A LEGACY OF EFFECTIVE PROGRAMS GIVES HOPE FOR TODAY’S CHILDREN

It only takes a few minutes with Virgil and Glenda to feel inspired by their generosity and hospitality. Glenda’s optimism simply bubbles out of her, and Virgil’s calm, steady nature is endearing. But both of these South San Diego residents have so many experiences tucked away that give them a perspective we should all take to heart.

Virgil and Glenda have three adopted children, Jahari, Daniel, and Rebecca, who all came to them as foster kids because their mothers struggled with drug addiction. The 10-year-old, Jahari, also has autism. They’ve fostered many other children over the years, two at a time.

Glenda has two other daughters living in Arizona, now 32 and 35, from a previous relationship. Due to domestic violence and drug abuse in the home, they were evicted and Glenda found herself homeless with her two daughters. The three lived in their van, and Glenda did everything she could to make sure they ate and stayed in school. She sought assistance from Brother Benno’s, an Oceanside organization that partners with Feeding America San Diego (FASD). She also volunteered with the organization because it gave her the opportunity to wash the girls’ school clothes. Eventually, they were able to get back on their feet, and Glenda proudly shared, “They never missed a day at school, and they were in everything that school had to offer.”

Later, Glenda became a chef in the Marine Corps and still uses her cooking skills to make her kids’ favorite foods.

The house the family now lives in is the same house Virgil grew up in, which his dad built at a time when the view down the backyard slope looked very different. In the living room, running along the tops of the walls, is a string of photos of musicians. On a closer look, Virgil is also in several of the pictures, posing with the celebrities. He shared that he has had several odd jobs throughout his life, including moving, junk hauling and also photography. Virgil is proud of his work, and surely could tell quite the stories,
BY THE NUMBERS

45%

of clients sell or pawn personal items to make ends meet

$27.59 / HR

Estimated value of volunteer time in California in 2015

777,700

miles driven by FASD trucks since our founding in 2007

San Diego ranks 7th in U.S. metro areas with highest number of food insecure children

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE
by Kelcey Ellis, Director of Programs

Dear Friends,

Move over, William Shatner, there’s a new negotiator on the block. From conversations with school staff to auditing for food safety to figuring out how to provide more produce with our operations team, I spend much of my day negotiating between parties. Joking aside, my role as Director of Programs here at FASD is actually built around relationships. Relationships with partner agencies, schools and mobile pantry sites make food accessible in neighborhoods throughout the county. Relationships with our federal and state programs—CalFresh, Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)—relieve hunger beyond pantry distributions. Relationships with legislative offices and other members of the hunger-relief community bring opportunities to continually improve our service to San Diegans.

So, whether you want to call me a negotiator, a bridge-builder or a listening ear, I’m honored and privileged to work with the champions who are on the front lines, offering quality, nutritious food with dignity to improve the health and well-being of families in our community.

Kelcey Ellis

PASTOR COMBATS LOCAL FOOD DESERT

Rolland Slade, Senior Pastor at Meridian Baptist Church, has a calming presence. He speaks purposefully, never rushing his words. In his office, he has inspirational posters and certificates hanging on the walls. Meridian Baptist Church is a multi-lingual church where “at least three different languages are spoken—English, Vietnamese and Arabic. We have services for all of those,” said Pastor Slade.

As he speaks, it’s clear to see this pastor cherishes his community. “This is a very caring community, people have been here a long time.”

Pastor Slade has been working as a pastor for Meridian Baptist Church for twelve years and serves as the site coordinator for the new food distribution there twice a month. “The food distribution started in January of this year. We’re seven months into it,” said Pastor Slade.

What led him to launch this new program?

During his studies at the Resident Leadership Academy in El Cajon, he missed a class on food scarcity and was asked to make up for his absence. He surveyed community members, conducted research, took notes and found that he was right in the middle of a food desert. “I didn’t realize 2nd Street in El Cajon was a food desert. I thought there was plenty of food with all the fast food restaurants but Ralphs had closed, Food 4 Less was struggling and there’s one Sprouts. Places to get fresh, wholesome good food were very limited.”

He also saw a need at the local schools. An assistant track coach, he noticed that during spring break, athletes were passing out at practice. He realized many of these kids relied on free and reduced price meals and, when school was out, they didn’t always have access to meals during the day. He decided something had to be done.

So he talked with other people working in hunger-relief in San Diego and began the distribution at the church. Once it was in full swing, he saw how vital this simple decision was. Clients are able to access fresh fruits and vegetables they may not be able to afford otherwise. “Thank you so much for making the food available. You are not only physically touching folks by feeding them but emotionally touching folks—giving folks a sense of community.”

Volunteer prepares to hand out bread at distribution

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Pastor Slade sees the food as a real and tangible way to change lives and recognizes the gratitude his volunteers and clients feel towards those making the distribution possible. “Thank you so much for making the food available. You are not only physically touching folks by feeding them but emotionally touching folks—giving folks a sense of community.”
September is Hunger Action Month, when Feeding America San Diego and the national network of more than 200 food banks unite to urge our communities to take action to help end hunger. As individuals, organizations and government, we all have a role to play in getting food to those in need.

