

# The Empty Bowls Project

THURSDAY, APRIL 29  
11 A.M. – 5 P.M.  
305 CLARK STREET



"For I was hungry  
and you gave me  
something to eat"  
– Matthew 25:35

Admission: \$10 Sponsorships are available.



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Spring 2027

Sharing Faith. Hope. Love.

*The mission of Good Samaritan Ministries is to proclaim the Gospel in both word and deed to all people in need in Brown County, Texas.*

## Empty Bowls Project to be drive-thru event

The 12th annual *Empty Bowls Project* is scheduled for Thursday, April, 29, from 11 a.m.—5 p.m. at the Good Samaritan building, 305 Clark Street in downtown Brownwood.

"As we began planning for this year's event, our area was in the midst of the coronavirus surge right after Christmas," Executive Director Leesa Stephens said. "With mask mandates still in place, warnings against large 'super spreader' events on the news daily and so many of our friends and family contracting the virus, we just felt that a drive-thru event was our best option again this year."

Rather than cancel the *Empty Bowls Project* last year, the event was rescheduled for later in April, and the result was an incredible outpouring of support from the community.

"I still think back to that day and just marvel at how many people came out to support us in such a frightening, uncertain time," Stephens said. "No one

knew at that point how much coronavirus was going to impact our worlds and how many more changes we were going to experience as 2020 continued. We raised enough that day to fund our hunger programs for the remainder of the year."

Stephens said that since GSM had not hosted a program of this type before, no one knew what to expect.

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*Scenes from 2020. Cars drove down Clark Street while GSM staff, Board members and their spouses greeted the "attendees" at their cars. Each attendee was handed a pre-selected hand-painted bowl in a bag. Attendees then chose a food coupon*  
*Left: One attendee was excited when her bag held the exact bowl she had painted.*



## Empty Bowls Project —continued

“As the day unfolded and more and more people kept coming by, one of our volunteers commented that we brought the water and God made wine,” Stephens said. “I think that is a pretty good analogy. We offered what we had, and He made it better than we could imagine.”

Because of the virus surge in December and January, the GSM Board agreed to not host bowl painting groups. But, can there be an *Empty Bowls Project* without bowls?

“We have really missed having the different groups come in and paint and seeing all of the beautiful bowls they create,” Stephens said. “I think most people in the community had a feeling of what was going on. Normally we are bombarded with requests to schedule painting. We only had a few groups contact us. It is like everyone understood that we were still in the midst of a pandemic.”

But attendees will not go home empty handed.

“Instead of a hand-painted bowl this year, for each minimum \$10 donation, you will take home a ceramic campfire bowl with the GSM name and the words *Empty Bowls Project*,” Stephens said. “It is still an empty bowl that you can use throughout the year to be reminded of the fight against food insecurity in our area and around the world.”

Area restaurants are once again donating coupons in place of the soups served at a live event.

“We want to drive business back to these restaurants who have supported us with soup in the past,” Stephens said. “Our Samaritan Food Sponsors have always made this event special.”

Financial sponsorships are available and Samaritan Food Sponsors are still needed. Volunteers are also needed the day of the event.

Call 325-643-2273 for more information on sponsorships or volunteering at the event.



*Top: Brookeshire's Manager Jordan Gomez shows their Super Hero trophy. Above: Lynn Day Manager of United Supermarkets carries an armload of trophies. United was a Samaritan Food Sponsor and a Soup-er Bowl Champ.*

## Donation Center celebrates one year anniversary

January marked one year for daily operations at the GSM Donation Center. The Center is located at 200 West Chandler on the corner of Chandler and Clark Streets.

Non-food donations such as clothing, shoes, housewares, home décor, holiday items and linens are all processed there. A large percentage of the items make their way into the Resale Store. The rest are shared with either Charity Shoes, LLC of Dallas or Arms of Hope benefitting the Medina Children's Home.



The Donation Center really took off during the pandemic shut-down as families utilized the time to clean out and organize.

An average of 30 cars drive through with donations each day and are unloaded by the Donation Center Staff. The record is 60!

Proceeds from the Resale Store support the operation of the GSM hunger programs.

