40 years earlier, during Hurricane Betsy, that many people who lost their lives drowned in their attics. They had climbed into the attic to escape the rising flood waters, but as the water continued to rise into the attic, they had no way to escape. This information was what forced me to leave the city of New Orleans that Sunday morning.

Perhaps I should have realized that this was a serious matter. But I couldn't help believing that it was yet another bullshit evacuation. People evacuate every year – they sit in traffic for 24 hours to get to Houston. Can you believe that? 24 hours – I can assure you that if I sat in a car for 24 hours, I would die. Plain and simple. So I never leave. And then the storm always wobbles to the east or the west and New Orleans is spared and I get a nice 3 or 4 day vacation from work. Then those poor fools who spent 16 hours in the car to drive 75 miles to Baton Rouge have to head home in returning traffic – several hundred dollars lighter from paying for a hotel room for three nights. So why do they do it?

You see, here in south Louisiana, folks live for hurricane season. There could be a storm just starting to form off the Cape of Good Hope and people in New Orleans are stocking up on water and sterno. Once a storm is in the Atlantic and clearly going to hit the Carolinas, our local weather people like to remind us that it could still turn and "we're all gonna die." I try to watch the national weather channel during storm season – they usually have a good idea where a storm is headed. They also keep the theatrics to a minimum and leave out the .007% chance that the storm will destroy New Orleans.

Living in New Orleans during hurricane season is an alarmist's dream come true – they can fret and fuss to their heart's content. We live for it, we love it, it's all we talk about from June through early September (yes I realize that hurricane season goes through the end of November, but by then we've lost focus on storms and are far more interested in LSU football and hunting season).



And for as much as I have mocked these alarmists for the past 15 years, there I was, sitting in traffic on Interstates 10 & 55, right alongside them. For the first time, I took the advice of my ax-wielding weather lady and decided to evacuate.

As I drove out of town, I made a point to look around – to remember what things looked like. I even said goodbye to my beautiful

"This past year has been the most trying of my life. I watch my city every day dying all around me..."

city. I told myself to do these things 'just in case', but I was still thinking that this will be another mini vacation from work. We'll be home by Wednesday.

I work for the food bank in New Orleans - Second Harvest Food Bank of Greater New Orleans and Acadiana. We serve 23 parishes (counties in the rest of the U.S.) across southern Louisiana, from the Mississippi border to the Texas border. Hungry people do not come to our food bank to get food. We work with social service agencies in the communities that we serve and they in turn get the food to the people in need in their area. I came to the food bank after a 10 year career in banking. Why the change? Well, at the risk of sounding like a Pollyanna do-gooder, I was looking for a job that truly gave back to the community, not just lined the pockets of a few already wealthy individuals. I was hired as the volunteer coordinator. I had been in that position for 10 months when the storms came (Katrina on 8/29/05 devastated the eastern part of our service territory. Rita on 9/24/05 destroyed the western half).

Like most places of business in New Orleans, we had a disaster plan. The only disaster was the plan itself (we have since adopted a very thorough disaster plan). I know we were not the only people to find themselves in this position. The biggest problem we had was communication. All we had were cell phone numbers and you could not dial anyone within the 504 area code. So by calling other food banks and tracking each other down, we were able to receive our instructions. We were to report to a vacant Wal-Mart just north of Baton Rouge, in a little town called Baker, LA.

Oh, the Baker Wal-Mart. How do I describe it? What did we do there? Well we turned it into a working warehouse. And we moved several employees and their families into rooms in the back of the building. We set up a kitchen. We turned the pharmacy area into a nursery and family room and we created a receptionist area in the old lay-away department. We even made showers in the private restrooms in the front of the store by attaching garden hoses to the sinks. It was quite a nice little set up. The rest of our staff (those not living in the Wal-Mart) were living with friends and strangers who opened their homes to evacuees.

And then we got to work. But who was doing what? Where did the food need to go? That was easy, we did what needed to be done – all staff took on new tasks and responsibilities. And we got the food to the people who needed it. In September 2005, we distributed 8 million pounds of food (not too shabby when you consider that we distributed 14.5 million in the previous fiscal year). We increased that amount to 10 million pounds in October 2005. By Christmas we had distributed over 30 million pounds and we ended the year (August 29, 2005 to August 29, 2006)

at 52 million pounds.



I have to honestly say that I don't remember much about the Baker Wal-Mart. Even though I spent 12 hours a day there for 7 days, it is pretty much a blur. What I do remember is being surrounded by my co-workers, many of whom had lost their homes. My boss at the time had broken her ankle the week before we evacuated so she packed only left shoes. Her house flooded. When she got her cast off she had to purchase all new shoes. I remember trying to teach co-worker's baby to walk while forklifts were whizzing by. I remember a lot of people crying. And I remember that in spite of all we had been through, we worked. We worked very hard. Even though people lost their homes and were separated from their families, we had a job to do. And we did it. It was some of the strangest days I have ever had. I hope to never see that Wal-Mart again – some of my co-workers have said they would burn it down if they ever had to go there again. Very strange days indeed.

We were eventually released from our work in Baker to take some time off to take care of our personal business before we returned to work in New Orleans. Wonderful and gracious volunteers from other America's Second Harvest food banks around the country came to run the operations while our staff was off. They continued to run the warehouse in Baker through February 2006.

Our staff reported back to work at our New Orleans facility in early October. Our building had sustained only minor wind damage so we were able to get right back to work. But everything had changed. A third of our staff had lost their homes in the floodwater. We arranged to have trailers brought in and placed on the front lawn of the food bank for staff who had lost their homes or who were not able to live in their homes. I moved into trailer #7. My home had not sustained any damage during the storm but I did not have gas or water service. I lived in my teeny-tiny FEMA trailer until I couldn't take it anymore. I moved back to my house and spent many miserable hours in front of a little space heater that I picked up at the drug store. And every morning, I would wake up, pack my bags and head out to my trailer to take a shower and get ready for work. I don't know why, but those were the darkest days for me. I considered giving up on so many occasions. I wanted to run screaming from this city, but at the same time, there was no where else that I wanted to be.

This past year has been the most trying of my life. I watch my city every day dying all around me. I mourn for those who so desperately want to come back to New Orleans but do not have anything to come back to. This is a magical place – for those of us who see it, who get it, we feel blessed to have found our home. I have always believed that there is a true Sirens' Song for New Orleans. The sirens must sit in the bend of the river and scream their heads off – and if you hear it, you can not deny it.

I can't let you believe that things are all bad. New street lights go up everyday. The chicken wing shop under the interstate opened last month. The Saints are winning. Now if that's not progress, I don't know what is. Maybe I just believe that things are getting better because I am all gooned-up on antidepressants. Who knows? Maybe everyone in New Orleans needs to be on antidepressants. That's it! You don't need to fix anything – just load the water supply up with Prozac. Or Zoloft. Or Valium. Or Percoset. Or poison. And make us believe that everything is o.k. – that we are going to be o.k. – that there is a light at the end of this very long tunnel.

Just do something. And please don't forget about us.

Ali A. James

December 4, 2006





Hurricane Rita

Three weeks later, the Food Bank was faced with yet another challenge when Hurricane Rita came ashore and decimated the western portion of Second Harvest's service territory. Many of the staff members of SHFB express similar feelings regarding Rita's hit on SHFB's service area. While they would not have wished Rita to hit their area many would not have wished Rita's destruction on any other area. Thankfully the response to Rita was quick. SHFB was already operating in disaster mode which made the pre-staging of product in close proximity to Rita's expected track much easier.

The impact of Rita was as devastating if not more so than the impact seen by Katrina. The western parishes of SHFB's service area were a place of refuge for those fleeing hurricane Katrina. Social service and emergency aid networks were already being stretched thin when Rita ravaged the western parishes. After Rita there were two sets of peoples displaced by a major hurricane to be served through the emergency response network. It is no secret now that the federal government's lackluster response to both disasters compounded the issue of serving those in need even further. Many agencies were already stretched to the brink serving those from Katrina, now many agencies were obliterated. An Urban Institute assessment of the conditions of non-profits throughout the entire area affected by Katrina and Rita reported that 95% of non-profits, including agencies served by SHFB, were operating and serving clients out of damaged buildings.¹ Fewer than one-half of previous non-profits were operating in the eastern portion of SHFB's area.² On average the non-profits that were open and operating were serving 73% more clients than prior to the storms.³ Hearing about agencies that were serving more than 2,000 clients a month was not unheard of. Many of these agencies previously served 250 clients a month.

What does this change in the landscape of the non-profit sector mean for emergency relief and recovery services? Many local economies were wiped out. Stories regarding people who previously prided themselves on self-sufficiency having to ask for help are no longer rare. Many communities are facing numerous challenges as they struggle to rebuild. The following pages contain an analysis of the current agency situation.

It was mainly the not knowing of all it, not knowing if your home was damaged, flooded or looted. Not knowing if all of your family members made it out okay. Not knowing what was to be left of our city. What we were sure of was that it would never be the same.

For the people and their pets Tanya O'Reilly, Agency Relations



As most native New Orleanians know, once a storm has formed in the Gulf of Mexico, we watch and wait....most of the city usually choosing to stay and "ride out" whatever may come our way. Being a long time volunteer with the Humane Society of Louisiana, my group spent the Saturday before Katrina made landfall evacuating more than 120 of our animals from our sanctuary which was located in Algiers Point, which is in Orleans Parish but on the westbank side of the river. Luckily, we did get the animals (which included dogs, cats, birds and rabbits) out since our sanctuary building was completely destroyed by wind damage and also flooded.

The day before Katrina hit, my boyfriend and I were still up in the air as to whether we should leave. Then late that afternoon, Mayor Ray Nagin gave an urgent demand for all those who could evacuate the city to "get out, as soon as you can-this is the one." "The one" is the hurricane we have all been dreading for many, many years. The one that would drown our city and take many lives with it. We packed up our two dogs and took both of our cars (another small blessing in the

big scheme of things, since they would have been flooded out) and headed to Atlanta to my boyfriend's family home. With bottleneck traffic, a regular eight hour drive from New Orleans to Atlanta took over seventeen hours! We spent the next four days glued in front of the television set and were relieved on Monday night to hear that New Orleans, had once again "dodged the bullet." We packed up preparing to head back home on Tuesday morning. We woke that next morning to the horror of seeing our city flooded, looted, total devastation. It was overwhelmingly sad and unbelievable.

As an employee of Second Harvest Food Bank, we are expected to report to work as soon as possible following a storm. We were told to report to Baker, Louisiana, several miles outside of Baton Rouge. At the time I left Atlanta for the drive to Baker, I had no idea where I would be staying. All I knew was that I had to leave my boyfriend and family behind and head out with my two dogs. With the cell phone towers being completely jammed, it was extremely difficult to make a call. Several of my family members including my dad, I had not even spoken to in days and did not even know if they were okay. The drive took over twenty hours and by the time I got closer into Louisiana, my director had called to inform me that I would be staying with a woman who volunteered her home to food bank employees.

