

The Bandera PROPHEET

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Silver Sage expands food distribution sites in Bandera County

By Art Crawford
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The level of food insecure households has risen significantly during the Covid-19 pandemic in Bandera County. New data suggest that 27 percent or one in four households currently suffer from some form of food insecurity.

Prior to Covid-19, levels of hunger and inadequate food were improving in Texas and Bandera County. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, the national average for food insecurity levels peaked at roughly 15 percent in 2011. That level gradually declined to a 20-year low of 10.5 percent in 2019, according to Texas A&M AgriLife.

To put this data in perspective, in 2019 The Silver Sage Meals on Wheels program delivered 37,543 meals throughout Bandera County, and in 2020 we delivered 73,133 meals. During 2019 the Silver Sage facilitated food distributions that served 3091 Bandera County residents. 2020 saw those distribution numbers grow to 14,394 people receiving food assistance from these events.

Current census data reports Bandera County population is 23,112 residents. December 2020 distributions totaled 2794 individuals (approximately 12 percent) receiving food assistance to help alleviate food insecurity.

The Silver Sage has expanded its partnership with The San Antonio Food Bank so that more services and food distributions will be available throughout Bandera County.

The new programs will make it easier for residents to access food assistance in the area they live. It has been acknowledged that transportation to a single event in Bandera is an issue for many residents

of Lakehills and Medina. This expansion will allow residents to decide which distribution they want to attend.

This newest collaboration will bring the TEFAP Pop Up Food Distribution to Lakehills and Medina on the fourth Tuesday of every month through June. TEFAP is The Emergency Food Assistance Program, administered by the Texas Department of Agriculture. Lakehills area residents will be served from 9 – 11 a.m., on Tuesday, Jan. 26, at the Lakehills Civic Center. The Medina area will be served from 1 – 3 p.m., at the Medina Volunteer Fire Dept. The next dates will be Feb. 23, March 23, April 27, May 25 and June 22 at the same locations and same times.

For all others, we will continue our regular food distributions at Mansfield Park on the fourth Wednesday of every month through June. The dates are Jan. 27, Feb. 24, March 24, April 28, May 26 and June 23. These distributions all run 10 a.m. to noon. There is no need to call and pre-register for these events.

During our recent trial run in Lakehills we served 173 households with 375 individuals as well as 207 households with 473 individuals in Medina. Participants received hams or shrimp, gallons of milk, dozen eggs, potatoes, apples, oranges, and more.

A few new rules apply to these TEFAP distributions.

Each family may only pick up food for themselves and one other family if we have the second family listed and you are their proxy. In practical terms this means you cannot just drive up and say you want to pick up for you and your neighbor and three others. You will only be allowed to pick up for yourself and one other. Please do not ask us to bend this rule and jeopardize the entire program for all those in the county that need it. There will be no staff or coordinated deliveries. If you need this food distribution you must pick it up yourself or have someone that can bring your information (proxy) and pick it up for you.

There are three ways to qualify for this food. 1. Have you been affected in any way by Covid-19. If yes, you qualify. 2. Income guidelines posted on our website. Or 3. Are you receiving SNAP, TANF, SSI, NSLP, or Medicaid? If yes, you qualify.

We will be filling out new forms this year. Mostly demographic information like date of birth, male or female, veteran status, and ethnicity. Why do we need this information? This how we get grants to continue to provide this service to the residents of Bandera County. We need to tell our funders who we are serving. Some foundations only give grants to help veterans, so we need to prove we are helping veterans. Some foundations only give grants to help children. So, we need to show how many children are receiving this food. Some funders only fund programs for senior citizens. So, we need to show how many senior citizens we are serving. Without this current data, it is impossible receive adequate funding. Without the funding we could not continue the distributions.

If you were at any of the distributions in December and filled out your form, you **WILL NOT** need to fill it out again.

The Silver Sage staff and amazing volunteers all look forward to seeing you and serving you at these events.

These distributions are an immense amount of work for The Silver Sage and SAFB staff as well so many wonderful volunteers. All we ask in return is that you be patient, kind, and courteous to our volunteers. They do not have to be there. Just a smile and a thank you makes it all worthwhile for them.

Please be considerate and wear your mask while you are interacting with our staff and volunteers.

If you wish to contact The Silver Sage, we are located at 803 Buck Creek Drive in Bandera, Texas. Our phone number is 830-796-4969. Or should you wish to donate to help with expenses for these distributions you will find a Donate Now button on our website at www.silversage.org.