



June, 2022

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**Hunger Update—Part 2**

INFLATION—we are all feeling the effects of it. Due to multiple causes, it has soared this year, increasing the price of everything. And, although you may be able to postpone some purchases until prices drop, food is not one of them. While the price of food remained relatively flat over the last decade, prices increased at an average annual rate of 3.5% in both 2020 and 2021, more than 17 times the average annual rate of the previous five years. Food prices reached an annual inflation rate of 10% in March 2022, the first-time annual food inflation had reached double digits since March 1981. The problem of food inflation is made worse by the fact that other weekly and monthly expenses like gasoline, household energy, and household cleaning products are also soaring, especially gasoline. So, although average wages and salaries increased 4.5% for the 12-month period ending in December 2021, due to inflation, the average worker experienced a 2.4% pay cut.

Low-income households already spend a greater percentage of their income on food (on average 10.8% compared to 6.8% for higher income households) and so have less flexibility in their budgets to absorb higher food costs. In addition, eligibility rules for nutrition programs are largely income-based, so families hit hard by higher food costs do not become eligible for federal food assistance just because they are spending more on groceries. About 31% of food insecure households are not income-eligible for federal nutrition assistance programs and another 19% are only income-eligible for programs targeted at women, infants, and children.

Just as individual households have been affected by increased food prices, so have food banks such as GCFD and pantries such as Operation Blessing. About 47% of the food distributed by GCFD is purchased and some of those costs are passed on to the client pantries such as us. This also puts a strain on our budget, just as it does the families we help. And, we experience the same increased prices for fuel, utilities and supplies.

It's tempting to become discouraged when you read items like this and wonder if things will ever get better. But, we do have hope because at Operation Blessing we believe that God can provide in all situations. Sometimes it is in unexpected ways and sometimes it is through people working together to help each other. And that is what we continue to do each day. (Much of this report was taken from an article written by GCFD. If you would like to read the full article, go to our website and look for it under "Newsletters")



A huge thank you to our volunteers that have helped keep us open during these troubled times.

Without your loyalty and hard work, we would not have been able to assist so many families over the past two years.

God bless you all.

**May Statistics**

Heads of Households	540
Individuals	1828
Professions of Faith	1
New clients	85
Prayed with	396

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