We worked out of the Baker warehouse for one week, some employees with children slept in this warehouse which was an abandoned Walmart. We worked around the clock, day and night getting food out to those in need. I work in the Agency Relations department for the food bank so it was my job to try to get in touch with as many of my agencies as possible to check in with them and find out what their needs were. Calls came in day and night, hundreds of calls everyday. At times you felt so helpless, like we were only able to help just so many people. As the week went on, volunteers and other employees of Americas Second Harvest began arriving to help out. It was a bright spot in a very, very difficult time. It was the hardest week of my life. It was mainly the not knowing of all it, not knowing if your home was damaged, flooded or looted. Not knowing if all of your family members made it out okay. Not knowing what was to be left of our city. What we were sure of was that it would never be the same.

After the first week of being at the warehouse, we were told to take three weeks off with pay to go on and get our lives together. This was such a blessing, everyone seemed so relieved for a moment, then the panic once again set in as to what we would find when and if we could get back into the city. I was able to stay with my boyfriend's family in Destrahan, which is about thirty miles outside of New Orleans. There I finally had internet access and being one of the founders of the Humane Society of LA, was horrified to find over 1,000 emails from frantic pet owners wanting us to check on their pets that they had left behind thinking they would return in two or three days.

The city had very tight security with military and police vehicles everywhere. Only certain personnel were allowed into the city. With animal rescue credentials, I was able to get into some areas of New Orleans. Most streets were impassable and still flooded. A triage area was set up outside of the city for those animals that were rescued from the ravaged streets. People once again from all over the country descended upon the city to help the innocent victims of the storm. We took boats out to some of the flooded areas. Armed with boots, crowbars, pet food and water we broke into more homes than I care to mention and climbed onto more rooftops than I care to remember. I would leave Destrehan every morning very early and head out alone. Once in the city, I would find others helping the animals and join them in the rescue effort. This went on for the two and a half weeks that I was on leave from Second Harvest. It was heartbreaking, devastating and emotionally and physically draining.

The animals, most of which were still barely clinging to life, we so grateful to be saved. One particular day, I had in my own SUV, two puppies, three pitbulls, two mixed breeds and a cat. Amazingly, all animals got along....they seemed to know they were on their way to being saved. Every morning before leaving out for these twenty hour days, I would print out emails of addresses where animals had been left. I tried to get to as many as possible. Sometimes all I could do was to break a window, climb in and leave food for the very frightened and confused animals. This work continued on weekends after I returned to the food bank.

Second Harvest of course, was extremely busy as we put out as much food as possible everyday. The calls kept coming and we kept working. Donations came from all over the country by the truckloads. A disaster such as Katrina certainly brings out the best and worst of people. Unfortunatley, I saw both sides of what people are capable of. I also met some of the most wonderful people in the world, those who came to assist the food bank and those who risked their lives to save an animal in need. I am still friends with some of them. We shared a common bond and went through a devastating event together. From them, I drew strength and hope.

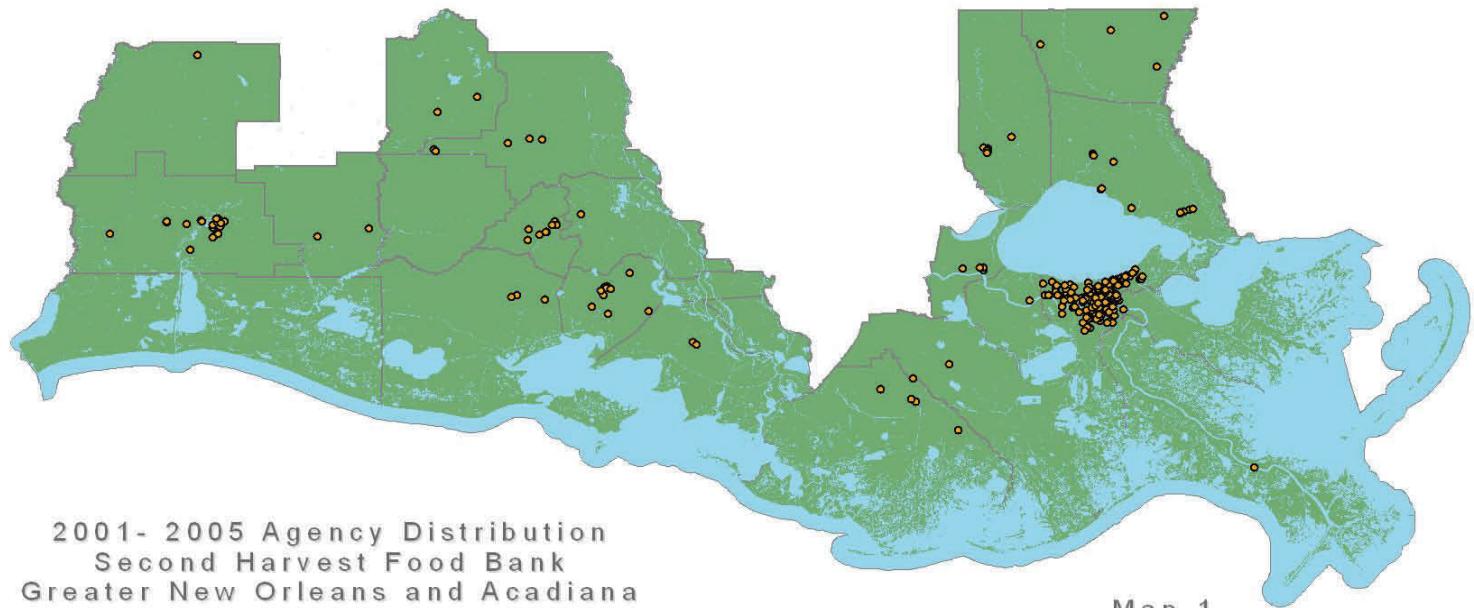
Hurricane Katrina left it's mark on everyone, physically and emotionally. I, personally know of three individuals who took their own lives in the months following the storm. The images of the city, the convention center and the animals that did not make it, will haunt me for the rest of my life.

Tanya O'Reilly

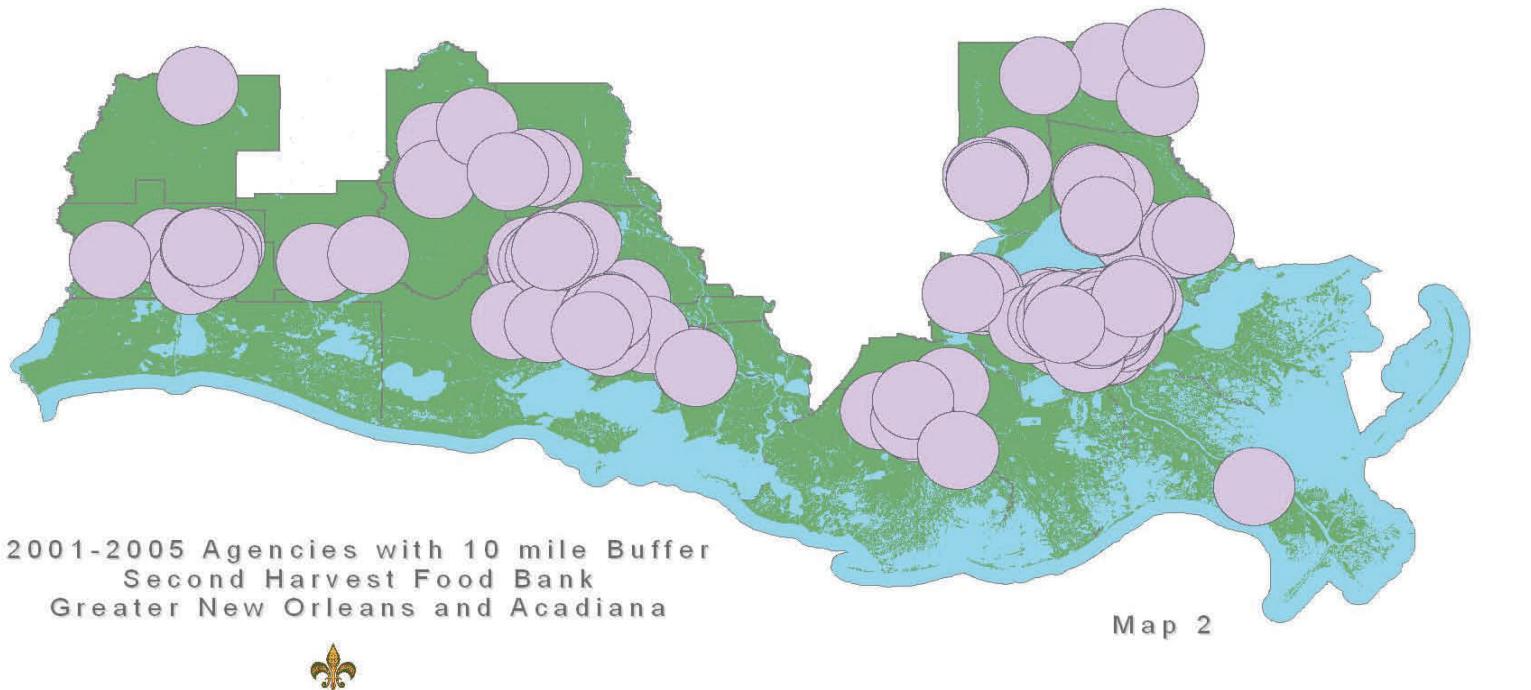


Agency Distribution

Since the landfall of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita SHFB has approximately 210 fewer agencies. SHFB is quite concerned, with good reason, that emergency food needs are not being met throughout their entire service area. It is reasonable to believe, with both anecdotal and statistical evidence that need for such services is just as great, if not more so. With this in mind an analysis of agency distribution was completed.



