Raising four boys can be a real challenge. Add the fact that you’re a widow, retired, the boys are your grandchildren, and you’ve got more than most can handle. However, Sheila Packet has the gut determination to raise her “boys” the right way. Oh, and don’t forget she’s also responsible for her youngest adult son who is mentally challenged. That’s a total of six in one small house.

“This was supposed to be my time to sit back and watch and play with the boys, then send them home,” Sheila says with a laugh, but after raising them on her own for more than seven years, “I don’t know what I’d do without them.” Although, inheriting the boys wasn’t her idea. “My oldest son has been in trouble and stayed in jail most of his life. He’s in prison now and his wife, she’s on drugs. It’s really bad, so I took the boys with me,” she explains.

As the boys get older, so do their expenses. Sheila now works “making auto parts on the third shift,” she says. “I stay up until midnight or 1:00 to get my housework done. Believe me, they make a mess while I sleep.” When the boys come home from school, she’ll “get up with them to do homework and supper, then I lay back down for a few hours before work,” she explains.

Feeding five hungry boys is impossible to do on what Sheila is able to earn, so she relies on our food pantry partner, the Good Shepherd Center in Madisonville. “I don’t know what I’d do without them, they really help my household a lot. It helps feed the boys for a couple of weeks every month,” she says.

Your sacrifice is making a huge difference in the lives of so many families. “Thank you very much, because we couldn’t survive without you. A lot of times we really couldn’t,” Sheila says with tears in her eyes. “I’m not the only person raising their grandkids and having a tough time, I know that. It’s beautiful, and I’m sure they’re grateful for the people who donate to Second Harvest.”
Sometimes life throws you a curve ball, and your life is changed forever, just ask Teresa Woods. While driving on the highway, her car hydroplaned into a concrete barrier, causing a terrible accident. “Oh my gosh, I punctured my right aorta, lacerated my liver, fractured my pelvis, broke my knee, and shattered every bone in my face,” Teresa explained. She has been on every life support system you can imagine and spent years learning to walk and talk again.

Living alone, Teresa struggles to make it on disability. She looks for help from our food pantry partner, Manna House. “The food pantries are what get me through,” she says. “I worry after I pay my rent and my lights. I don’t have money to live on hardly. So, this helps fill that void, at least I have food.”

Without your help, “I don’t know what I would do,” Teresa says, “I guess I would go to the Mission. I’ve done that too. I’m not too proud.” She’s particular about every penny spent, calculating exactly what’s needed to survive. “I have some milk and eggs, along with a little bread and butter. Just the basics. The pantry provides my canned food,” Teresa explains.

Overcoming Incredible Odds

The food pantries are what get me through.

-TERESA

The opioid statistics are shocking: Opioid prescriptions outnumber people in Tennessee; more deaths are caused by the drugs than in wrecks, homicides, and suicides. What starts as a legitimate, well-intentioned prescription, destroys any and every one in its path — young and old, wealthy and poor, especially the families.

The grandparents, who had planned a simple retirement for two, are now housing, feeding, and caring for more people than they can afford. Of course, they gladly take on the extra responsibility and make huge sacrifices to give their grandchildren a home. All too often, people who can, leave retirement and go back to work, yet many are not physically capable of employment. So, a small income is stretched beyond capacity, forcing grandma and grandpa to miss meals so the young ones can eat — if there’s enough food for them.

If it weren’t for friends like you, who give so generously, many of these families would be in a terrible place. Your gifts are what pulls us all together in East Tennessee, making us one big family. As actor David Ogden Stiers once said, “Family means no one gets left behind or forgotten.” Your ongoing compassion and support is helping us take care of family — eliminating hunger where it’s needed most.

Sincerely,
Elaine Streno
Executive Director
Hungry Until the Next Paycheck

“We have two packs of hamburger in our freezer. That’s pretty much all we have,” explains Kathy. "That won’t be enough to feed her and her husband for the following week until the next paycheck comes. So, Kathy goes to our food pantry partner, Hamblen Central Services, for help.

“We don’t come all the time, but when we do they give us things that we need — freezer items, canned foods and bread,” she says with a smile. “They give us what we need for a few days, long enough to last until my husband gets paid.”

Kathy is out of work right now, so they’re grappling to live on one income. Kathy’s husband “is a pallet loader where they ship bathroom stalls all over the place,” she says. “He really loves his job, but sometimes it’s not enough.” When they’re about out of food, “The first thing we do is pray. Absolutely,” she stresses. Going to Central Services “is such a blessing. It helps out tremendously, I mean 100 percent,” she explains.

Thanks to your support, Second Harvest is helping struggling families like Kathy’s who don’t have to face days without food. Solemnly she says, “Please give to Second Harvest to feed somebody in need. You don’t know what family is out there just sitting with nothing.” Because you care, you’re helping to change the lives of so many families in East Tennessee. Thanks for all you do!

Save the Date

Benefitting Second Harvest Food Bank, the 2019 Music Feeds concert series, presented by Commercial Bank, includes six amazing shows at the Tennessee Amphitheater World’s Fair Park through October:

- Friday, Aug. 30: Music Feeds – Steve Earle & the Dukes
- Friday, Oct. 4: Music Feeds – Scott Miller & the Commonwealth
- Saturday, Oct. 5: Tim Kerin Memorial Power Towel Drive at the UT vs. UGA game
- Wednesday, Dec. 11: Double Your Donation Day

Tickets for Music Feeds presented by Commercial Bank are on sale NOW at: knoxvilletickets.com/musicfeeds.

Special Thanks

SPECIAL THANKS FOR SUPPORTING SECOND HARVEST

WE ARE VERY THANKFUL TO THESE CORPORATE AND FOUNDATION DONORS WHO HAVE STEPPED UP THEIR GIVING TO FEEDING AMERICA SPECIFICALLY FOR GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN SUPPORT:

THE KATZENBERGER FOUNDATION AND ANONYMOUS DONORS
Janna Cox and her husband are the kind of folks that have dedicated their lives to helping others, but now they’re the ones needing help. Janna, a grandmother of 15 grandchildren, spent her life as a cook at the local Mission helping the homeless. Her husband is a retired veteran who is suffering from COPD and emphysema. “We’ve got oxygen in our house, but it could be a lot worse. I feel we’re blessed,” Janna declares.

With three at home, including a granddaughter, surviving on her husband’s pension makes life incredibly hard. Her Social Security check is completely spent on health insurance. After paying all their bills, “We have about $100 left to buy food for the month,” she says with a sadness in her voice. “You pay your bills and medical expenses, and you just don’t have much left.”

To stretch their dollars, Janna says she’ll make “Soups. You don’t have to have meat in everything. Soup or beans and cornbread will last longer, and it keeps you full.” When things get really tight, Janna turns to our pantry partner, Western Heights Baptist Center, for groceries and other necessary items.

Because of faithful partners like you, families like Janna’s won’t go hungry. “God bless you,” she says. “I thank you for all of the food, because here it is at the end of the month. You pay your bills, and then you need something else. I am so grateful.” Your generosity is changing the lives of entire families. Thank you!