Greetings-

I am writing this letter having just returned from a luncheon to honor Governor Mary Fallin for being a Hunger’s Hero. Her efforts through her Feeding Oklahoma Food Drives have resulted in millions of meals for hungry Oklahomans in the last three years. She is understandably very proud of our state’s strong economy, but is also committed not to leave the hungry behind in this prosperity. We are so grateful for her understanding of the issue of hunger, and her determination to bring it to the public’s attention and enlist their help.

There are many Hunger’s Heroes in our midst, all doing what they can to alleviate their neighbors struggle. You will read about a combined effort by Tulsa Sports Charities, Lift Up America, Tyson and TU which provided chicken to the hungry and funds to the Food Bank. The feature on Senior Servings in Nowata highlights a partnership between the Food Bank and the community to insure that the seniors in that community have the food they need to live out their years in good spirits and good health. Richard Tyler of Vian certainly fits the term Hunger’s Hero as he fights for a community wrestling with need by employing innovative technology and a very generous spirit.

By virtue of the fact you are receiving this letter, you most probably qualify as a Hunger’s Hero in your own right. You have made an effort to fight hunger, through giving your time, food or funds- or all three. It is the collective efforts of you, and all of the other heroes that surround us, which makes the work of the Food Bank possible. Your efforts provide meals and hope to those in need, and that certainly qualifies as heroic from my perspective!

On behalf of the Hungry,

Eileen Ryan Bradshaw, Executive Director

Like the newsletter? Good news, it only looks expensive!

Due to changes with our printer, we’re able to bring you this larger format, full-color newsletter at no additional cost to the Food Bank. You’ll receive “Food for Thought” six times throughout the year, to keep updated on all the latest news at the Food Bank.

If you want to stay updated between newsletters, become our Facebook fan (facebook.com/cfbeo), follow us on Twitter (twitter.com/foodbankok) or visit us online at www.cfbeo.org.

Vision

Food security, with dignity, for all Eastern Oklahomans.

Mission

Feed the hungry of Eastern Oklahoma through a network of Partner Programs and engage the communities in ending hunger.

Cover Photo: Left to right, Kent Matthes, Hornsby, Kiel Roling. Photo taken by Drew LaFollette.
Hunger’s Hero Luncheon
Honoring Governor Mary Fallin and the 2012 Feeding Oklahoma Food and Fund Drive

For the past three years, the issue of hunger has had the support of Oklahoma Governor Mary Fallin. Since her inauguration, her Feeding Oklahoma Food and Fund Drive has provided more than three million meals. With more than 675,000 Oklahomans struggling with hunger, including one in four children, Oklahoma ranks fourth in the country in food insecurity. Considering last year the state ranked first, tied with Arkansas, as the two hungriest states in the country, food and fund drives indeed provide a significant impact.

Governor Mary Fallin was in town on Thursday, October 25th to shine light on this year’s 2012 Feeding Oklahoma Food and Fund drive, which began on October 15th and runs through November 15th.

The event received the support of Presenting Sponsor, WPX Energy, along with eight additional sponsors including Optimus Industries, IBM, Williams, University of Tulsa Collins College of Business, Schnake Turnbo Frank | PR, Legacy Jet Center, Omni Air, Ackerman McQueen. Governor Fallin came to Tulsa to promote the Feeding Oklahoma Food and Fund Drive and spread the word that the need for food remains for fellow Oklahomans as we head into the holiday season.

"We want to bring awareness that we can do something about those that don't have enough food in our state," Governor Fallin said.

““We had an incredible response from the business community to support the Hunger Heroes lunch to provide meals for all Oklahomans,” says Marcia MacLeod, co-chair of this year’s Feeding Oklahoma campaign and senior vice president of Human Resources and Administration at WPX Energy. “While we exceeded our goal for the lunch, much work remains to ensure that all children and all Oklahomans have enough to eat.

“Hunger is not just a social issue, but an economic issue that affects every Oklahoman. We know that children who do not have enough eat do not perform well in school. Hunger affects their health, their academic performance and their self-esteem. When our children can’t succeed, our cities don’t succeed; our state won’t succeed and we don’t succeed. For these reasons, each of us has an obligation to take action.”

