ach wednesday, rain or shine, blazing 90-degree heat or freezing February cold, a truck with a Society of St. Andrew volunteer behind the wheel makes a 60-mile round trip from a distribution center in Monroe, NC to refugee Support Service in east Charlotte. Those dedicated drivers do it because they know that no matter what the weather, approximately 60 families will be there for ESL classes, help with medical appointments and insurance forms, and classes on American culture. And they’ll also line up to help unload the truck filled with up to 2,000 pounds of donated produce.

It’s a successful partnership that has worked for more than five years, since March 2010. The refugee populations have changed and grown over the years – now, along with montagnards from the central Vietnamese Highlands, the center also sees bhutanese-Nepalis, many of whom are Hindu and persecuted by the buddhist bhutanese government, burmese who have escaped their nation’s military regime and spent time in thai refugee camps, and a few Africans and Afghans.

Working with a distributor for a local grocery chain, Society of St. Andrew pick a load of produce each week. Some is graded out because of size or shape. Some is rejected simply because a supplier sent more than the store wanted. All of it is good to eat.

Our vegetables aren’t always an easy fit for the diverse refugee communities, but they are game to

Refugees gather for ESL classes, medical appointments, help with American culture – and weekly food assistance from SoSA.

Continued – see SoSA Delivers Food to Refugees on page 5

by Jean blish Siers*
Executive Director’s Report
By Steven M. Waldmann, Executive Director

Jackie Usey, 1965-2015

I don’t often write about our staff because we stay focused on those we serve and all the people who make this ministry possible. But I’ll make an exception and tell you about someone who is just pretty special.

Since 2009, Jackie Usey was our Gleaning Program Coordinator in Mississippi. In March of last year, Jackie was diagnosed with a particularly bad form of leukemia. On December 27th, Jackie finished that battle and went on to a far better place.

Mississippi is a wonderful state, but the need there is so great that it usually ranks worst in the percentage of its population living in poverty. Like most people who come to SoSA, Jackie had never done work like this before. But when she interviewed for the position, I knew she was the right person for the job. She was “called” to do it, even if she didn’t fully recognize it as a calling.

“Jackie was just plain fun to be around”

Her wonderful, compassionate heart, combined with her energy and joy in life, ensured she would succeed. Those qualities also made her a favorite of everyone she met, and in this ministry, you meet a lot of unique people. Jackie was just plain fun to be around, as anyone who knew her could say. That was certainly the case among the rest of the staff at SoSA – Jackie made every staff gathering fun.

Year-End Statistics for 2015

Fresh food saved and donated to feed the hungry:

Gleaned Produce..................................16,581,894 lbs
Potato & Produce Project.........................11,608,250 lbs
Events...............................................4,825
Volunteers...........................................32,710

Total Historical Pounds 772 Million
Total Historical Servings 2.3 Billion

Recent Donations

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Bobby Arehart
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Gary Perry
Donald Petty
The marriage of Sarah Barton and Andrew Phillips
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Michael Warren, M.D.
Joyce Faye White
Food Takes a Bite Out of Crime in a Depressed Community

By Michael Binger*

Hunger has many side-effects in a community, including loss of hope, depression, desperation, and crime. In working with local feeding agencies, the Society of St. Andrew seeks to address all these concerns.

East Greensboro, North Carolina is a community where more than one-fourth of the households experience hunger sometime during the year. The week before Christmas, a potato distributor donated several truckloads of white and russet potatoes - as long as they could be distributed before the holiday. SoSA reached out to Pastor Calvin Foster, Jr. of Genesis Baptist Church in East Greensboro, and to Louise Rucker, who runs the George Rucker Sr. Food Drive Ministry. They quickly arranged a potato drop to help feed their neighbors.

In the previous 2 months, more than 140 crimes had been committed within a mile of the church. Foster and Rucker see feeding their neighbors as part of crime prevention, “If we can get food to families, I think that will lessen some of the crime because people will have food on the table.”

