

# **CommonCall: Second Helpings meets needs in Lufkin**

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LUFKIN—An East Texas pastor's wife launched a community ministry to recover and repurpose food that otherwise would have gone to waste.

Aurelia Newton started [Second Helpings](#) to address food insecurity in Angelina County and reduce waste at Lufkin school campus cafeterias.

Three years ago, when her husband Mark became pastor of First Baptist Church in Lufkin, she became aware that a significant number of families and individuals in their community lacked reliable access to food.

So, she decided to do something about it, modeling a Lufkin-based ministry after the Campus Kitchen program at Baylor University, which recovers food from on-campus dining halls and transports it to Waco-area ministries that feed hungry people.

## **Reduce waste, feed hungry people**

In 2016, 10 volunteers from First Baptist Church in Lufkin started Second Helpings with prayer and a few aluminum sheet pans.

After visiting with the local school board and principals of local schools, Second Helpings received permission to collect prepared but unserved cafeteria food, such as pans of green beans or macaroni and cheese, and distribute it to families and groups in need.

Currently, about 110 volunteers from throughout the community pick up and deliver food. Second Helpings—now a not-for-profit organization separate from First Baptist Church, but still strongly supported by the

congregation—has provided about 140,000 meals through the local Salvation Army, Family Crisis Center and other agencies in Angelina County.

In addition, Aurelia Newton also has launched a backpack program to provide weekend meals for students who depend on free or reduced lunch programs on school days. It's a familiar ministry to her. In San Marcos, where her husband was pastor of First Baptist Church for 14 years, she was instrumental in launching the [School Fuel](#) program

“We work with school counselors to identify students who need weekend backpacks or family rations,” she said. “We want to be in every school in our area. One of our challenges is how to get groceries to every family in the community who need this resource.”

## **Volunteer-driven ministry**

Volunteers begin by picking up insulated boxes to transport food at a proper and safe temperature. They drive to a designated school campus and load food, which already has been placed in sealed disposable pans. Then they deliver the food to a recipient—either an agency or directly to a family.



Second Helpings volunteers begin by picking up insulated boxes to transport food at a proper and safe temperature. (Photo / Lisa Crow / [lisacrowphotography.smugmug.com](http://lisacrowphotography.smugmug.com) )

“Whatever we do, our group prays over the food and backpacks,” said Becca Chance, vice president of Second Helpings. “We have school board members and retired teachers. These people have been in the schools. ... They know the effects of children not having enough food.”

Research clearly links hunger to academic and behavioral problems. Students’ attention span lessens and retention decreases when they are hungry.

Second Helpings operates frugally. Volunteers cover their own expenses for transporting the food. Warehouse space is donated for non-perishable food storage. Three freezers and one refrigerator hold perishable items.

In addition to serving half-way houses, senior centers and other agencies, Second Helpings also seeks to meet the needs of people who otherwise fall through holes in social safety nets, such as a woman who had cancer,

two children at home and a husband who worked as her fulltime caregiver.

## **‘Making a difference in the lives of people’**

Lufkin’s Family Crisis Center wrote in a note to Newton: “We benefit in such a big way from the donations provided by Second Helpings. Our clients are provided three meals a day. To have a donation of nutritious prepared food for our clients is a huge time-saver for our staff. Also, we are a nonprofit making the reduction in the cost of grocery bill a true gift. Our partnership is amazing. We are very grateful for Second Helpings.”

Inez Tims with the Senior Living Apartments receives donations of food from Second Helpings. She wrote: “For our residents who do not have a home care provider or are able to function with day-to-day activities, Second Helpings is a Godsend by providing a hot balanced meal. Their service is truly appreciated, and we thank them for having and demonstrating a caring, giving and thoughtful spirit. Their actions are the example we all need to follow.”

Newton believes programs similar to Second Helpings could be replicated by churches throughout Texas.

“Second Helpings is making a difference in the lives of people in the San Marcos area,” she said. “Jesus tells his disciples in John 21:15-17 to ‘feed my sheep.’ We try to love people and be the hands and feet of Jesus.”

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