During a luncheon at the Doubletree Hotel Downtown, Governor Fallin was awarded the Sara J. Waggoner Hunger Awareness Award, which “formally recognizes an individual or organization for actions and efforts that not only brings attention to the daily lives of those struggling with hunger, but creates an awareness of food insecurity in Oklahoma that has a significant impact on our communities.”
On October 8th, the Community Food Bank of Eastern Oklahoma partnered with Tulsa Sports Charities, Inc., Lift Up America, University of Tulsa Athletics and Tyson Foods, Inc. to distribute more than 30,000 pounds of boneless chicken to 63 Food Bank Partner Programs. A donation this size of a high protein food like chicken is a rare occurrence for Food Bank Partner Programs. Forming partnerships such as the ones with these organizations is essential as the Food Bank continues to expand the diversity and availability of food to Partner Programs who are currently facing increases in those seeking assistance.

More than 59 pick-up trucks, flatbed trailers and refrigerated vehicles lined up on a mild October afternoon at the Donald W. Reynolds Center on the campus of the TU. Spirits were high and the enthusiasm and joy from Food Bank Partner Programs could not be contained on their faces and in their reactions. For some programs, delivery drivers were sent to claim their portion, while for other programs executive directors wanted to be on hand to personally observe the exciting process.

It took only 30 minutes for more than 60 TU athletes to unload 1,542 cases into vehicles of all sizes and shapes as individuals from Tulsa Sports Charities, the University of Tulsa, Tyson Foods, Inc. and representatives from the Food Bank looked on with amazement in the smoothness and efficiency of the event. But such an event does not take place without the generosity of key individuals.

Tulsa Sports Charities, a 501(c)3 organization, began in September 2002 as a chapter of the Jim Thorpe Association. After terminating their association in 2005, Tulsa Sports Charities liked the concept they started and chose to regroup with a new mission statement to raise a lot of money, have fun doing it and give it all away.

Since 2003 Tulsa Sports Charities has given away nearly $600,000 to charities, scholarships and sports programs for kids. But it was an association with Spencer Tillman, an All-American running back from the University of Oklahoma (1982-86) and current CBS sports analyst, who introduced Tulsa Sports Charities executive director Tommy Thompson to Lift Up America in 2011. Lift Up America has been partnering with Tyson Foods and Feeding America. For the past two years the Food Bank and our Partner Programs have benefited from this partnership with two substantial food donations.

“This year we thought it would be a good idea to connect the Lift Up America Tyson food give-away with the Food for Kids program,” said Tommy. “The University of Tulsa allowed us not only to utilize their campus and student athletes for the Tyson distribution, but also allowed us to promote the Food Bank’s Food for Kids Backpack Program at the University of Tulsa versus University of Texas El Paso football game.”

TU also held a campus-wide food and fund drive during the week leading up to the game where the equivalent of more than 10,200 meals was raised.
Looking at an Oklahoma state map sits Nowata, just a short 51 miles north of Tulsa. With all the charm and community spirit found in many eastern Oklahoma towns, Nowata is not only home to its population of more than 3,700 residents, it is also home to the Nowata Senior Citizens Center, a one-stop site for local seniors to gather for activities and meals. During only its second Senior Servings distribution to Nowata through the Community Food Bank of Eastern Oklahoma’s most recent program designed to serve the senior population, two recipients sat down to discuss the program’s impact on their lives.

For Linda and Connie, the Senior Citizens Center in Nowata is their home away from home. The two seniors, full of vigor and spry, first met more than a decade ago when they were both working at the WalMart in Bartlesville. After each moved to Nowata separately a few years ago to be closer to their adult children and their respective families, they recognized each other in town and recalled their days as fellow employees. Now they live only six houses apart, but it is the Senior Citizens Center where they come to visit and catch up on their families and what’s going on in their lives.

“We come here to just talk and visit with friends and neighbors,” said Linda. “On average, we come here three times a week and on occasion we volunteer and serve food. In Nowata, this is the place to be.”

For seniors ages 55 and older, the Senior Citizens Center offers more than meals. It is a place to play bingo, dominos, billiards and of course, socialize. But on this Monday afternoon in October, Linda, Connie and 38 other Nowata senior residents received a much-needed supply of food including a variety of shelf-stable food products specifically selected for senior nutritional needs, along with produce and bread items.

