

The West Texas Food Bank Is A Rock Star. Here's Why, and How to Help Them.

Jacy Lewis | April 1, 2020 | 3:00PM

While we are all settling into a new normal, food banks have been hit by the perfect storm.

First they are seeing more and more people are in need because of lost income. Libby Campbell, Executive Director of the West Texas Food Bank, said in a statement that “the Permian Basin has been experiencing a slow down because of price wars overseas, and our need was already up.”

Second, because of the new social-distancing guidelines, they've been forced to redesign exactly *how* they are distributing food.

Finally, because of shelter-in-place orders and the contagious nature of the virus that causes COVID-19, the use of volunteers has been put on hold.

One of the first changes WTFB made was to implement a drive-thru distribution model, which allows for more social distancing while distributing food. To limit staff contact with the public, WTFB closed their Client Choice Pantry, and clients now receives a pre-made Pantry Box, filled with dry goods like rice, beans, and pasta, and canned goods like fruits and vegetables. Clients also receive fresh fruits and vegetables, as supply allows, and frozen items like ground beef or chicken.

Sounds simple enough, but WTFB slammed on the brakes and turned the truck around, much like a sand hauler on 358 heading to the oil patch. It was abrupt, and traffic may have blocked for a minute, but with this new method, they are serving more people in need than ever before.

Considering the scale of their operations – they distributed over 4,333,000 meals to the 19 counties they serve through a network of over 80 partner agencies and 133 feeding programs – this was no easy transition.

How can you help?

You may be asking what you can do to help while sheltering in place, and the best answer is they need your dollars. Because of the loss of thousands of pounds of donated product, WTFB is having to purchase the food being distributed.

Fortunately WTFB has tremendous purchasing power, which will make your dollar go much further.

“With the loss of donated product from the grocery stores, we are having to spend significantly more to purchase food,” said Campbell. “Grocery stores contributed about one third of the food we distribute, but they are selling out of their inventory, and this is leaving us short.”

To donate, visit wtxfoodbank.org/donate-money.

At this time WTFB is not accepting donations of food or other items. According to Campbell, “we believe the community is better served leaving extra food on the grocery shelves for your neighbors, so we are not asking the community to buy extra to donate.”

WTFB does offer an online “virtual food drive” which allows you to tap into their tremendous buying power. You can visit the virtual food drive here:

<https://wtfb.fenly.org/drive/west-texas-food-banks-virtual-food-drive/>

“We have had to make some incredibly hard decisions, but suspending food drives and closing down our volunteer program were the hardest decisions I’ve ever had to make,” said Campbell. “Our community is so giving, but times are hard, and not everyone can afford to send a little extra to the food bank. We will get through this crisis with the same grace and grit that West Texans always do. I know times are tough, and I know we are all unsure of what tomorrow brings, but I know West Texans are resilient and will come out on the other side of this crisis even better than before.”