*Above: The Donation Center staff celebrates the anniversary milestone. (L to R) Melanie Haynes, Cooper Reedy, Danny Hill, Donation Center Manager Becky*



When bow season in October did not net any venison for the GSM Deer Project, there was concern about how the rest of the season would go.

January did not disappoint, however, as a higher than average 3149 pounds came in bringing the season total to **13,632** pounds.

In terms of the impact to the GSM Food Pantry, this poundage will provide a total of **54,528** servings of quality protein for families who come to the Food Pantry for assistance. With grocery prices continuing to climb, especially for protein items, we are blessed to be able to offer venison for the next several months.

Thank you to our processing partners and to all who participated by donating deer.



## Season ends strong

## Mobile Food Pantry begins 5th year

Transportation, health and financial limitations make it difficult for some clients to come to the GSM Food Pantry. The Mobile Food Pantry program takes the nutritious grocery staples to those households.

The Mobile Food Pantry currently partners with three churches and the Brownwood Senior Citizen Center. In February, a record **91** families received food through the pantries held at North Lake Community Church, May First Baptist and Cannon Courts Apartments hosted by the Youth Ministry Team of FBC/Bangs.

Volunteers from Victory Life Church donate their time to pack the bags and boxes for the programs. Church members from the Mobile Food partners pick up the food and hold a “pantry” once a month at the church or other site.

Brownwood Senior Citizens utilizes staff to pick up boxes and deliver to the homes of their clients, many of whom also receive daily meal delivery.

There is great potential for expansion with this program. If you are interested in developing a Mobile Food Pantry program in your community or donating to purchase food for the program, contact us by calling 325-643-2273 and speak with Leesa or you can reach out through e-mail: [office@goodsambwd.org](mailto:office@goodsambwd.org).

## Resale Remodel Fresh look brings increased store traffic

The Resale Store used the holiday break for a little update. The result is a trendy new look creating an inviting atmosphere for shoppers.

“Coming out of 2020 and all the challenges of COVID the timing was perfect to give the store a face lift,” Resale Manager Marie Smith said. “It had been five years since we did new floors and paint. We had not had the opportunity to make significant changes. The new year seemed like the perfect time for a fresh start.”

The Resale Store had a very successful 2020 despite being closed for six full weeks.

“Considering the strange circumstances that came with 2020, we were still able to come really close to the financial goal we had set for the year,” Smith said. “We definitely had to get creative utilizing online sales and working with limited hours for a time period.”

The Resale Store update involved cosmetic instead of structural changes.

“Some of the makeover included new paint and all new



According to Feeding America, one in four Texas children struggles with food insecurity. In rural areas like Brown County, this problem often remains hidden.

Many students receive free and reduced lunches and breakfasts at school. Groups like sports teams, Girls Scouts and Wednesday church gatherings often provide additional snacks and meals.

But what happens over the weekend? The Food for Thought program comes in to provide quality food in individual bags for students to take home on Friday. Each bag continues items for two breakfasts, two light meals and other high protein snacks.

Enrollment in the program is increasing. February saw a total enrollment of **215** students, the highest ever since the program began. Food for Thought is delivered each week to 15 Brown County campuses across five school Districts.

You can help by donating your plastic bags. We use over 400 each week. Financial support is also needed. It costs almost \$1500 weekly to feed this many children. Donate online at [goodsambwd.org](http://goodsambwd.org).

## Child hunger program has record enrollment

shelving,” Smith said. “There were also small changes like new size tags for the clothes racks.

After the painting was complete the Resale Store Staff got busy putting shelves together, rearranging and restocking the store with all new-to-us donated merchandise.

“I give my staff kudos for working so hard while I was out for a few weeks. They completed the remodel in my absence and did a phenomenal job,” Smith said.

Volunteers are urgently needed to work at the checkout counter in the Resale Store. There are currently seven days open for volunteers each month.

“We’re only open four hours a day,” Smith said. “Grab a friend and come work at the register one day a month. It’s a great way to give back.”

Contact Stacy Walker our Volunteer Coordinator to sign up to fill one of these days.

