

# Food Matters

## In one day their whole lives changed

No, they weren't dining with the Rockefellers, but life was just fine for Audrey Best and her family a year ago. She and her husband had just welcomed their second daughter; they both had been at their jobs for years and were able to cover their monthly bills. They felt secure even though news of the economy was bad. Little did they know how much their lives were going to change in May 2009.

Both Audrey and her husband lost their jobs on the same day. The news was unbelievable.

"We had both worked for the same restaurant chain for years," Audrey said. "I worked as a server and my husband is a cook. New owners came in and started closing some locations and making cuts. Just like that, we were out the door."

They filed for unemployment immediately, but the company contested their eligibility. With little in savings, it did not take long for the family to lose their apartment. They moved in with friends and after a couple of months won their fight for unemployment benefits. "It was a difficult time," said Audrey. "It was hard not to be angry."

Audrey's husband is still looking for work every week. The search has become more difficult since they lost their transportation. Audrey describes their dilemma. "One day our car just up and quit, and we don't have any money to get it fixed," she says. "Now he has to find work that he can get to by bus. It sure limits the opportunities."

Audrey has had to learn how to fend for her family in a world that was alien to her a year ago. "I applied for food stamps but we are always out of food before the end of the month," she explains. "I discovered the WestJax Outreach Center where I can get a bag of food each month to help us get through and there's a local flea market that gives away produce they can't sell. I've tried calling every agency and program that I think might help us, but mostly all I get is a busy signal."



Audrey understands the reason. "There are just so many people who need help," she said.

A program that may come through for Audrey and her family is one that will pay for her to get trained for a new job. "I am really hopeful that I can go into this program to learn how to work in a pharmacy," she said. "I have provided all the documentation and should hear soon if they will cover my tuition."

Recent reports on the news indicate that the economy is finally recovering and the recession will hopefully be behind us soon. But families like the Bests, who were hit hardest and lost the most, will have a long road before finally feeling secure again. ■

**"New owners came in and started closing some locations and making cuts. Just like that, we were out the door."**

## Letter from the executive director

Helen Keller once said: "the welfare of one is bound up in the welfare of all." I wonder today how many of us believe in this idea.

Too often we hear that those in need are "different from us," "lazier than I am," or "not willing to do what is necessary to help themselves." How many of us have thought or even said these words? My guess is a lot



of us. Somehow, we think, we would handle all of this differently if we were in the same spot. But would we? Could we? Perhaps the efforts made by those in need are already heroic – we don't recognize that, for many, paying the rent this month or providing a nutritious meal today is a tremendous achievement. If you're staring at a rent payment, medical bill, childcare cost, insurance for your car, \$3 per gallon gasoline

and a checkbook that is empty, it seems that making it through to tomorrow is a venture of faith and a sign of fortitude that many of us may know very little about.

So, how do Ms. Keller's words bind us together? If we believe in biblical terms, that which we do to the least of us we do also to our Lord. If we are of a different ilk, perhaps we think of the idea of karma which suggests that we all get back that which we invest (good, bad or indifferent).

However we may view it, if one of us is failing, all of us are failing. Whether we know it or not, we are all just one moment, one decision, one ill-fated circumstance from needing the help of someone else. For those who have extended their hand before, surely they are to find one waiting for them.

We all need each other to make it through; today, just today, find someone who needs help and bind yourself to them.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Thomas Mantz', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Thomas Mantz

Executive Director, Second Harvest North Florida

## How you can help

Fresh fruits and vegetables are vital to a healthy diet and Second Harvest is making it a priority to provide fresh foods to our agencies who serve families in need. Unfortunately, fresh produce is harder for us to find than canned or boxed goods. If you would like to help stock our refrigerators, here are some easy ways that you can lend a hand:



- If you have a summer garden and find yourself with excess produce, don't let it rot on the vine! Bring it to Second Harvest or call us to pick it up!
- When you plant your summer garden, plant an extra row designated for Second Harvest.
- If your kids get bored this summer, help them learn about community service by planting a garden for kids in need.
- When your citrus tree bears more fruit than you can pick, call us and we'll arrange to harvest the fruit and get it to families who will be thrilled to have it.
- Spread the word! Let others know how they can help fight hunger in their own community.

For more information or to arrange a tree harvest, contact Melanie Wright at 904.517.5562 or [MelanieW@WeNourishHope.org](mailto:MelanieW@WeNourishHope.org). ■



The mission of Second Harvest North Florida is to distribute food and grocery products to hungry people and to educate the public about the causes and possible solutions to problems of domestic hunger.



## You do not want to miss this year's FOODFIGHT!

June 10, 2010 marks the 20th anniversary of the Jacksonville FOODFIGHT and this marquee event is going to be better than ever! Each year 50 of the finest Jacksonville restaurants come together in a friendly competition to help "Take a bite out of hunger." This year's lineup includes fabulous favorites and exciting new entries. You and your friends will experience a marvelous evening enjoying great food, fine spirits, a silent

Tickets can be purchased online at [www.jacksonvillefoodfight.org](http://www.jacksonvillefoodfight.org) or at THE LOOP Pizza Grill area locations. Individual tickets are \$60 each, VIP tickets are \$85 each and Raffle tickets are \$100. VIP tickets include a private VIP reception with special food and drinks from



auction and a raffle that is more exciting than ever!

This year's raffle will feature two exciting prizes - a 2010 Harley-Davidson Dyna Super Glide motorcycle, provided by Adamec Harley-Davidson, and two club level

season tickets to the Jacksonville Jaguars. Only 400 raffle tickets will be sold for these prizes. Attendance at FOODFIGHT is NOT required to win the raffled prizes. Winners not in attendance will be notified the week following the event.

6-6:30 p.m. in a private seating area that is available throughout the event. Ticket packages and event sponsorships are also available.

All proceeds from the event will benefit families in our community who need our help. The FOODFIGHT is a tradition in Jacksonville that has provided almost six million meals to people in need in north Florida. Come enjoy a fabulous evening that will make a difference to so many.



**Thursday, June 10, 2010 - 6:30-9 p.m.**  
**Touchdown Club East**  
**Jacksonville Municipal Stadium**