Kenzie Didn’t Wait to Make a Difference

Some kids dream about the great things they might do when they grow up. 13-year-old Mackenzie Hinson just jumped in and started doing it. Her creation, the Make a Difference Food Pantry, serves 1,200 clients a month, providing a full range of food, including fruits and vegetables from Society of St. Andrew. Kenzie learned about hunger in Wayne County, North Carolina when she worked on a project in 4-H. Concerned about the 1-in-5 residents of the county who sometimes go hungry, she determined to do something to help them.

In April 2015, she opened her food pantry in a church basement, but quickly needed more space and more facilities. With support from friends, family, and corporations including Harris Teeter and Food Lion, she opened a storefront in South Goldsboro where clients are served.

Gracie Hatch, Charlie Hatch, and Kenzie Hinson at the Make a Difference Food Pantry. After a morning of gleaning almost 1,000 pounds of corn with elementary school children, they brought the corn to the pantry to bag it up for the Thursday distribution. Society of St. Andrew contributes produce to this pantry throughout the growing season.

Photo by Michael Binger

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SoSA Inspires Action

As this ministry focuses on preventing food waste and feeding the hungry, a lot of other things happen in the process. Nutrition is improved, the environment is helped, and just as important, people are inspired.

If you’ve been a reader of this newsletter for some time, you have noticed occasional stories of how people, young and old, have been inspired to action by their involvement in SoSA programs. This inspiration takes many forms, and is an important outcome of this effective and successful ministry.

You can read examples of inspired action in this edition of our newsletter. Action coming from SoSA-related inspiration comes in big ways and small, but it is always vital, and serves to help others living in poverty. Inspiration is usually the source of wonderful creativity, and that is the case with SoSA.

I remember a group of youth who started a gleaning network in Tidewater, Virginia back in 1987 after attending one of SoSA’s Harvest of Hope retreats. That gleaning network is still active today and is part of SoSA. Harvest of Hope retreats have resulted in hundreds of post-event initiatives by both youth and adult participants. In fact, helping participants get involved in their own communities is a critical part of every Harvest of Hope event.

Creative fundraising has taken place, new farmers have participated, gleaning efforts have been started, devotions have been written, careers have been changed, and even books have been written - all because of the impact SoSA programs have had on individuals. And of course, millions have been fed.

Whether through the Potato & Produce Project, Harvest of Hope, or the Gleaning Network, SoSA programs inspire others to love and help others “... in deed and in truth.” That inspiration is manifested in countless ways, and represents a huge bonus, as we continue to Glean America’s Fields and Feed America’s Hungry.
In the fall of 2014, 13-year-old Sarah Pope attended a Harvest of Hope gleaning retreat with her youth group. She and other youth from Coats and Erwin United Methodist Churches in North Carolina traveled to Virginia to glean turnips, and to learn about hunger in America. As it has for many others, the experience created a vision of service.

Back home in Coats, she spoke with her parents, John and Leslie Pope, about using some of their land to grow crops to give away to the needy through Society of St. Andrew. The Papes own and run a poultry and tobacco farm, and they agreed they could set aside some land for corn and potatoes.

The next summer, the family invited SoSA area coordinator Tricia Lounsberry to bring volunteers to their farm and harvest the new fields of produce. In several trips, they dug more than 1,500 pounds of potatoes and picked almost 8,000 pounds of corn. Again, this year, SoSA is bringing volunteers to the Pope farm to collect truckloads of corn to distribute at the Coats UMC food pantry and through feeding agencies in surrounding counties.

John Pope says it can be hard to get away from the farm to be in mission to serve others, but his daughter’s request has made it possible for the family to be in mission to the needy using the resources they already have at home... a win-win, he says. Sarah says she is glad there is something they can do that makes a real difference in the lives of poor and hungry people.

Sarah Pope attended a Harvest of Hope event in 2014. Her family now feeds thousands through Society of St. Andrew.

SoSA volunteers with potatoes they dug and bagged on the Pope farm. The corn behind them will be picked later. Farmer John Pope is in the white shirt.
Doug Rauch, the former head of the Trader Joe's grocery store chain, still thinks about food all day, every day. But now he's thinking about food that he couldn't sell when he worked at Trader Joe's - food that's not pretty enough to sell at the grocery store - the same food that the Society of St. Andrew thinks about every day. Doug has pioneered a new kind of grocery store in Boston, called the Daily Table, that sells fresh and prepared foods at a steep discount, because the ingredients are imperfect or otherwise considered unmarketable.

Our approaches to doing something about this kind of food are different, and our scale these days is vastly different (Society of St. Andrew moves a lot more food!) but Rauch says some important things that we'd do well to hear.

Doug challenges our language. He asks, “When you shop at Marshall’s, TJ Maxx, or Plato’s Closet, what are you buying? Is it clothing waste?” He's pretty clear about this. “No one wants to eat food waste!”

I don’t know that Doug has found the right phrase for imperfect and unmarketable food yet, but he’s convinced me that “food waste” is the wrong one to use when talking about the millions of pounds of fresh, healthy, nourishing, and delicious fruits and vegetables that the Society of St. Andrew gleans or transports and distributes each year.

I’m leaning toward “unsold,” “available,” or maybe even “awesome.” What do you think? 🤔

* Lynette Johnson is SoSA’s Director of Church Relations. She recently participated in the Reduce & Recover: Save Food for People conference at Harvard Law School, sponsored by the Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic. She had the opportunity to meet and talk with Mr. Rauch there.
THANK YOU
to the following
FOUNDATIONS & CORPORATIONS
that donated $1,000+ in the second quarter:

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- Orlando Sentinel Family Fund ........................... Orlando, FL
- Penry Farms Inc. .............................................. Daphne, AL
- Selby & Richard McRae Foundation .................... Jackson, MS
- Southeast Produce Council ............................... Millen, GA
- Walmart Foundation ....................................... Bentonville, AR

The pantry received a big boost recently with the donation of $20,000 and a commercial freezer from Tyson’s Foods. With that support and continued fund-raisers, she can afford the storefront rental and utilities. And with the food pantry in place, other ongoing needs can be addressed.

Asked how she believed she could launch such an endeavor, Kenzie replied, “Faith.” To that, she has added a healthy dose of caring, energy, and hard work. Society of St. Andrew is so pleased to provide fresh produce to Kenzie’s distributions to the needy in Wayne County.

The Make a Difference Food Pantry also operates a mobile food program for senior citizens. On Wednesdays, volunteers prepare the food, and on Thursdays, it is delivered to three senior citizen complexes in Mt. Olive.

This summer, Kenzie’s Kids Summer Café utilizes volunteers to cook and prepare food at the local Salvation Army kitchen. That food is then delivered on Fridays to three area Boys & Girls Clubs and distributed to 170 youngsters from families in need. This summer program is an extension of the Backpack Buddies program Kenzie runs throughout the school year. Volunteers from her food pantry box up food for four local schools where children in qualified families bring it home to assist their families in having meals over the weekend.

Mobilize Your Congregation During Hunger Action Month in September

September is Hunger Action Month - a great time for your members to help prevent hunger in the U.S. SoSA provides resources to help you raise the issue and to put your faith into action.

- Go to EndHunger.org/ham for resources. Download the calendar and other materials for your own use, and for your congregation.

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