



Fighting Hunger, Feeding Hope

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“I try to teach them that we need to pay it forward with helping other kids,” Cindy says



The temperature barely reached the 40s, but the baby didn't seem to mind. Bundled in his mother's arms, he grinned and wiggled, unaware of the cold.

Patient for his age of 14 months, the child barely made a sound as he waited in the food pantry line with his mother.

The pair stood outside for almost an hour in early February, braving an overcast and chilly day for a grocery cart packed with cereal, fruit, yogurt and meat.

For some, the end may not seem worth the means. But for this little guy and his mother, Cindy, waiting in the pantry line helps feed their family.

Cindy and her husband, Tom, have six children, ages 14 months through 16. They live in Jefferson County, where Tom works in the construction industry. In certain times of the year, his income is reduced due to the nature of his job.

“Sometimes I don't come to the pantry for six months, and then there are times when I come every month,” Cindy says.

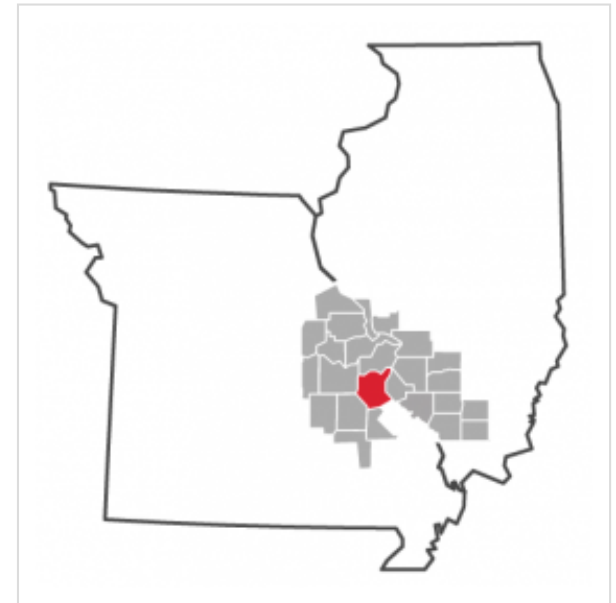
The family doesn't rely solely on the pantry for their food, but uses it to fill in the gaps between grocery store visits and supplement what they can afford to buy.

The canned fruit, yogurt and mixed items Cindy receives at the pantry are often a treat for the kids.

“They get excited,” Cindy says. “I make dishes up from what I get.”

The family is ineligible for SNAP benefits, commonly known as food stamps, and the children do not receive reduced school lunches.

Jefferson County



Living Faith Food Pantry in Festus, Mo., serves hundreds of families in need each month. They rely on donations from the St. Louis Area Foodbank, church members and the community.

“We don’t get any other assistance,” Cindy says.

Cindy and Tom are open with their children about where their food comes from, and encourage them to give back to the community whenever possible.

“I try to teach them that we need to pay it forward with helping other kids,” Cindy says. “We try to donate clothes that don’t fit us any more to foster families.”

When asked if she could tell all Americans one thing about families struggling to put food on the table, Cindy said “it’s not where you live or how much money you make.”

Cindy shared her story in February 2012 with Bethany Prange, communications coordinator at the St. Louis Area Foodbank. Her personal circumstances may have changed since the original interview.



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