Map 1



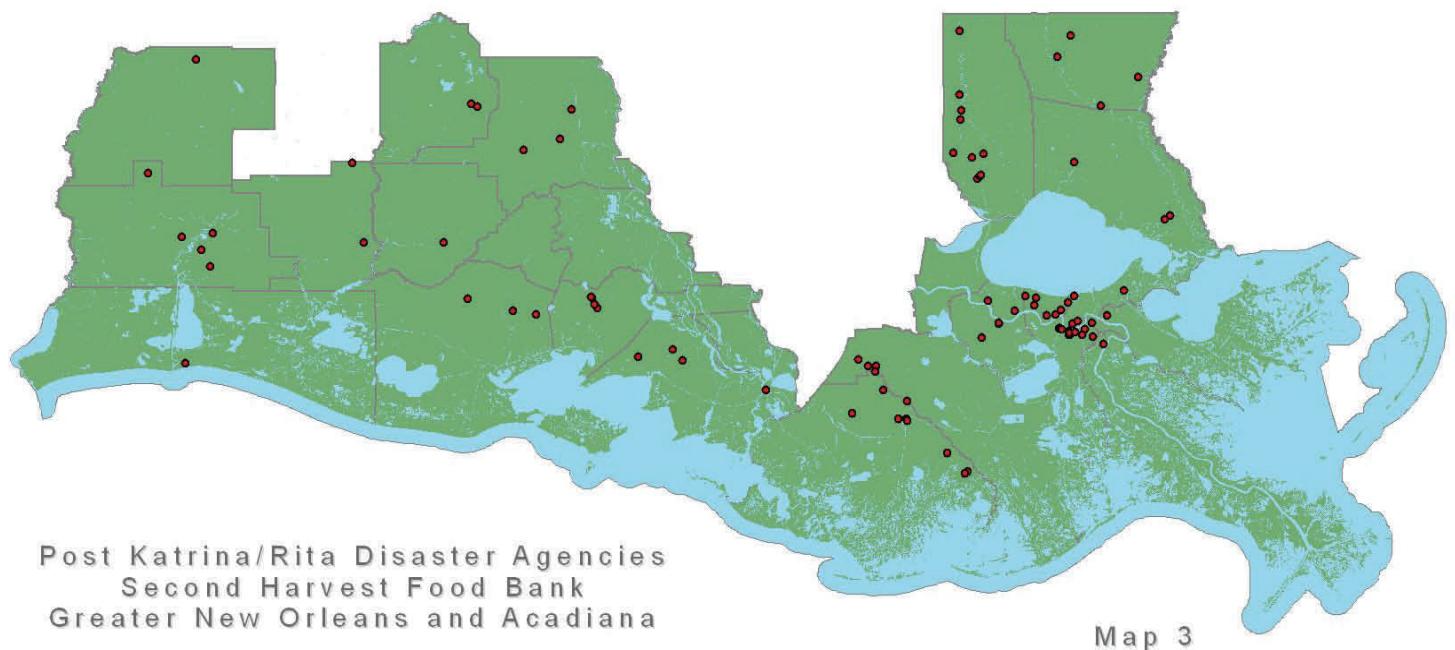
Map 2



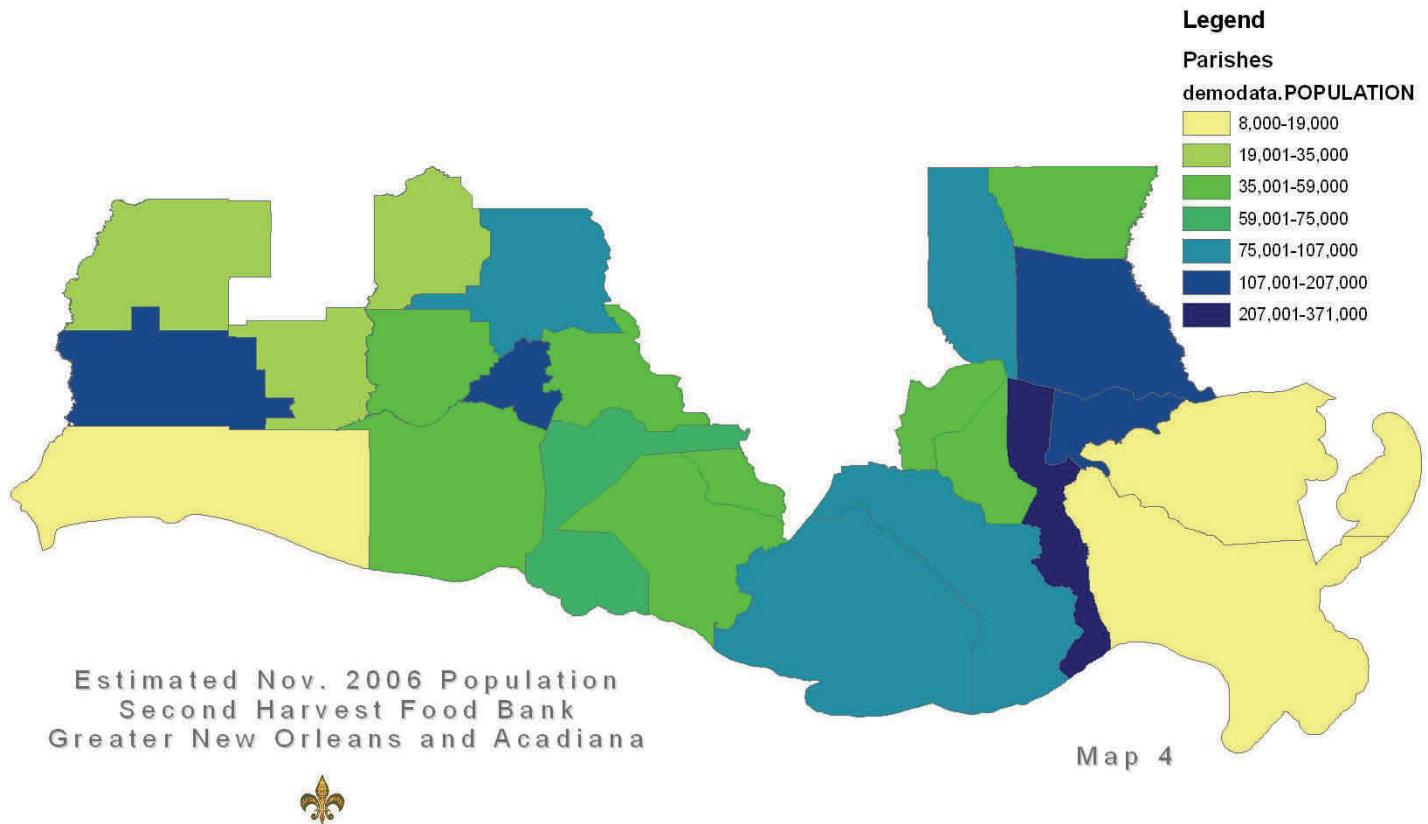
It should be noted, the data for the maps includes the entire October 2005- September 2006 distribution. However, the current agencies are the active agencies listed as of 10 October 2006, this explains why there are no agencies listed in parishes where food has been distributed.

Map 1 shows the agency distribution of SHFB from 2001 until August 2005. This map shows there were pockets which did not have agencies, however, for the most part the coverage of SHFB agencies was decent. Map 2 shows these agencies with a 10 mile buffer around them. In this view we can see the coverage is actually quite good in rural areas with very few areas not within a 10 mile radius. Considering the age of SHFB and the relatively recent growth into the western parishes it would be understandable that some areas were without the infrastructure to support an emergency food relief organization. Cameron parish, population pre-Katrina around 14,000, is a good example where there are no agencies. Other parishes have large rural areas which are not covered well either. St. Martin, Tangipahoa, and Vermillion stand out; however, it is perfectly acceptable to believe that within 5 years SHFB would have had even coverage of their entire service area. That was before Katrina and Rita.

With Hurricanes Katrina and Rita the landscape of agencies changed quite dramatically. Map 3 shows the disaster agencies which were in operation following hurricanes Katrina and Rita. With this map we can see that several agencies popped up where previous agencies had existed. There are also more agencies located in areas relevant to disaster response, such as along the path of Katrina and Rita, as well as areas where an influx of evacuees was experienced.



It should be noted that many disaster agencies were not fully addressed. Examples include "the corner of Mounes and Sam's" as distribution sites, No city, state, or even zip's included. This is understandable since for much of the first two months record keeping was limited to notes scribbled when given a chance. This limits the ability to map where distribution points were located. About 1/3 of disaster agencies were not mapped because of these types of issues.



Map 4 shows the SHFB area populations as they were estimated in November 2006. As we can see the areas with the darker shades are again, Lake Charles, Lafayette, and New Orleans, the most populous parishes. Looking at Map 5, which shows the pounds per parish from October 2005- September 2006 we see that there are 10 parishes (Beauregard, Cameron, Evangeline, Jefferson Davis, Lafourche, St. Charles, St. John the Baptist, St. Martin, Vermillion, and Washington) which have received less than 1 million pounds each. The total pounds for these 10 parishes were approximately 10% of total food distributed. The population of these 10 parishes is close to 25% of the total SHFB population. It seems as though SHFB may not be meeting the need of several parishes. However, this data does not paint a full picture.

One of the most poignant stories is that of an elderly woman who lives near the church. Mrs. G, as she is lovingly referred too, is 90 years old and has been forced to pick up aluminum cans to pay for her medications. Without the help of the food pantry she would be forced to make that choice that no one wants their parent to make, food or medicine.

Just doing what they had to do...

Pastor Shirley Gravois and her husband Johnny at the Promise of Life Church in Thibodaux did what they had to do when hurricane Katrina slammed their community about an hour outside of New Orleans. It wasn't the wind damage, or the water damage, that many agencies experienced. What Katrina did for their small community church was to create a great need for relief supplies. With its close proximity to New Orleans many evacuees ended up in the area, and many communities outside of Thibodaux relied on this small food pantry for supplies. Prior to Hurricane Katrina the food pantry served maybe 75 people a week. Now they are serving upwards of 200 families a week. During disaster operations the Gravois' and their volunteers "stopped counting after 500,000 pounds of food". They estimate that they gave over a million pounds in the months following Katrina and Rita.

Sitting at a table in the back of their church, over a cup of community coffee, the Gravois' share stories about their experiences. A lot of reflection has occurred over the past few months and you can see the desire to help their beloved community. They experienced the pain of the fishermen who were forced to ask for their assistance for the first time just after the storm. They understood the concern of a woman from Virginia who called to ensure that her family in Lake Charles, about 3 hours west, had food.

