

Christians pack meals formulated to feed hungry children

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Volunteers wearing hairnets and gloves gather around tables, carefully scooping prescribed portions of vitamins, vegetables, soy and rice into plastic bags they carefully seal.

The names of the organizations vary—Feed My Starving Children, Meals 4 Multitudes, Heaven Sent Ministries, Kids Against Hunger and Meals from the Heartland, among others.

But the mission and approach of each is remarkably similar: Enlist volunteers of all ages to hand-pack meals formulated specifically to provide essential nutrients to children in extreme poverty. Then distribute those meals to children in need globally through partner organizations that supply the meals through churches, orphanages, schools, clinics and other established delivery points.

Feed My Starving Children

[Feed My Starving Children](#) has operated 30 years and works in 70 countries. The Minnesota-based non-profit Christian organization has earned the highest 4-star rating from [Charity Navigator](#) 12 years for its accountability, transparency and efficiency.

By working with established in-country partners, Feed My Starving Children was able to deliver 99.8 percent of the meals it shipped to their intended recipients last year. The organization also supports sustainable development through its MarketPlace program that markets the crafts

produced with artisan groups in communities around the globe that receive meal packets.

A mid-August MobilePack event in Dallas drew about 5,500 volunteers who packed 1.53 million meals—more than 77 tons of rice, nearly 26 tons of soy, close to 11,000 pounds of vitamin powder and 4,500 pounds of freeze-dried vegetables.

The event involved volunteer groups from Park Cities Baptist Church in Dallas along with multiple other congregations, a crew from Buckner International and representatives from many Dallas-area businesses.

‘Labor of love’

A few weeks earlier, Green Acres Baptist Church in Tyler sponsored a MobilePack event with a goal of preparing 100,000 meals. The 534 volunteers at the East Texas church surpassed that goal, packing 116,640 meals.

“The energy and enthusiasm of each shift was amazing,” Pastor David Dykes wrote in the church’s newsletter. “These meals will provide enough food to feed 320 hungry children for an entire year. Your labor of love will make a life-and-death difference in the lives of children who are hungry.”

Later, Dykes reported he received word from Feed My Starving Children saying 540 of the boxes the Tyler church packed had been shipped to Salesian Missions, a group that works primarily in schools, orphanages, clinics and churches in The Democratic Republic of Congo.

By next year, Feed My Starving Children plans to open a permanent packing site in the Dallas area—its eighth permanent location nationally. The organization hopes to engage 150,000 each year, with a goal of packing 50 million meals annually.

Last year, Feed My Starving Children engaged more than 1 million

volunteers across the United States and produced more than 284 million meals to feed more than 779,000 children daily for a year.

Meals 4 Multitudes

[Meals 4 Multitudes](#) shares a similar mission but works on a different scale and scope. Founded by Jim Palmer, missionary in residence at First Baptist Church in Athens, the organization has provided packaged meals to Haiti, Sierra Leone and to Syrian refugees to meet acute needs, but it has worked primarily in Ethiopia and Nicaragua.

The recently reconstituted ministry currently focuses specifically on Ethiopia, working through churches in The Ethiopia Aid Mission Network, a group that has been supported primarily by several Baptist churches in East Texas.

“That way we can say to the host church that from the time the meals are packed at their church ‘til the meals reach a hungry child, the meals are never out of our control,” Palmer said. “Our motto is: A church with 60 volunteers can pack 10,000 meals in two hours for \$3,000, including all costs to feed hungry children in the name of Christ.”

Palmer’s brother, Joel, a member of The Crossing Baptist Church in Mesquite, now directs Meals 4 Multitudes. He believes the organization occupies a unique niche.

“We will do smaller packing sessions than anybody else I know about,” he said, noting most organizations require a minimum 20,000 to 30,000 meals per session, with a significantly higher cost for the sponsoring church. “We want to make it affordable so a church of any size can participate.”

This is part of an ongoing series about how Christians respond to hunger and poverty. Substantive coverage of significant issues facing Texas Baptists is made possible in part by a grant from the Prichard Family

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