“This food is a blessing,” said Connie. “Social Security income is not enough and the cost of gasoline is killing me.”

“I am just so appreciative of the fruit,” added Linda. “It’s healthy and because this is the first of the month, I will now have a little more freedom to spend on other things I need. After the last visit by the Food Bank, I enjoyed the plums for my 3 p.m. snack. I was so astonished and I couldn’t believe we each get all of these items. Everything was so good in the sack.”

The Nowata Senior Citizen Center brings family and friends together for meals, camaraderie and support. On this day Linda’s mother-in-law stopped by to visit and receive the Food Bank’s Senior Servings distribution.

“I’m so thankful to have a place where I can get acquainted with people my own age,” said Linda.

In partnership with AARP Oklahoma and Drive to End Hunger, the Food Bank’s Senior Servings Program is in a six-month pilot phase. Seniors pre-register based on age and income restrictions to receive a sack of 12 food items along with produce and bread twice a month at specified locations in West Tulsa, Nowata and Pawhuska. If you are interested in volunteering your time to assist in distributing food to West Edison Plaza in Tulsa, please contact Kate Pelizzoni at 918-936-4512 or kpelizzoni@cfbeo.org.
For the Community Food Bank of Eastern Oklahoma’s 450 Partner Programs, fighting hunger often requires innovative ideas with real-time results. Some Partner Programs provide meals on-site for senior citizens, others provide emergency sacks of food for families; while for other programs, it is providing a backpack of food for children in their community. But for one program in Vian, Okla., an aquaponic site is expected to supply organic foods to a community who has faced tremendous odds. Aquaponics, a sustainable food production system, combines the raising of aquatic animals with cultivating plants in water in a symbiotic environment.

Richard Tyler of the Vian Peace Center Pantry hopes to provide 5 million pounds of vegetables and fish to help residents in Sequoyah County who are food insecure as well as offer organic, healthy food options that currently are not affordable. For Richard this is a labor of love, because five out of seven kids are currently going home hungry in towns such as Vian, Gore, Marble City and Sallisaw.

Over the past eight months, Vian and surrounding communities have experienced a loss of 13,000 jobs due to the closings of US Steel, Bean Trucking, Whirlpool, Riverside Furniture and the Blue Ribbon Downs racetrack. As a result, these communities are facing a rising number of residents with fewer and fewer employment opportunities.

But it is a blond-haired girl he met two years ago that led this decorative concrete company owner to dedicate his time and energy to helping those in his community who are struggling with hunger.

To this day, Richard, a single parent of a high school senior, recalls a chance meeting with this young girl that forever changed his life. After a long day of work, he promised his local church and teenage son he would help prepare hot dogs for a church event; and although bone-weary from a physically long day, he didn’t want to disappoint. Near the end of the event, the girl approached Richard where he offered her a hot dog. She quietly said yes, but only if he would help her three siblings first. You see, she told Richard she and her family hadn’t eaten since Wednesday and it was now Saturday evening. All told, the family of two adults and four children ate 50 hot dogs.

“This family simply didn’t know how to ask for help, but it was then I realized I couldn’t stand by and do nothing,” said Richard.

For Richard, helping others is nothing new. Last year, he reflects on how close he was to losing his house, truck and business so everyone around him could celebrate Christmas. During this time, he and his church, the Vian Peace Center, were in the process of opening an emergency pantry. Upon applying to the Food Bank in October of 2011, Richard and his church began by assisting 69 families. Now one year later, the Vian Peace Center Pantry served 400 households, totaling 1,685 people last month alone. This is a staggering number when you consider Richard also makes sure an additional 450 kids receive a hot meal on Wednesday nights at their youth services as well as he delivers 38 backpacks to Vian Elementary School every week during the school year. These are more than numbers to Richard; they are his fellow neighbors who would otherwise not know where their next meal would come.

“It’s a shame on one hand, but a blessing we have been able to help so many people here in this community,” said Richard. “It’s overwhelming when you know Sequoyah County has the highest poverty and unemployment rates in the state and ranks the third highest county in the nation, but we just need to do it.”

So the situation in Vian seems ripe for plans to feature an aquaponics system that will grow safe, healthy and affordable food. This method of growing crops and fish together in a re-circulating system will offer a sustainable food source for decades to come.