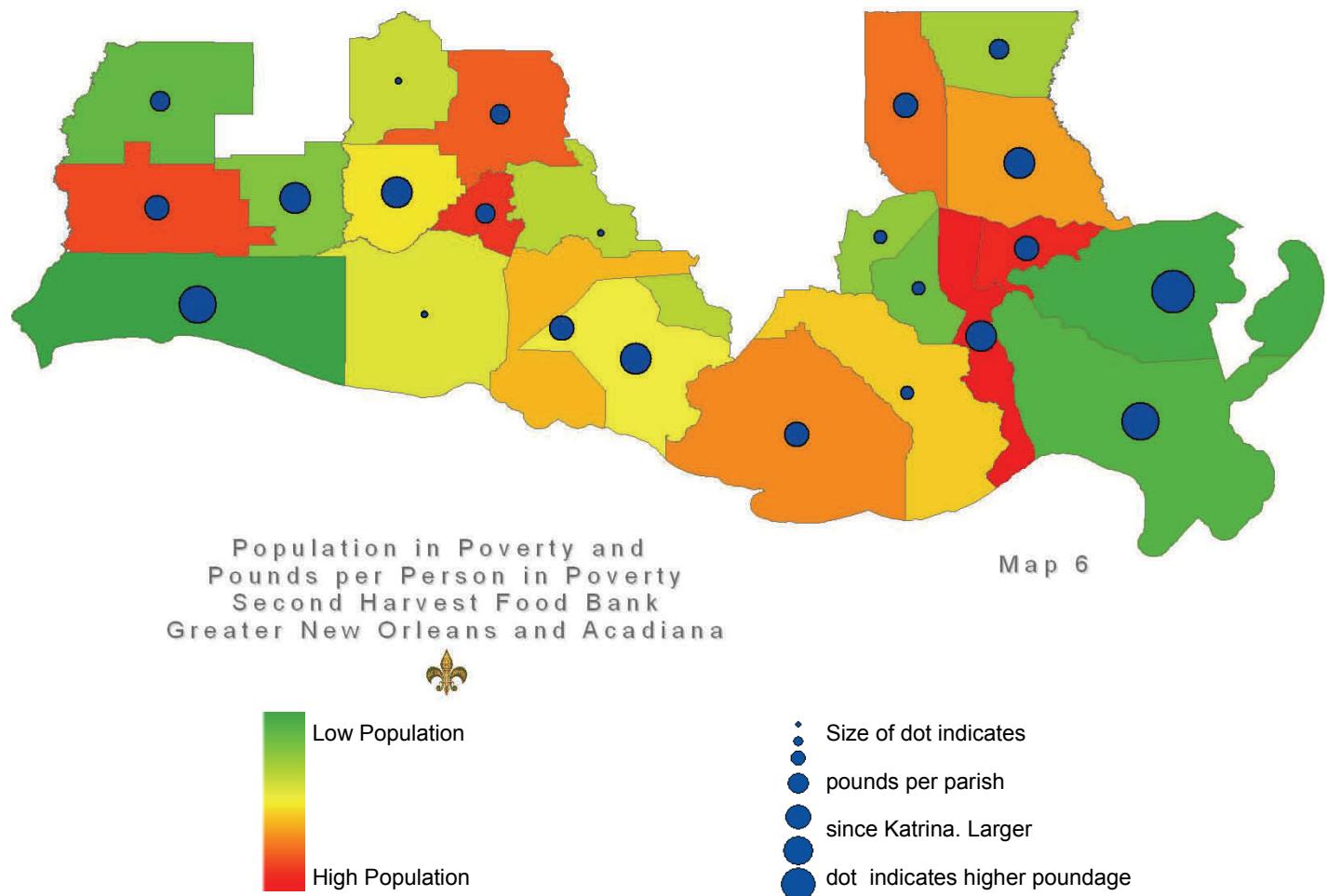
With all the need in their area the Gravois' stepped up and took care of business. Within a few days of Katrina's landfall they received a call from a New York City food bank asking if they could handle food. Three weeks later they had unloaded and distributed 55,000 pounds, and the distribution did not stop there. This is quite the feat when you realize they do not have any kind of loading docks for the 18 wheelers which were dropping the product off at their door. The Gravois' distributed food to the American Red Cross, Habitat for Humanity, and a plethora of other volunteer groups who showed up in the aftermath to help the Greater New Orleans area.

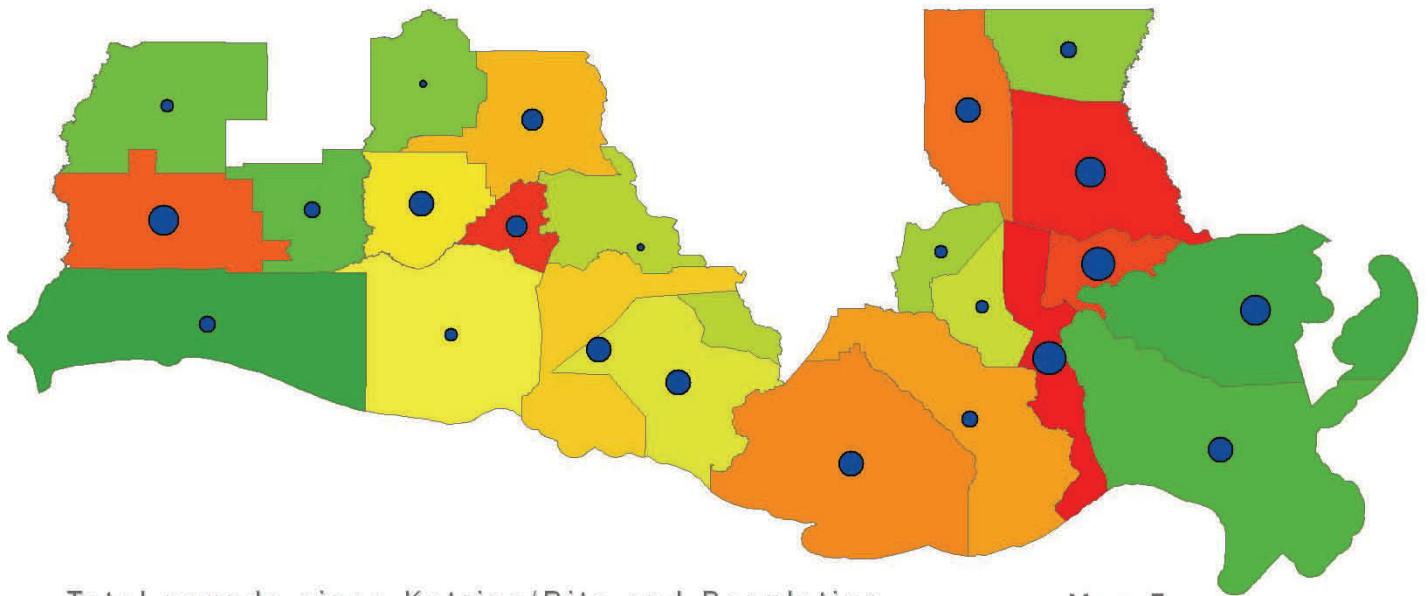
The increased distribution has not stopped yet. The Gravois' talk about the increased numbers of patrons of their pantry and discuss the economic conditions that have led to this situation. It is no secret that the cost of living is higher in this area now. Something as simple as butter is selling for almost a dollar more than prior to the storm. Take into account the increased costs of food and utilities and factor in the fact that many people are rebuilding their houses, and their lives, on the same budget as prior to the storm it is no wonder that more people are seeking the services the Gravois' offer. One of the most poignant stories is that of an elderly woman who lives near the church. Mrs. G, as she is lovingly referred too, is 90 years old and has been forced to pick up aluminum cans to pay for her medications. Without the help of the food pantry she would be forced to make that choice that no one wants their parent to make, food or medicine.



With their selfless modesty the Gravois shun any praise offered for their efforts. They bow their heads and reiterate their belief that they just did what they had to do. Eighteen months after the disaster SHFB must try to move away from disaster operations. This would mean that SHFB will

Map 6 shows the population in poverty and the total pounds per person in poverty the food bank has distributed. Second Harvest Recommends 45 pounds per person in poverty the target for distribution. In Map 6 the warmer colors indicate a higher poverty rate, while the blue dots denote how many pounds per person in poverty SHFB has distributed to each parish. Three parishes meet the suggestion from America's Second Harvest, Cameron, St. Bernard, and Plaquemines. These parishes also have some of the lowest poverty rates in the region. The red parishes on the map indicate the highest poverty levels. With a combination of higher rates of poverty and lower pounds per person in poverty distribution Evangeline, Washington, St. Landry, Vermillion, Tangipahoa, and St. Martin are the parishes with the highest need. Other parishes with high rates of poverty have larger pounds per person in poverty distribution rates.





Total pounds since Katrina/Rita and Population
Second Harvest Food Bank
Greater New Orleans and Acadiana

Map 7



Another side of the food distribution is simply looking at the total pounds of food distributed to each parish since Katrina. Map 7 shows the total pounds of food distributed by SHFB since Katrina and shows the estimated population for each parish. The pounds of food since Katrina are represented by the blue dots on each parish. The color of the parish indicates the population; again, the warmer the color of the parish indicates larger the population. In this case you can see that out of these 11 parishes that received less than 4 million pounds of food there are a few, Cameron and Jefferson Davis are examples, which have a lower population indicating less need. However, parishes such as Beauregard, Evangeline, and St. Landry, have lower populations and also have less pounds of food being distributed to them. These are also parishes which have fewer agencies, and consistently are shown to be the parishes in which agency outreach is needed the most.



No More Silent Suffering...

Mary Ellen Citron of Food Net recognized that the disaster in New Orleans was one of man. Within a few hours of realizing what was happening Mary Ellen and her board decided it was time to help those who were in need. Many evacuees from the area hit by Katrina ended up in Lafayette. With an outpouring of support from the community Mary Ellen helped to set up a new facility to run their hurricane operations out. With some ingenuity they set up a great distribution center which had a road running around it. Within a week they were distributing to 675 cars a day.

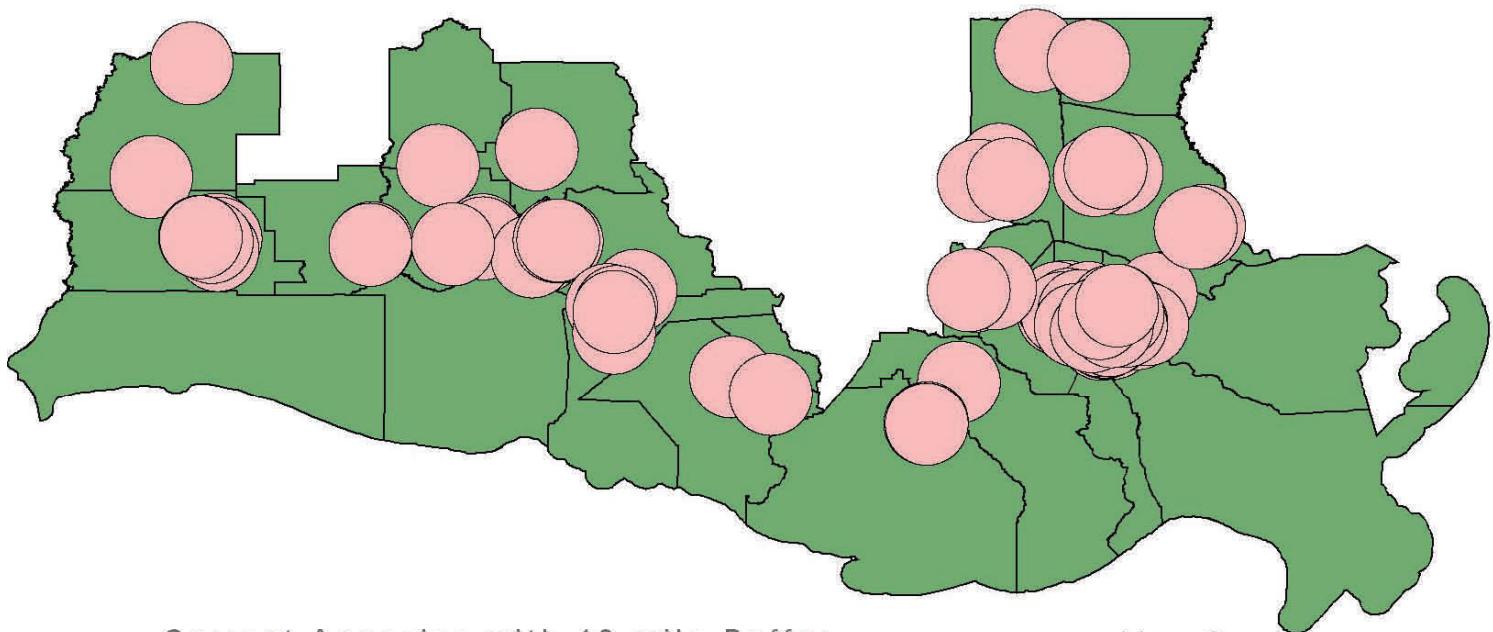
Then Rita hit. Now Food Net had to feed evacuees from 2 separate disasters. With its convenient location right between the two areas of impact Lafayette was a popular spot for the evacuees. Many showed up with just what was on their back and in their car expecting to return home in a few days only to find that their communities were wiped out. With no where else to turn Food Net served as a point of hope for many. The disaster distribution facility was open until the day before Thanksgiving 2005. Prior to the closing of the facility Mary Ellen and her board realized they needed a new facility to continue their work. With the new need in the community and their increased distribution rates there was no way to go back to the facility which previously housed Food Net.