At SoSA, we believe all people have intrinsic value and are worthy of the security of knowing where their next meal is coming from. These potatoes, as with all the food we share, offer hope and security to people in need. And along the way, it also works to make the communities receiving it better and safer places.

If we can get food to families, I think that will lessen some of the crime because people will have food on the table.

The morning of the food distribution, Pastor Foster said: “It’s ironic that we had a (police and community) meeting here last night that was about not-so-positive things going on in the community... then to be able to be here again this morning talking about what is positive here in the community.”

Many thousands of people have been fed because of the heart, spirit, hands, and feet of Jackie Usey. And it is important to remember that Jackie, and all the staff of SoSA, are able to accomplish what we do only because of the caring and support of all our partners in this amazing ministry. Your support is a precious resource to some very dedicated people in our common fight against hunger.

* Michael Binger is the Regional Director of our North Carolina office.
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Milestone in Alabama
More than 1 Million Pounds in 2015
We’re very happy to announce that our regional office in Alabama saved and delivered more than one million pounds of food in 2015. Amounts have climbed steadily since the office was established in 2005, and exceeding one million pounds is due to the farmers, volunteers, donors, and our partner churches and organizations. A nod is due to sweet potato farmers Steve and Connie Penry in Daphne, and Clark Haynes in Cullman, for more than 150,000 pound each. Thanks also to Regional Director Mark Mangum, Program Coordinator Josh Howard, and all our gleaning coordinators.

74 year-old Leotha Woodson is the founder of a charity organization known as Noah’s Ark. Every Saturday, Woodson offers a truckload of donated food to hungry residents living in northeast Washington, D.C.

Woodson is often provided fresh food by Society of St. Andrew for his deliveries into the nation’s capitol. One day in the late fall, a group of high school students, church groups, and families gleaned for two hours in the Marker-Miller Orchard in Winchester, VA. Elderly volunteers brushed dirt from fallen apples, while young boys triumphantly knocked apples out of trees using sticks.

The majority of the apples gleaned - a harvest of 18,000 pounds, or roughly 54,000 apples, went into Woodson’s truck. The remaining fruit went to other local food pantries.

Continued — see Apples to DC on page 5

Brother Woodson is a familiar sight at SoSA events, loading food for the homeless and needy in Washington, DC.
SoSA Delivers Food to Refugees - continued from page 1

try anything. Marci Mroz, the RSS volunteer who oversees the weekly food distribution, says it’s fun to see the folks, some in the country only a couple weeks, try to figure out what they’re getting. Marci researches unfamiliar produce (What to do with chayote? What about rhubarb?) and passes that along to clients. Marci gets a kick out of their openness to new things. “Often they will just take a big old bite out of something to figure out what it is and if it should be eaten raw or if it needs to be cooked.”

The partnership depends on the generosity of our distributor and on the dedication of our SoSA truck drivers. Four drivers take primary responsibility for the distribution, one for each Wednesday of the month. They seldom miss a day, scheduling doctor appointments and even vacations around “their week” when they pick up hundreds of pounds of bok choi, persimmons, chayote, yucca, radishes, and whatever else our wonderful distributor can share. Occasionally they’ll get the all-time favorite donation: ginger!

In October, a tilapia farm in West Charlotte donated a ton of live tilapia to SoSA. Rachel Humphries, Director of Refugee Support Services, loaded her truck with coolers on Tuesday night, drove to the “farm” on Wednesday morning, and surprised the refugees with about 500 pounds of still flopping fish!

Fish are not as common as potatoes and tomatoes in a SoSA delivery, and these tilapia were very much appreciated by the refugee community.

We all look forward to what food adventures the next five years bring!

*Jean Blish Siers is SoSA’s Charlotte Area Gleaning Coordinator.

Even the youngsters get involved in carrying produce from the weekly SoSA delivery.

These immigrants are learning a new language, a new culture, and all about new foods, with the help of many people in the Charlotte, North Carolina area.
Quarterly REPORT
Endhunger.org

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