

## Childhood Hunger Initiative

Second Harvest's greatest focus in 2007 is its Childhood Hunger Initiative. Our goals include increasing meal service with our [Kids Cafe](#) Program, expanding the Kids Cafe Program to serve more rural communities, increasing food distribution to children in our rural counties with our Mobile Pantry Program, and increasing local distribution to serve more agencies that provide services for children. Currently, ASHCG operates a total of 28 Kids Cafes serving over 1,800 children. Four of our Savannah sites are located within or close to public housing, with poverty rates as high as 78%. The other 18 sites that are located in downtown Savannah operate in areas designated as poverty tracts, where at least 25% of the population lives under the poverty level. ASHCG has partnered with the Boys & Girls Club, the Salvation Army, the City of Savannah's Recreation and Leisure Services, [The Housing Authority of Savannah](#), local religious organizations, 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC, and the [Savannah-Chatham School Board](#) to provide meals to children in after school programs. In addition, ASHCG has opened a site at a school in Garden City, Georgia, where 65% of the children are eligible for free or reduced lunches, and Port Wentworth, Georgia, where 74% of the children are eligible for free or reduced lunches. ASHCG operates four Kids Cafes in counties outside of Chatham. Two are located in public housing in Hinesville, Georgia (Liberty County), with a poverty rate of 14.8%. Two were opened in January of 2007 by the Boys & Girls Club of Toombs County: one in Vidalia City, with a poverty rate of 19.9%, and a second in Lyons City, with a poverty rate of 37.1%. In addition to expansion of its Kids Cafe Program, ASHCG will combat childhood hunger with its [Mobile Pantry Program](#). The food for the mobile pantry program will consist of a combination of donated and salvage goods, as well as fresh produce. These products are received at the main distribution center and must be inspected and sorted. The non-perishable and produce items are then packed onto a refrigerated delivery truck and transported to a rural county drop site. ASHCG will partner with local agencies in the rural communities to insure that food is provided to eligible families in need. These agencies will include food pantries, the Division of Family and Children Services, public housing agencies, and local churches. In addition, the partner agencies will organize volunteers to assist with distribution of food once it is delivered to the drop sites. In 2007, ASHCG will deliver one full truckload, or approximately 15,000 pounds, of food to each of its rural counties. Food is a basic need that insures children have better health, improved academic performance, and an overall sense of well-being. The following are some statistics in support of ending childhood hunger:

- "Analysis of government data reveals major differences in the intakes of poor and non-poor children for ten out of sixteen nutrients (food energy calories, folate, iron, magnesium, thiamin, vitamin A, vitamin B6, vitamin C, vitamin E, and zinc). Moreover, these differences in intakes appear for nutrients considered crucial to sound health and normal developments."[\[1\]](#)
- "The proportion of poor children with substandard intakes of some nutrients (eg., vitamin A and magnesium) is nearly six times as large as for non-poor children."[\[2\]](#)
- "Poor children are at risk of nutrient deficiencies that can lead to serious health problems, including impaired cognitive development, growth failure, physical weakness, anemia and stunting. Several of these problems can lead to irreparable damage to young children."[\[3\]](#)
- "Research shows that preschool and school-age children who experience severe hunger have higher levels of chronic illness, anxiety and depression, and behavior problems than children who do not experience hunger."[\[4\]](#)

- “Children from food insecure and hungry homes have an overall poorer health status. These children also are more susceptible to some illnesses and infections, more likely to be hospitalized, and more susceptible to low-level complaints like colds, sore throats, and stomach aches.”[\[5\]](#)

In Chatham County alone, 12,586 children under the age of 18 live below the poverty level. In the 21-county service area reached by ASHCG, 41,641 children under the age of 18 live below the poverty level. The poverty level for a family of four in 2007 is a mere \$20,650. This suggests that many more families are food insecure than poverty levels indicate. ASHCG is committed to ending childhood hunger in our communities with an increase in meals served at Kids Cafes from 140,401 in 2006 to 178,830 in 2007. Additionally, ASHCG will distribute 300,000 pounds of food to families in need with its Mobile Pantry Program in 2007. Lastly, the Childhood Hunger Initiative will focus local efforts on recruiting agencies that serve children and increasing overall distribution to 6 million pounds of food.

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[\[1\]America’s Second Harvest, The Nations Food Bank Network.](#)[\[2\]America’s Second Harvest, The Nations Food Bank Network.](#)[\[3\]America’s Second Harvest, The Nations Food Bank Network.](#)

[\[4\]Pediatrics, Vol. 110 No. 4, October 2002.](#)

[\[5\]Children’s Defense Fund, \*Over 13 Million Children Face Food Insecurity. June 2, 2005.\*](#)