There are many stories from Mary Ellen regarding those who were silently suffering. A couple from Cameron Parish showed up to receive food. When asked when they were planning on returning the couple, stoic until this point, broke down. All they owned was what was in their car' a few boxes of their most prized possessions. When Mary Ellen heard their story she took the couple aside and asked if they would like a box of pots and pans. With this offer the couple left extremely grateful to those who stepped up in our country during a great time of need and sent whatever they could muster.

One of the most heartbreakng stories of those suffering in silence came from a young man who had been working with Food Net. Just a week after Katrina this young man was one of the hardest workers in the facility. After his third day at work he asked to speak with Mary Ellen. In her office he related his story; his family was from New Orleans and they were missing. Later while he was still working for Food Net he found out that they had found his parents. His parents were turned away from the hospital just prior Katrina so they went to their home. When the house started flooding the young man's father helped his mother to the roof where he drowned. This young man used his work at Food Net to help work through the pain and suffering that was around him, as well as his own pain.

Mary Ellen and her crew at Food Net stepped up and did what they had to do. The strain on this community and its social service agencies by being a central point for evacuees from both Hurricanes Katrina and Rita is unimaginable. However, this can be seen throughout the service area of SHFB, people will step up and do what they have to do in order to help their suffering brethren. With agencies so committed to serving those who are in need SHFB, and their agencies, are truly one of the many points of light in this devastating situation. Throughout conversations many people cannot send enough praise to SHFB and the staff. While the immediate response to the disasters is dying down, it is time to look forward to the future and the hopes for rebuilding. Food Net has responded to the growth it has experienced due to the hurricanes. There are many non-profits throughout the Southern Louisiana area which are not as sure of their future. With the strain on their finances and promised help from FEMA slow in coming and confusing to get many agencies are being forced to shut down. This could prove disastrous for an area with less social service and support agencies than prior to the storms.





Current Agencies with 10 mile Buffer
Second Harvest Food Bank
Greater New Orleans and Acadiana

Map 8



Map 9 shows the current agencies in the SHFB network with a 10 mile buffer. A 10 mile buffer was arbitrarily chosen to be a distance which would be reasonable to expect those in need of emergency food would be able to travel. Realistically this is not the case when considering the working-poor, elderly, or those in need without transportation. For the purposes of this analysis we will consider 10 miles to be realistic. This map shows there are several areas which are not covered by the 10 mile buffer. The parishes which are the least covered in this map have repeatedly appeared throughout this analysis as those in need of emergency food distribution sites.

From this analysis it is easy to conclude that while SHFB has done a remarkable job covering their service area prior to and during hurricanes Katrina and Rita there are huge areas which have great need for emergency food distribution in a completely changed Southern Louisiana. Groups who have traditionally sought emergency food are not the only ones in need now, many who have never asked for help before and never dreamed they would need the services of SHFB are being forced to seek emergency food assistance. With this in mind SHFB must increase agencies in those areas which have high poverty rates but are not sufficiently served by emergency food agencies. Evangeline, Vermilion, St. Martin, Acadia and several other parishes are in need of targeted outreach efforts. There are several communities, such as the village of Delcambre, which are without their own grocery store and the nearest place to purchase groceries is a half an hour away. These areas need to be reached through programs and services offered by SHFB.



Post-Katrina and Rita

Sifting through the amount of research related to the effects of hurricanes Katrina and Rita can leave one wondering what is actually going on. There are many conflicting reports and one would think that a lower population in New Orleans would indicate less need for emergency social services, including food. However, prior to the storm it is well known that the social service networks in New Orleans, and southern Louisiana for that matter, were lacking. The fiscal capacity of Louisiana prior to Katrina and Rita was 48 out of 51. In fiscal year 2004-2005 Louisiana spent \$7,221 per capita on regular operating budget. Katrina and Rita caused \$8,244 per capita in damage. Money for limited social services was hard to come by prior to the storm; following Katrina and Rita the situation was greatly exacerbated.

Research indicates that there still is great need in Louisiana, but long term indicators are just as dramatic, if not more so. In New Orleans 21% of households reported having less income than prior to the storm. Around 50% of families reported having the same or an increased income. While SHFB waits for area wide data on poverty and low income families there are several reports on what can be expected, and in many cases what is being seen. Many of the families that will require the most help to return are the families which are being forced to return by their mortgages. Low-income homeowners are the population living most precariously. These families are unable to afford both a rent and mortgage payment while also rebuilding their entire lives. Many of these families were forced to ask for help once immediately in the aftermath of the storms, and now as they struggle to rebuild in a more expensive community with the same income they will rely more heavily on social service support networks.



Programs which have been created to help homeowners rebuild are proving to cause more stress on an already overwhelmed population. The Louisiana Road Home program grants homeowners funds for rebuilding their damaged homes. With road home funds tied up in bureaucracy many middle and upper-middle income families are using their own funds to begin rebuilding. This is not an option for many of the low-income homeowners in southern Louisiana.

On top of this newly distressed population there are the traditional populations of need. The elderly, disabled, and single parents are all facing new challenges. In Calcasieu Parish the Calcasieu Council on Aging is facing a dramatic increase in need among the elderly while still operating on the same budget. Simple programs such as Meals on Wheels are not providing enough support for those in need. Many recipients of meals on wheels have been reportedly splitting their meals three ways: one portion for now, one portion for tomorrow and one portion for their beloved pets. How can we expect the existing systems to provide enough support for rebuilding devastated areas when simple needs such as food are being overlooked?

By October 2006 SHFB had finally reopened their Sam's avenue facility. After weeks of cleaning up spoiled food and repairing minimal wind damage the food bank was ready for distribution. The staff of SHFB who were released to take care of themselves returned ready to tackle the growing need in their service area. By the end of December SHFB had distributed 60+ million pounds of food. These increased distribution rates would continue for the next year. By December 2007 SHFB had distributed well over 60 million pounds of food.

In order for SHFB to be able to meet the needs of their service area as well as the needs of the agencies, changes were required in operations. SHFB has suspended the shared maintenance fee, which prior to the disaster was a minimal \$.14 per pound. Many agencies have expressed their gratitude for this simple measure which has made it possible to meet the need of their communities. However, SHFB is considering reinstating the shared-maintenance fee in order to meet operating costs. One agency in Thibodaux, which has gone from distributing to 75 families per week to more than 250 families in a week, would no longer be able to distribute if the shared maintenance fee is reinstated. The financial toll on traditional agencies has weakened many to the point where they will no longer be able to serve their communities. Even with the promised support from FEMA, in the form of reimbursement for disaster relief operations, many will be forced to cut back their distribution. In an area where need is even greater this could have devastating effects on already weakened communities.

Alternative sources for the shared maintenance fee are being explored. These ideas need to be followed to fruition. The effects of reinstating the shared-maintenance fee will severely limit the ability of SHFB and traditional agencies to meet the need for emergency food assistance. With creative solutions however, it will be possible for SHFB to postpone reinstating the shared maintenance fee. Options such as holding conferences, workshops or other sorts of capacity building opportunities would be highly beneficial to both SHFB and the agencies. With such a blank slate creativity is key to exploring alternatives to the shared maintenance fee.

Other forms of support for agencies are coming in the form most needed by many. America's Second Harvest has donated \$1 million to help rebuild many of the agencies which were demolished by the hurricanes. This money is to be used to help the agencies rebuild their physical infrastructure.

Granted DJ Latino, Program Manager

Who would have ever thought how life changes in such a short time. All the plans of mice and men, well go figure. It all started for me the latter part of 2004 after selling and closing small businesses. The entrepreneur spirit was in my blood, so these businesses were acquired several years prior to 2004 to quench my appetite to have my own. Well they wore me down both physically and emotionally resulting in the aforementioned sale.

My intent upon the sale was to take a considerable amount of time off to regain my sense of spirituality and physical well being. I was cruising for those months following the sale, enjoying my grand children, time traveling and just plain chilling.

I watched the 2004 hurricane season come and go and was tracking the season of 2005 mainly because of travel plans. During these two seasons, I was always calling a friend of mine to monitor his plans as it always seemed that the hurricanes were heading in his direction in Florida. On August 26th, I left New Orleans to visit my son in Chicago. Prior to leaving I again called my friend as this hurricane called Katrina was scheduled to arrive in the Gulf and turn back into Florida. After arriving in Chicago, I watched the progress of the hurricane over the next few days as the path consistently changed towards New Orleans. As the hurricane passed just east of the city, the news media and the Mayor reported that we had survived the worse of its path. Then came the news that our world had changed. The levees broke and the water was consuming New Orleans and the other parishes of St. Bernard and Jefferson. I continued to watch in horror as the people were trying to survive. Then I learned how far reaching the destruction was. It had devastated much of the gulf coast of Mississippi and Alabama. I felt helpless as I could not fly back home to help family and friends. Speaking of friends, my friend in Florida was trying to call me during this time but to no avail. All cell phones based in the hurricane affected areas were not working. This compounded the horror of not being able to contact family and friends.

