

## Hope, Help & Giving Back

Nora Jean has spent her life working hard and helping others. For years, she was a prep cook in a fast-food restaurant, but after losing her sight, she could no longer work. Now legally blind, she receives a Missouri Blind Pension and Social Security — and just \$24 a month in SNAP.

That \$24 helps her buy some staple groceries ... but it doesn't last.

***“Without SNAP, I wouldn't be able to get stuff like milk and eggs and bread, and those are really important for everybody,” she said.***

But SNAP alone isn't enough to cover all her needs. That's where Southeast Missouri Food Bank and her local pantry step in, helping fill the gap with nutritious food that stretches her budget and ensures she has enough to get through the month.

Even with her challenges, Nora Jean continues to give back. She walks to her local pantry with a wagon because she can't drive — and she volunteers with Southeast Missouri Food Bank, helping pack senior boxes that will be provided to others in need.

For Nora Jean, volunteering isn't just about staying busy. It's about purpose. It's about making sure someone else has what they need, too.

SEMO Food Bank means stability for Nora Jean. And through her service, she is a reminder that in difficult seasons, generosity and community shine through.



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Chief Executive Officer

- Administrative Offices & Main Warehouse:**  
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*Our Mission*  
 To end hunger and leverage the power of food to build healthy communities.



# Serving Our Communities with Care and Impact

For the past two years, I have had the privilege of serving as Board Chair for the Southeast Missouri Food Bank. While I have long believed in the importance of this organization’s mission, the opportunity to witness its work firsthand has deepened my appreciation for the meaningful impact being made throughout our region.



During my tenure, I have seen the Food Bank grow — not only in capacity, but in strategic focus. In 2025, the organization launched a comprehensive strategic plan that places significant emphasis on equitable food distribution. In a predominantly rural service area such as ours, this commitment is essential. It demands thoughtful planning, strong collaboration, and a dedication to meeting individuals and families wherever they are.

I have also had the opportunity to observe how responsibly the Food Bank manages the resources entrusted to it. With 95 percent of donations directly supporting food purchases and program initiatives, the organization continues to prioritize efficiency and stewardship. This level of accountability should give all supporters confidence in the tangible difference their contributions make.

From expanding mobile food pantry distributions to strengthening partnerships with local agencies, Southeast Missouri Food Bank remains steadfast in its response to rising need — approaching each challenge with care, integrity, and a deep sense of responsibility.

As my term as Board Chair concludes, I am grateful for the opportunity to continue serving on the board and supporting this mission. The fight against hunger is far from over, and I am honored to stand alongside each of you as we work together to make a lasting impact.

*Mark Avery*

Mark Avery  
 Past Board Chair, Southeast Missouri Food Bank

## Save the Date: Annual Golf Classic

Mark your calendar for the 15th Annual Southeast Missouri Food Bank Golf Classic on **Mon., Sept. 21, 2026, at Dalhousie Golf Club.**

This four-person scramble begins with a 12:30 p.m. shotgun start. The roster is limited to 25 teams and fills quickly, with priority given to sponsor teams.

To secure your place or learn about sponsorship opportunities, contact Rebecca Lambert at 573-471-1818.



# Childhood Hunger in Southeast Missouri



Across Southeast Missouri, too many children are growing up without reliable access to food. That's why SEMO Food Bank is committed to **Growing Strong Children**: Because when kids are fed, they can learn, grow, and succeed.

## Numbers Behind Child Hunger 18,280

children in our area face hunger; that's **22.4% of kids**, higher than the Missouri average of 18.1%

## 8 of the top 10

counties with **the highest child hunger rates** in Missouri are in SEMO Food Bank's 16-county service area

## 40% plus

of students in our service area rely on the National School Lunch Program; in **12 of our 16 counties**, more than half qualify

## 84%

of food-insecure kids live in homes **with incomes below 185% of the federal poverty line**

Sources: Map the Meal Gap; Missouri Hunger Atlas



## Backpacks for Friday

Our largest direct-service program for children sends 1,100 students home with food for the weekend during the school year. Each bag is filled with nutritious, kid-friendly food and drinks. Here's a look at what is in the bags:

- **Cereals** (plus shelf-stable milk)
- **Fruits** (shelf-stable cups & pouches)
- **Snacks** (with filling peanut butter)
- **Meals** (ready to eat or easy to prepare)

**Plus milk & juice**

**When I open my backpack and see all the food, it makes me feel like someone cares about me.**

~ Flynn, 5<sup>th</sup> grader

## Sponsor a Child's Backpack

You can help ensure a child has food for the weekend. **A gift of \$200 provides one student with Backpacks for Friday** for the entire school year. Scan the QR code to sponsor a student today.



# Nourishing a Healthier Life

Twice each month, Tammy and her brother Billy pick up a box of fresh produce through Southeast Missouri Food Bank's Produce Prescription Program. In partnership with Mercy Southeast and VA hospitals in Cape Girardeau and Poplar Bluff, the program provides 10 to 15 pounds of fruits and vegetables, along with recipes and nutrition tips, to support individuals living with chronic illness or other health conditions.

The boxes help Tammy and Billy stretch their fixed incomes while keeping fresh food on the table.

***"We went to the store and looked at produce, and I said, 'We can't afford a lot of this,'" Tammy said.***

Both siblings retired after decades of work: Tammy as a CNA for 39 years and in a hospital kitchen, and Billy after 20 years with the Department of Corrections. Now, he continues to work full time for a local company.

The produce boxes have become a regular part of their routine. Tammy especially enjoys cooking the vegetables. "I like the squash and zucchini. I like the cabbage, too," she said. They've also tried recipes included with the boxes. "The potato patties are really good," she added.

The program also helps them stay healthy.

***"When I went to the doctor, my blood-work is starting to get better," Billy said.***

With reliable access to fresh produce, Tammy and Billy, and other program participants, are able to manage their health, maintain independence, and stretch their budgets.



## About the Produce Prescription Program

Southeast Missouri Food Bank's Produce Prescription Program, funded by the USDA's Grant Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP), provides fresh produce to participants who have been referred by a physician. They also receive recipes and nutrition tips to help support healthier eating habits. By offering consistent access to fresh produce, the program helps participants manage their health, stretch their budgets, and maintain independence, turning fresh food into a tool for wellness and better quality of life.