SPREAD THE WORD
An empty plate means an empty stomach. Raise awareness on social media by posting a picture of an empty plate with a hunger stat. Use #HungerActionMonth and tag Feeding America San Diego on Facebook or @FeedingSanDiego on Twitter and Instagram to join the conversation.

HUNGER IN SAN DIEGO
• 1 in 8 San Diegans face hunger.
• 1 in 5 San Diego children face hunger.
• Feeding America San Diego serves 60,000 people in need each week.

GO ORANGE. Show your support by wearing orange, adding the Hunger Action Month profile frame to your Facebook profile picture or sharing pictures of orange foods on social media.

GIVE
Get creative! Give a dollar for every time you hear or read about hunger during September. Is your company looking to get involved in the community? Host a food drive or sponsor an office volunteer shift. For every $1 donated, FASD can provide four meals to those in need right here in San Diego.

VOLUNTEER
Attend a special VOLUNTEER OPEN HOUSE on Saturday, September 17, at our distribution center. Learn more about volunteering, tour the facility and try several of our regular volunteer projects.

FEEDINGAMERICASD.ORG/HAM

VOLUNTEER CAPTURES BEST OF HUNGER-RELIEF
By Madeleine Hennessy, Communications Coordinator
Anna Pietrowski has a job that most people only dream of: a professional photographer who travels the world and calls picturesque San Diego home. But she wanted to add something unique to her resume.

About three years ago, Anna reached out to Feeding America San Diego after moving to the San Diego area, wanting to get involved in her new community, and offered her photography skills. Since then, she has captured several events and special volunteer shifts for FASD, allowing us to showcase those who make our work possible.

“I love it; Feeding America San Diego has so many different and diverse events. People are actually really excited to be there,” said Anna.

Growing up in Central California on a dairy farm, Anna was always asking her parents for disposable cameras to take pictures of her pets, family and friends but didn’t consider a career in photography.

It wasn’t until after she graduated DePaul University and lived abroad to teach English in Thailand that she thought more seriously about photography and dove in to explore her passion.

Three years later, she returned to the states completely sold. When Anna and her now husband later moved to San Diego, she decided to make photography her full-time career and began growing her business, Anna Katherine Photography. In addition to volunteering, she also used her skill to get involved in her new community by teaching digital photography classes at Pacific Ridge School.

Even with her busy schedule, she’s still drawn to come back and volunteer.

“People really care about this organization. It’s refreshing. And I believe the food is making a difference – simply the amount put together and dispersed. Even if it’s just one meal, its one meal someone didn’t have.”

And to others considering using their skills to volunteer?
Anna says, “My experience has been amazing. People are involved, concerned and proactive. I definitely recommend others to volunteer.”

Want to give back through skilled volunteer work? Watch our website for specific position postings or contact our volunteer department at volunteersd@feedingamericasd.org.

feedingamericasd.org/volunteer
but he simply points out the musicians and says, “I would show up to a concert four to five hours ahead of showtime. I was looking for openings and making friends with security... just had to have some finesse. They’ll pose for you if you ask nicely.”

The house isn’t the only thing Virgil carried on from his parents. They were also foster parents for 17 years and Virgil always thought, “I could do that, too.”

Glenda spent many years volunteering with St. Vincent De Paul. Today, Virgil and Glenda are involved at New Life Assembly and Headstart, a child development program through the Neighborhood House Association. FASD hosts a Mobile Pantry in partnership with Headstart, and this summer, FASD hosted a Kids Community Pantry at New Life Assembly once a month. The couple is a central piece of the community and volunteers their time at the distributions. “I’ve always given back. It’s different for me than it is for my husband—because I used to be homeless. I know what it’s like worrying about that next meal. And to pull yourself up from that and still volunteer to feed people and give and give and give, not worrying about who’s going to give to me. You just do. You give from your heart.”

The family still occasionally receives food from the same pantries they volunteer at to help stretch their budget, but between Glenda’s small business through Legal Shield and Virgil’s hauling and other odd jobs, they are making it work. These days, they are focused on raising three beautiful children who needed a home and, as Glenda put it, “leaving a legacy for them.” If it’s anything like the legacy Virgil’s parents left, their generosity will have ripple effects for generations to come.

UPCOMING EVENTS

ON THE GO

Hello Friends,

Have you heard of the Fruit and Veggie Fest? It’s an event at a Wrigley’s Supermarket in National City that happens every year to help people shopping for groceries make healthy choices.

This year, Feeding America San Diego interns were able to host a station with carrots, strawberries and fun nutrition activities.

Some local colleges and schools participated and the mayor of National City, Ron Morrison, even stopped by!

What a fun way to learn about nutrition! Events like these are also very important to help people in our community who might not have enough food to eat and don’t get all the nutrients they need.

Wheelz and the NUcrew
Join Feeding America San Diego and the 13,000 individuals who dedicate their time to help feed more than 480,000 children, families and seniors every year.

**DONATE**

Feeding more than 60,000 children, families and seniors every week, FASD relies on the support of individuals, corporations and community groups. Through our highly organized distribution model, every $1 donated turns into four meals.

**ADVOCATE**

In order to achieve a hunger-free and healthy community, FASD advocates on behalf of the food insecure on a federal, state and local level. Lend your voice to the fight against hunger and show your support for hunger-relief efforts on social media.