On September 3rd I was able to get a flight into Memphis to meet another son who had evacuated there with family. From Memphis we made our way back to our community which is north of New Orleans in Mandeville. The journey in was an eye opener. Trees were down everywhere and on house after house. My house was spared any devastation. My son was not as lucky as he had three trees on his roof creating numerous holes. Thus starts my hurricane recovery participation. We cut the trees from the roof and the sides, covered the roof with a blue tarp and cleaned the inside which was damaged from the rains penetrating the roof. Contact was finally made with my daughter who had evacuated to Dallas with family. Her house was still under water in New Orleans and was to remain as such for a month.

Since New Orleans was not approachable, I continued to help friends clear the damage from their houses in my community of Mandeville. As the weeks passed I was able to go into New Orleans and witness the damage in and around my daughter's house. The house was white colored and the neighborhood quiet. There was no sign of life, no birds or any other living animals. I stared gutting her house and the houses of other friends and relatives over the following months. This recovery effort was extended to others as they returned to their communities, to the smell of contamination, to mold infested houses. A different focus of life, a different lifestyle had been imposed on us.

It became evident to me in August of 2006 that it was time to return to some form of employment. Among several offers from different companies, I accepted the Program Manager position with Second Harvest Food Bank of New Orleans and Acadiana. In my sense, I was able to continue to help in some way to the hurricane relief effort. The focus of the position was to administer a grant received from America's Second Harvest-The Nation's Food Bank Network. The grant was in the amount of \$1,000,000 to be used to rebuild the infrastructure of the agency base which is the means of the food distribution to the hungry. Because of both hurricanes Katrina and Rita the agency base was cut in half. With far less agencies available to handle the increase in the number of people needing assistance, the work load increased tremendously.



The first month on the job involved becoming familiar with the culture of Second Harvest Food Bank. This involved not only understanding the different types of agencies such as pantries, kitchens, and residencies but also the guidelines under which they performed. In addition, the criteria and the conditions for grant participation were developed in conjunction with America's Second Harvest the provider of the grant. Drafts of the award letter and the check request form were also made. With all this done, the roll out of the grant began in late September.



Agency contacts and appointments were made beginning September 19th. The intent of the visits were to explain the mechanics and criteria of the grant and to determine if their needs for funding were still the same as previously communicated to Second Harvest. Upon leaving for my first agency appointment, my mind was programmed as to how I was going process communicating the grant criteria and requirements to the good Bishop at Lift Up My Name Higher Church. Well, the planned half hour conversation turned into a two hour tearing (both of us) story of their trials in helping others. Bishop O'Neal and her husband, both in their late seventies, were still feeding the hungry not only at the original location but in another location in the heart of the city of New Orleans. My concept of being prepared to formally communicate the grant immediately changed to one of "let the emotions just flow".

As my journey continued, I became more aware of the differences and uniqueness of the various agencies. There are the pantries that provide food in containers to be taken home, kitchens who feed those in need at their site for that meal only, and residences the need may be for battered women or drug rehab. In more times than not, each agency was operating under difficult circumstances. They were continuing to operate without equipment they once had, in damaged facilities, in tents, and in the elements hot and cold, wet and dry. In addition, the number of agencies after the hurricanes was half of the number prior to the hurricanes. This put an additional burden on the agencies still operating. What an experience it was to visit with the good sisters of St. Joseph Church-Feed Jesus. The homeless came not only to be fed but also for counseling. Their eyes, you can see the pain in their eyes. Not necessarily physical pain, but the pain of hunger, of depression, of being humbled. But, the sisters were there for them even under their own difficult circumstances.

You would think that since many months have passed since the hurricanes that recovery would be more obvious in the communities. Not so in many of the areas of my travels. There is a constant reminder of how the lives of many of our citizens in our communities have changed. Our conversations continue to evolve around the hurricanes and the devastation it has caused and the planned governmental assistance which seems to never come. But the grant funding finally arrived. The initial pass through the agencies created great anticipations that many of their problems would be resolved.

Traveling west to Lake Charles, I visited the agencies affected by "the other hurricane," Rita. Different hurricane but the same affects on the agencies. Facilities completely destroyed in Cameron, facilities with cracks in the walls that you can see through, facilities with warped and raised floors caused from the extreme winds were evident everywhere. The agencies were there, and patiently awaiting some relief from the grant.

A visit to a small faith based agency in Jeanerette, was overwhelming. Seeing the people in line for the food handouts was a humbling experience for me. Their eyes, you can always see the pain in the people's eyes. The church, severely damaged itself was the base for the food distribution. But the couple who had the ministry of the church were their for the people even under very marginal circumstances for themselves. Needless to say there were tears during and after this visit. The stories were very much the same throughout all the visits of so few giving so much too many.

Subsequent to the agencies verifying and quantifying their needs, award letters began to be distributed. These letters outlined the grant amount for that respective agency along with the guidelines for participation. The award letters were distributed with another visit to the agencies. This time around there were tears were of joy, there were hugs as the award letters signaled the beginning of the process of acquiring their needs. I was the messenger through which their heart felt gratitude was expressed to America's Second Harvest. This also started a different phase of my job to the point of helping with vendor recommendations and construction analysis and negotiations among other things. That was easy because it is no longer a job, but had become an experience; a very heart warming experience. The volunteers in the agency system are the heroes, giving much and asking for little. They are always there.



What this means for SHFB

There are many communities that are still lacking access to SHFB emergency food. There are several possibilities of how people are making ends meet in these areas. Persons in need could be driving to the nearest emergency food distribution agency, which could be a few hours in many cases. A recent study of the effects of the storms claimed many people in the New Orleans area were relying on the informal social networks which allow for bartering and trading of good and services so that those without enough cash can make ends meet. This informal social structure is well known to exist in more rural areas as well. We can safely assume that many people are relying on these networks to survive in the western parishes. However, it is important to remember the total devastation of communities in the west due to Hurricane Rita. Many of these networks were blown away with the category 5 winds putting a strain on the help that can be offered by such social networks.

There is also the possibility that organizations which are not known by SHFB have sprung up in response to the needs of the community. Many reports of such organizations exist by SHFB staff. The concern is that people are not receiving enough food to meet daily requirements. If this is the case it would be very beneficial for SHFB to search out these organizations and build a network to supplement their existing supply of food products. The final possibility is that families and individuals are not making ends meet. This is the most disheartening possibility; however, this is the situation which SHFB knows to exist. With the Mobile Pantry SHFB is able to bring temporary relief to these areas. However, concentrated efforts to recruit traditional distribution agencies need to be increased. There is no excuse for families and individuals to go without food. We have seen the disaster of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's response and the non-profit sector is expected to pick up where FEMA left off.

Another issue facing SHFB is the negative image in a few of the areas served. Many view SHFB as a Catholic organization that plays favorites. This is because of a few incidents in the past decade. New leadership and structure have remedied this issue. Organizations in Bogalusa have left the SHFB network and have used their own funding to purchase food to distribute. However, many of the agencies that have left the network are facing a new crisis: overwhelming need. Prior to Katrina and Rita these organizations were serving their populations without needing extra food. The strain that the hurricanes have put on the budgets of these organizations has forced many to consider closing. With support from a new SHFB these organizations could continue distributing. It is important the SHFB make extra effort to recruit these existing agencies and mend broken fences. Letting past transgressions hinder emergency food distribution to persons in need is inexcusable. SHFB and these agencies must put the past aside in post-disaster Louisiana.



Where to go from here

The federal response to the disasters has focused primarily on short term help in the form of FEMA assistance and other federal programs such as food stamps. In total FEMA reported 1.36 million people requesting assistance following the storms. The federal Food Stamp Program reports having given 900,000 people \$400 million in disaster food stamp assistance in the 90 days following Katrina. While these numbers are staggering, and the government has helped with needs such as rental assistance, these programs last for at most 18 months. The response from the federal government has not focused on the long term problems that will arise from the storms. New and innovative strategies are required to help secure a new social support system in the areas affected by the hurricanes. These new strategies are going to be required to come from the private and non-profit sectors as has been shown with organizations such as the Common Ground Collective which sprang up in response to the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina in the lower 9th ward. These organizations are showing how non-profits can best respond to the current situation in New Orleans and the rest of SHFB's service area.



Second Harvest Food Bank of Greater New Orleans and Acadiana should respond to the new landscape of southern Louisiana with a holistic root cause approach. A community food security center which would include many of the traditional food banking activities such as emergency food distribution, as well as emphasize programming which is centered on ending hunger would be one of the most innovative solutions offered thus far. Simple acts of handing out food, while important, will not sufficiently address the current situation. Families should be offered assistance so they will be able to get their lives to return to some semblance of normalcy.

Offering programs, such as a community kitchen to give job training to those who have not had access before, are key. Programs such as the Mobile Market and Mobile pantry are great examples of the changes SHFB has had to make to programming to respond to the new needs of the community. The mobile pantry is taking food to areas which are not easily served by existing agencies. One of the more successful trips was to the Bogalusa area. This trip was to an area with several FEMA *Transitional Living Communities*; the response to this mobile pantry outing required the limiting of the amounts of food distributed to each person in order to ensure that all who had shown up (200+) would be able to receive. The mobile market is a joint response with Market Umbrella and the New Orleans Co-op to take a mobile non-profit grocery into areas which do not have access to normal means of purchasing food. Communities where supermarkets have been wiped out and have yet to return a year and a half later.

Other programmatic activities include Kids Café which is serving areas of New Orleans which are seeing the most need. This program is a national program through America's Second Harvest to give children who would otherwise worry about their dinner a secure and safe place to get a full meal. The Backpack program is another program responding to the overwhelming needs of children in the area. With backpack children who qualify- in some cases entire schools- home with "pop-top" nutritious food. This food is for the child who receives the backpack and their younger siblings. The backpacks are taken home for use during weekends and extended breaks in which children may have difficulty finding food. Many parents and teachers express overwhelming gratitude for the backpack program because it has come along to help in a time of dire need.

While these programs are serving a large number of those who are finding themselves in need of support while they rebuild their lives, there is a large gap in who receives the benefits of these programs. Excluding the mobile pantry these programs are limited to the Greater New Orleans area. Because the financial requirements of extending these programs to encompass all areas of extreme need are great, SHFB has had an unpleasant choice to make, just who gets food. While SHFB is serving a great number of people through traditional agencies there is still an overwhelming need in the entire service area for food and programs that support children, the elderly and other "at-risk" populations.

Resilience is where we live now. Lemel Jones- Chief Programs Officer

The Beginning- Month of August

It was my 40th birthday. While this is a date many people would run from I was ecstatic. I had everyone at my job sing "Happy Birthday" for each of our monthly staff meetings leading up to my day August 28th! I know I was a bit aggravating about my constant celebrating but with a 15 year old son and one year old son- I deserved it. My fiancée (at the time) lived 5 hours away so I was extremely busy and tired. He had promised me a weekend of relaxation and chilling out at the Beau Rivage on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. We had arranged for the poolside Cabana for the whole day on Saturday. I was having dreams about it while trying to figure out how relaxing it would **not** be if I took my kids who would definitely think shopping (15 yr old) or spitting up on me (1 year old) would be my great way to relax. After I got over the feelings of guilt I was resigned that I would relax!