The prototype is built and the plan is to start in January and begin producing food no later than April. At full force, Richard hopes to be able to provide food to supplement the local school system so they can provide fresh vegetables and fish to area students who might otherwise not have access to fresh foods.

“With the economy here, I can’t find all of the necessary resources, but we believe this cutting-edge system can make a real difference in the lives of our residents,” said Richard.
Tax Law Changes and Your Plan – Will You be Ready in 2013?

Two major issues present potential impacts that will affect your tax rate and estate in 2013. The automatic tax increases and automatic spending cuts. The tax increases refer to the expiration of the Bush-era tax cuts enacted in 2001 and 2003. These tax increases change the new lowest income tax from 10% to 15% and a new high from 35% to 39.6% as of January 1, 2013. The spending cuts refer to the general cut in government spending if Congress cannot reach a budget deficit deal by the end of 2012.

In addition to the Bush tax cuts expiring, capital gains, dividends, the gift and estate tax, and the generation-skipping tax exemptions will change significantly in 2013. The top estate tax rate also increases from 35 percent to 55 percent. The basic exclusion amount – the amount you can own before your estate is subject to estate taxes – will be lowered from the current $5.12 million in 2012 to $1 million in 2013. This means that for every dollar you own more than the $1 million exemption, up to 55 percent will be subject to federal estate taxes upon your death.

Also set to expire in 2013 are the phase-out of the personal exemption and itemized deductions, as well as the return of the marriage penalty. This means:

If your income exceeds $265,000 for married filers or $175,000 for single filers, your personal exemption ($3,800 for 2012) will be eliminated.

For the same households referred to above, up to 80% of taxpayer’s charitable deductions, mortgage interest, state and local income taxes, and real estate taxes will be eliminated.

In 2013, a single filer will have a larger standard deduction compared to joint filers whose deduction will be 33% lower; and the tax brackets contract for joint filers at the two lower rates. This increases taxes paid for married couples compared to the two same people who live together but are not married. What does this mean for you?

Now is the time to get your “financial house” in order. It may be time to have your current plans reviewed to make sure they will still meet your needs in light of the potential changes or to have a plan created that addresses these issues. The Community Food Bank of Eastern Oklahoma provides a free, confidential service to help in this process. There is no cost or obligation to talk with someone from our office. Please call Amy Cannon 918-936-4514, acannon@cfbeo.org.

The Community Food Bank of Eastern Oklahoma has been selected to participate in a Planned Giving Challenge Grant program. This means that for every $5 in planned gifts that the Food Bank raises (through 12/31/13), we will receive $1 of current operating funding from Tulsa Community Foundation. A gift through your estate would not only be a gift today, but also in the future.

Set the Table Tulsa is a challenge to Tulsans during the month of November to eat together at least four times a week. Set the Table Tulsa is presented by Global Gardens with support from the Community Food Bank of Eastern Oklahoma, The Tulsa City-County Library and TulsaKids magazine. Research shows eating together several times a week has important benefits for individuals and families. We want to see what happens when there is a community wide effort to Set the Table. To learn more or get involved contact SetTheTableTulsa@global-gardens.org

Find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/setthetabletulsa

Visit the blog to follow others who are taking the challenge! www.setthetabletulsa.wordpress.com

Ways you can get involved:
• Commit to take the challenge!
• Connect with us online through Facebook and our blog. Tag Instagram photos, #SetTheTableTulsa.
• Contribute to the blog. Share your stories during November - challenges and success! If you’d like to be a contributor contact us today at SetTheTableTulsa@global-gardens.org
• Pick up and share the October and November issues of TulsaKids Magazine which feature Set The Table Tulsa!

Ideas for the challenge:
• Start meal planning - making time to eat together is easier when you've planned in advance.
• Invite friends and family to join you this month and trade off cooking duties.
• Include children in cooking, dinner preparations and mealtime activities.
• Make dinner time for your family a no-tech zone to minimize interruptions and maximize conversation.
Faces around the Food Bank

See more Food Bank photos on

flickr

www.flickr.com/communityfoodbank

View the fundraising update, food and fund drive highlights and food distribution by county at www.cfb eo.org.