This was a day of great anticipation. I tried to finish all my work early. I knew there was a Hurricane meandering around Florida but we had been assured earlier in the week that it would not be coming our way. I didn't need to stockpile water or canned goods because I was vacationing not evacuating. Well, by the end of the day Friday I heard a shout cross my cubicle "Look at weather.com the Hurricane is coming this way. I was in total disbelief. I pulled it up and saw the hurricane clearly headed towards Florida. Not Louisiana or the Mississippi Gulf coast. I thought the taunts of my vacation being ruined were just folks joking with me because I had made such a big deal about my birthday. After all they sang to me at every weekly staff meeting.

When I left along with the rest of the staff on Friday afternoon we all said see you on Monday. I got yells of "have fun at the Beau Rivage" and "don't party too much". I headed home and called my fiancée to confirm his arrival time the next morning. I confirmed with my sister that we were dropping the kids off in the a.m.

Reality Set In

I went to sleep with the remote on the bed. I was hoping to roll over at 3:00 a.m. and turn on the television to a weakened storm. This was not the case. Early morning hours confirmed the worst. The storm was headed our way. The Mississippi Gulf Coast vacation was not even an option. Pack to leave~ wait a minute~ I'm packed already I thought. My guy lived outside of Lake Charles in a city called New Llano. We could just take the kids and do my normal thing circled around family and friends. We could watch the weather and maybe take a ride up to Houston for dinner and a movie.

I gathered my clothes for the trip- my vacation bag and a few more t-shirts. I took 5 days worth of clothes for the baby and my teenage son with a school shirt for us to return like we normally did in about 2-3 days. My fiancée's father lived in the Bywater area right next door to the lower 9th ward but little did we know at that moment about how that area would be affected. He was 83 at the time and an amputee of the right leg with various medical conditions. He picked him up as we decided it would be best to come with us instead of any of the other family members. My sister and I confirmed that she would pick up my mom in Morgan City about 1 hour and ½ away. She was 81 and did not drive (likewise for another sister who lives there on the not driving). My sister and her husband have 2 teenage daughters. A lot of planning normally goes into an evacuation because so many people are without transportation. Knowing that we would be back in two to three days just seems (at times) like why do this again....lets stay home. *Many of us will never think that way again.*



Hurry up and Wait in Traffic

The trip took about 12 hours including going down the back roads. Normally our trip would take 4+ hours. This I understand was good compared to many people who spent 20 plus hours on the road. Arrival 1:08 a.m. August 28th- MY BIRTHDAY. I spent the next day in panic state. I did not know where many people had evacuated to or if they had evacuated at all. The category went from 3 to 5. My heart raced uncontrollably but we always made it through why should this be different? Home by Tuesday or Wednesday I thought!

I went to sleep, woke up, slept, woke, slept and turned as I went back and forth to my spot near the T.V. I played with the baby. I talked to my older son. Wait a minute I am in the house with 4 males ages 1to 81! That's crazy. Everyone was looking at me to cook something but I could barely function because of worry. The storm came through as I slept. The word was we had skated through. All the news stations were reporting about how lucky we were. I was so tired. I said a prayer for the folks that got the burnt of the storm and yet again counted my blessings for making it through again. I could finally get some real sleep. Before I knew it a tug came at my shoulder. The look I'd never forget. My fiancée said "come here" I went to the T.V. and I saw water everywhere. The city was covered in water. My heart felt like it fell out my body and I could not control the pain that was tearing through every inch of my body. My body went numb and I fell to the ground –tears falling uncontrollably. My sons came around me and immediately I stood tall not wanting them to see the pain. I had to protect them against what I knew would be an event that would change all our lives. My fiancée's father looked in disbelief as they showed the corner store near his house completely under water. He knew everything he owned was gone. He looked so helpless and afraid. His concerns turned to his neighbors. It was hard! I began to take on all of this pain in every face, story, and appeal for help that I heard. How could this happen in our country? I didn't sleep for days, weeks, months. Well I'm really not sure when I started sleeping again.



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The phones were not working. "Where in the world is everyone" – I thought out loud. My fiancée tried to console me but nothing worked to ease my mind. I was on the edge. I got a text message from my job at Second Harvest Food Bank of Greater New Orleans and Acadiana. "Report to Baton Rouge Food Bank" I made plans to get on the road and take the boys with me. Baton Rouge was about 5 hours away. This was closer to New Orleans and what was going on?

1st Responder- The Food Bank? What??

I got to the Baton Rouge Food Bank and it was in reactionary mode. Brian Green our outgoing Executive Director, Jenny Rodgers (Director of Development) and all the Baton Rouge food bank staff was there. They generously helped us in any way they could food, housing, conversation- we appreciated it all but we were in a daze. We were happy to see any co-worker walk through the door finally knowing that they were safe. My older son became my assistant. He worked at the warehouse, took care of the baby, helped co-workers. He was a rock. I was quite impressed with his strength. I think he grew up in that instant. Several of my co-workers to include my ED and DD homes were lost to the hurricane. Eight employees ---- some have not yet recovered. We went to work immediately fighting off the impressions of starving people being televised across the world. Our mission became the forefront. We made a lot of errors because there was no precedent. This devastation was unheard of. We worked side by side trying to get the food out and arrange deliveries and receivables coming from across the country. Those first couple of days seemed like chaos and madness. I was working around people that for all intent should have been seeking refuge to themselves....ourselves! No one was really dealing with the devastation in their life. It was total reactionary mode. We were calling agencies everywhere to assist with distribution. The ones we didn't call started calling us. We developed new disaster agencies to accommodate the need. After almost two weeks America's Second Harvest's President- Robert "Bob" Forney came in a released anyone who wanted to go to leave and go take care of our business and ourselves. It was the most generous thing to happen. Everyone was so overwhelmed! About 60% of the staff took him up on the offer. I was one but I ended up in my hometown trying to work and deliver food to people. Everywhere we went people seemed so overwhelmed that it was hard for many comprehend the events.

Returning home

When we were allowed to return to the area in early October many employees had no homes. Some employees that lived in areas that were not cleared had to stay with relatives and friends. It has been a continual rebuilding process over this last year and a ½. Many people have chosen to leave the area after months of frustration. But there are those that continue to come into the area to support the rebuild efforts. Our food bank has distributed about 57 million pounds of food Post Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. I am very proud to be a part of all the efforts that have been made to support those unlikely faces. Many of our clients never thought they would need emergency food services. They are in a fight for their homes and their livelihood.

I am proud to be part of the recovery.

Resilience is where we live now.



“..the backpacks
are a real bright spot
in the children’s lives right now..”



Katrina's Kids

In the aftermath of Hurricane's Katrina and Rita safe and enriching after school programs were hard to find. With several local Boys and Girls Clubs out of service until renovations and repairs could be completed. Just 30% of day care and after school programs that existed prior to the devastation of hurricane Katrina exist in New Orleans alone. The situation is similar in the western parishes of SHFB's area where Rita ravaged communities.

SHFB is trying to continue a program that existed prior to Hurricane Katrina's landfall. The Kid's Café Program offers children from low-income communities an after school alternative. With this program children are provided a safe space to get a nutritious meal, and many experiences which could open their world to new possibilities of growth and achievement.

Children eat in a restaurant-style setting and participate in all aspects of the programming. Each site is rooted in its neighborhood with involvement from parents, children, other adults, and organizations. Children have the opportunity to participate in hospitality training, therefore giving them marketable job skills for future opportunities.

At Kids Café New Orleans, children serve as hosts; they wait tables, help in the food preparation and, of course, enjoy a nutritious meal. Adult table monitors encourage proper dining etiquette and friendly dinner conversation. Kids Café New Orleans is a place beyond poverty and hunger where low-income children enjoy a healthy and delicious meal – New Orleans style!

While this program is currently limited to the Greater New Orleans area Kid's Café would be a wonderful addition to programming in the western parishes. The high costs of a Kid's Café Program are inhibitive to possible expansion. America's Second Harvest- The Nation's Food Bank Network created the Kid's Café Program and suggest that each site have a sponsor.

Many of the children that participate in the Kid's Café Program are given an opportunity that they would not otherwise have. This is an opportunity that could open doors for children from low-income areas where the possibilities for social mobility are limited.

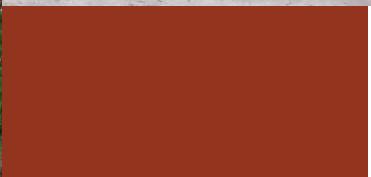
SHFB also offers other programs to ensure that children are not being left behind in an area where stories of children going without school lunch are not uncommon. The Lagniappe (a little something extra) program is the New Orleans version of the national Backpack program which send children home with backpacks which contain nutritious pop-top foods which they are able to prepare. This program ensures that children who are at risk of going hungry during weekends and vacations from school are able to receive healthy foods.



The Lagniappe packs are distributed throughout the Greater New Orleans areas to (number of schools) schools for children to take home on weekends and vacations. The children then bring the packs back for the next round of distribution. In 2005 Wal-Mart and America's Second Harvest- The Nation's Food Bank Network created a partnership which granted SHFB funding to expand the Lagniappe program. One of the most valuable components of the Lagniappe program is the discreteness through which the backpacks are distributed so as to not stigmatize the children receiving them.

Throughout the tenure of the program there have been many parents and educators who have expressed their sincere gratitude for this much needed program. While typically only a portion of the school population receives the Lagniappe pack, the situation in SHFB's service area is such that in many cases all students at a school qualify for the program. With such great need the Lagniappe program needs to be expanded to include the entire service area. However, again issues arise with funding. Since the food in the Lagniappe packs must be such that children can access and prepare it easily most of the food must be purchased by the food bank.





One of the Lucky Ones? Ken Gravener Food Procurement Manager

I suppose I was one of the lucky ones. I got an extra week or so reprieve from the very harsh reality that Hurricane Katrina visited on most of us. Early on the morning of August 27th my wife and picked up our daughter-in-law at her house for a flight to Philadelphia. My daughter would meet us in Atlanta to change plane for Philly where we would meet our son. A family reunion awaited us in the Philadelphia area....many of my friends and assorted cousins never having met my daughter. And my son was a small boy when most of them had last seen him. Yes, we knew there was a pretty big storm out there. But I had been so busy setting up the trip and doing stuff at work that I think my mind had more or less blocked out Katrina's threat. I had never left for any threatening storms.....Georges in 1998 and Ivan in 2004. I always stayed home with the dogs and promised everyone who had left that, yes, I would retreat to the second floor. And that I'd take food and fill the bathtubs with water. And, God forbid, I'd take an axe to our attic if the results turned out to be Biblical.

Sunday, August 28th was delightful. More than fifty people attended the reunion in my brother's house. Katrina was on everyone's mind. I delighted in the fact that on that day I was the resident hurricane expert. I told the attentive that under near-perfect conditions, New Orleans could be inundated with flood water. I certainly did not think it would happen. That night, after a truly special day, we retired to our hotel. The television stayed fixed on CNN or the Weather Channel all night. My wife was on the phone with Sheriff Harry Lee (a story for another time) trying to save her aunt and uncle from the still six hours away Katrina. I was able to sleep. I awoke to see Brian Williams in the Super Dome with a gaping hole in its roof. Several hours later it looked as if New Orleans had dodged the proverbial bullet.

Later that Monday, August 29th, we walked the boardwalk in Atlantic City....a good time interspersed with gambling, eating, drinking.....and suddenly pictures on television of rising water in our beloved city! The beginning of 16 months, and counting, to the closest thing to hell I've ever had the bad fortune to know. Several days later we spent four days in New York.....*Rent, The Producers*, ground zero at the WTC site, Carmines, Tavern on the Green, Phillies-Mets at Shea, standing outside the Today Show and talking with Lester Holt about Katrina. We held an "I Love NO" sign. They couldn't resist talking to us.

Since we couldn't get to New Orleans, Delta Air Lines was good enough to fly us to Monroe, LA with no penalties. It was five days before I could rent a car to get to Baker.....no buses, no trains to Baton Rouge. It was pretty shocking to see the toll on my colleagues and to hear some of their stories. I saw many red eyes. Mel Jones and Ali and I had dinner that night as we all plotted what was next. The food bank was giving us three weeks off with pay. Most of us took that offer.

I spent two weeks in Philly with my parents. By this time, the whole Katrina thing had taken on a bona fide surreal characteristic. When I returned to New Orleans and the food bank on October 3rd, the aura of surrealism was replaced by stark realism. I drove through the city and it was unbelievable. Driving over the 17th Street Canal into New Orleans was akin to going through the Brandenburg Gate between East Berlin and West Berlin. Had God designated Metairie as the land of "milk and honey" while New Orleans was castigated into the depths of hell as a latter day Sodom and Gomorrah? It seemed that way. The brown-grey landscape and musty smell was pervasive. The darkness as night fell was so total. The city I had called home for thirty days was moribund.

My work at food bank has actually been an important tonic for me. I've always liked the work I've done here and thought it was important. But it has helped these past many months as an escape from the crushing reality of where I am personally and where this region is, or is not. Not a day goes by when Katrina doesn't hit my wife or I in the face. Some days it's a slap on the face, others a right hook to the nose. Still others it's a take-your-breath away punch in the stomach. These assaults are brought to one and all courtesy of FEMA, AllState, SBA, Mayor Nagin, the Road Home program, Entergy, Governor Blanco, the Army Corps of Engineers, President Bush, mortgage companies, and demons of lesser note. We've pretty much done most of the gutting and "throwing away" at our house. We have salvageable belongings at storage facilities and with friends and relatives.

My arms and shoulders ache and my mind rebels at the thought of dealing with another bureaucrat....either the government kind or one from the private sector. Bureaucracy has deeply wounded New Orleans and I feel it both personally and in the way my city has tried to recover. I have been pessimistic since the beginning.....both for our overall recovery and my personal situation. In addition to dealing with the reality we've faced since that infamous day in late August of 2005, I have, despite being insured suffered a fairly large financial hit. I, like so many others, face a mortgage on a new house at age 59. It is reason for pessimism. That's when I think about many of the people we serve at the food bank and know I am so much better off than many.....probably most. It's been no walk in the park for most of us, but I am a true believer in the adage that there is always someone who has more problems than you do. It's something I'll force myself to remember as we all navigate an uncertain, at times scary even, future.





Organizational Change

Second Harvest Food Bank of Greater New Orleans and Acadiana has not only dealt with the dramatic changes wrought by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, there have also been significant changes within the organization itself. The first of which was occurring during the landfall of hurricane Katrina. Brian Greene the previous CEO of SHFB was in the middle of a transition to a new job as the CEO of the Houston Food Bank. Various other staff from Food Bank's throughout the country took on the role of acting CEO of SHFB during the months following the disaster. Natalie Jayroe, President and CEO SHFB, took the reigns of one of the largest challenges to ever face a food bank on January 3, 2006.

Along with the change in leadership at SHFB there has been a great deal of internal restructuring. There is now a management team consisting of the Chief Financial Officer, Annette LeBlanc, The Chief Development Officer, Terry Utterback, and a soon to be hired Chief Operations Officer. LeMel Jones has assumed the position of Chief Programs Officer to respond to the growing programs department within the SHFB.

Other changes in SHFB structure have be a direct result of the impact of hurricanes Katrina and Rita, as well as the continued growth of SHFB. DJ Latino has been hired as part of a \$1 million grant to help restore some of the agencies which have been wiped out by the storms. With the expansion of SHFB to Lafayette a warehouse team is being assembled in order to help better meet the needs of the western parishes within SHFB's service area.

Along with the personnel changes have come a shift in the mission of SHFB to become more progressive, program oriented and more focused on the goal of ending hunger. With this there are formidable challenges in what many view the role of the food bank as. Traditional opponents to the food banking system are now sitting at the table with SHFB. This new atmosphere of cooperation will allow SHFB to become a leader in ending hunger.



Conclusion

It is the hope that this report will be used as a tool to help create a plan for the next steps of SHFB, to educate those involved with SHFB's mission on the impact of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, as well as a resource for anyone with an interest in SHFB. SHFB is now out of the disaster relief mode and, while this was an immensely challenging time for the food bank, the staff and volunteers rose to the occasion to do "what had to be done". Now, as we move on past the 18 month mark of the disasters the landscape of Southern Louisiana offers great possibility. With funding and proper management SHFB can offer the programmatic resources to **end hunger** and not merely enable those who are hungry to be fed. It is entirely possible for an organization as large and successful as SHFB to make this an achievable mission.

Janet Poppendieck makes a strong argument in *Sweet Charity: Emergency Food and the End of Entitlement* regarding the value of food banking as it has traditionally been carried out. Rather than help end hunger, food banking seems to have been more of an enabler, band-aiding a serious problem and diminishing the consequences of out right hunger. When we can allow ourselves to feel good about donating a few canned goods a year to only help a family feeling "*food insecure*" make it through one more week the real problem is being overlooked. While these actions are beneficial they do not address the root cause of "*food insecurity*" in the United States.

The planned community food security center will go a long way towards this end. SHFB has the opportunity to bring together many of those involved in the anti-hunger and anti-poverty movements. Creating a center which can serve as a spring board which does not offer help for those who are hungry; rather helps those who are hungry get to a position where they will be able to purchase their food in normal and socially accepted means. This can occur through job training, education support and a myriad of other methods which are limited only by imagination and budget. For SHFB to be the sole organization involved in a community food security center would be irresponsible and reckless. Community food security is founded on the notion of bringing together the many players which all have a role in ending hunger. SHFB is, however, in a unique position to be the network that brings all those involved together.



The staff of SHFB and all those who are part of the SHFB network have all risen to the occasion and performed above and beyond what could ever be asked of them. Many of those involved claim that they did just "what needed to be done". While this may be the case, they did it with grace, compassion and a belief that they could help make this disastrous situation less painful for the residents of Southern Louisiana. Many who are asked about SHFB express sincere gratitude for all the help and support they have received. The staff of SHFB and the entire America's Second Harvest Network should be commended for their exemplary response in the face of governmental shortcomings.

As we move into the future it is important to remember the points of life found throughout this tragic ordeal; The stories which give hope and inspiration on just what can be done when "doing what you have to do". Those agencies who came back stronger and more capable of coping with the increased need throughout the service area, the staff who returned just a short month after the devastation of Katrina, as well as the staff who worked through Katrina only to be forced into a surrealistic world where Rita wreaked havoc, are all sources of hope for what can be accomplished. Remembering the triumphs and tragedies of the past 18 months will allow us all to reflect and move on into the future "doing what we have to do" to end hunger.

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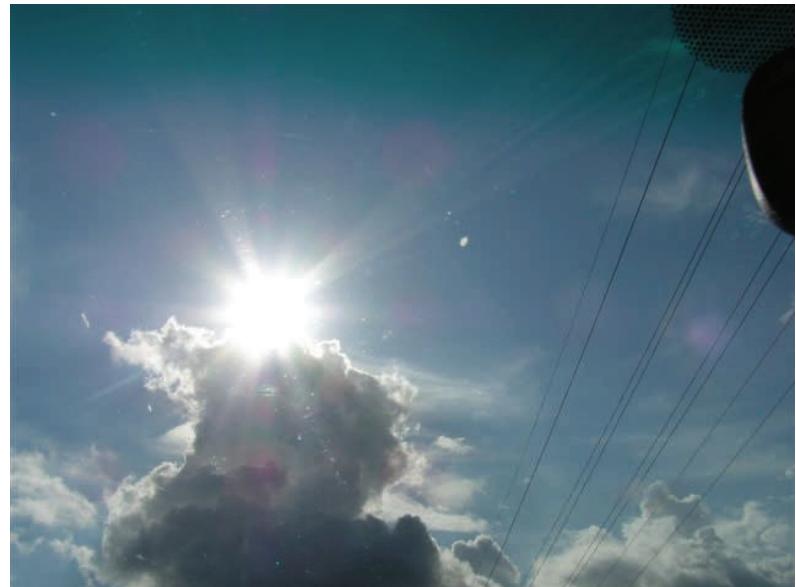
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A Note of thanks

Working in a city where piles of someone's life line the streets as people struggle to return to something that resembles normalcy has been an experience for which I am grateful to have been part. At such a trying time as this I am overwhelmed everyday by my colleagues who have spent the past year working to rebuild an entire region, while rebuilding their own lives. The strength of spirit I have been privy to over the past 6 months has been inspiring, for this I thank each and every staff member of SHFB. I would like to thank Lisa, for taking an extra two people into her office and handling our distractions well, and Mel and Natalie our fearless leaders. Every person (Ali, Tanya, Candace, DJ, Ken, Mary Ellen, and the Gravois' and many more) who has contributed in some way to the completion of this report I am appreciative. Those who have allowed an outsider to share in their experiences as we join together in the fight to end hunger and those who have spent their time working to end hunger. Thank you



In the time since Hurricane Katrina hit land, The Second Harvest Food Bank of Greater New Orleans and Acadiana has been called to do something unprecedented in food banking history. Distribute more food, through fewer agencies, to more people in the midst of collapsing infrastructure. At a time when New Orleans was closed and entire parishes wiped away the staff of SHFB stepped up and “did what they had to do”. This report is an analysis of the current situation of SHFB agencies and how SHFB can ensure they are getting food to those who need it.



OF GREATER NEW ORLEANS
AND ACADIANA

1201 Sams Ave.

New Orleans, LA 70123