Hunger, fear, and desperation were enough to force a young mother to take her four-day-old son out in public to the food pantry. Both Kimberly and her parents lost their homes to the Gatlinburg wildfires. Now, they’re living in a motel and standing in line at the food pantry in Roaring Fork Baptist Church — one of our agency partners.

When asked if things were tight at home, Kimberly said, “Yes, since the baby and being out of work.” Her mother, Kathryn, explained, “My husband’s ill, and I’m the one working. Kimberly’s not working because she just had the baby, and nobody would give her a job before she had the baby,” and that’s only the beginning of their story.

The wildfires consumed almost everything they had and forced them to live in a motel. “My son, his girlfriend, and their one-year-old are living with my husband and me — all in one room,” Kathryn said. Kimberly lives in the room next door with her two children. They pay $800 a month for their rooms, but can’t afford to move out.

It’s a vicious cycle that many working poor just can’t escape. “You have to pay the first month’s rent, last month’s rent, a deposit, and you’ve got to pay a deposit for electric and water. It’s $2,000 – $3,000 just to move in,” Kathryn explains. Money they just don’t have.

To make matters worse, Kathryn was in a terrible car accident when a lady ran a stop sign and hit her. She was badly injured, and their only car was totaled. With little money on hand, they bought a clunker with four bald tires, no air conditioning, and a clatter in the engine. If she had a flat, “I couldn’t afford to buy a new tire,” Kathryn said. “Right now, I’ve got a screw in one tire and nail in the other, so my son will plug them for me.”

With their low income and high cost of living, everyone is missing meals, just to make ends meet. “We earn too much to qualify for food stamps, but not enough to live on,” Kathryn said. Thanks to compassionate donors like you, “We’ve got a good amount of food now,” she said. “Without it, we’d really be struggling.”

When asked what’s the hardest part about not having enough food, Kimberly said, “I don’t even think that far ahead. I go day-to-day.” With a nervous laugh, she said, “It stresses me too much to try to think about next week. I’m just ready to get back to work.”

Your continued support to Second Harvest is helping the working poor who can’t afford to keep enough food on the table every day, especially for young mothers like Kimberly with a four-day-old child. Thank you for all you’re doing to bring hope and help to the hungry.
Brandi worked for years at a prescription eyeglass factory until it recently closed down. Now, she’s out of work and said, “My husband is the only one working right now. For a while, he also had some bad health issues. We got behind, and it’s just hard to catch back up.” Including desperately needing food. “Our family is in need of a little help through the month, and Strawberry Plains Elementary School has been so gracious to help us out. We sure appreciate everything they do for us,” she said.

Brandi says she often misses a couple of meals a day just to keep the lights on and make sure her daughter is fed. “I have a child that says, ‘Mom, I’m hungry,’ and sometimes there’s not the right things that she would prefer to eat, and it’s very overwhelming,” she explains.

In addition to the emotional pain of unemployment and not being able to properly feed her family, Brandi suffers from “Fibromyalgia, thyroid disorder, high blood pressure and rheumatoid arthritis,” she explains, “along with anxiety and depression. It really will take a toll on you.”

The dire sacrifices hungry families, like Brandi’s, make to survive are incredible, like missing meals and postponing badly needed prescriptions. “Right now, we have medicine at the pharmacy. It’s waiting on my husband’s paycheck, and there’s going to be days that we’ll be without that medicine,” she said.

Because of our faithful donors, Second Harvest is able to supply plenty of nutritious food to agency partners like the Strawberry Hills Elementary School Pantry. “The extra food we get here just helps so much, because I don’t want to see my family do without,” Brandi said.

Thanks to you, we’re helping hardworking families get back on their feet when they’re down. Brandi stated it best, when she said, “Second Harvest has helped us tremendously. Y’all are such a blessing — very much. Me and my family, we can’t thank you enough!”

Sincerely,
Elaine
Elaine Streno
Executive Director
Special Thanks

SPECIAL THANKS FOR SUPPORTING SECOND HARVEST

We try not to miss meals, but sometimes it’s slim pickins.
-DUANE

Working Full-Time Isn’t Always Enough

Shake hands with Duane, and you quickly learn from his rugged grip that he works with his hands every day. The craft of building steel chains requires long hours in extreme heat. Men, like Duane, earn every penny they’re paid to make high-quality chains for “Combines, potato pickers, anything on a conveyor belt,” he explains.

Duane is one of the few lucky ones who works full-time in Sunset Gap. Most folks in this remote area depend on a part-time or seasonal job, but even working full-time, in a physically demanding job, doesn’t pay enough for Duane to adequately feed his family.

“There are five of us at home — me, my wife, and three kids. They’re 14, 12, and 10,” Duane said. When asked if things were tight at home, he simply says, “Always.” A lot of times they don’t have enough food in the house, forcing he and his wife to miss meals. “We try not to, but sometimes it’s slim pickins,” he said. “And, sometimes you don’t get enough, but we make sure the kids are fed.”

To make ends meet, Duane and his family turn to our agency partner, Sunset Gap Community Center. It’s here that more than 1,000 families are provided food every month. Thanks to you, most of that food comes from Second Harvest Food Bank of East Tennessee. Your generosity ensures hard-working men, and their families like Duane’s, are able to get the food they so desperately need.

With a big grin, Duane says, “The donors at Second Harvest are awesome.” Thank you for caring and making a difference in the lives of so many people in Sunset Gap.

Morgan Stanley

DOUG WRIGHT
MARCIE WRIGHT
JEFF BEZOS
ROBERT LEE WEISS
FOUNDATION

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Persistence is Paying Off

Timothy and Stephanie lived in a tent for nine months and didn’t have a car. Life was rough. “If you don’t have a house, you can’t buy anything to keep overnight. You have to eat whatever you buy, then that’s it,” Timothy said. “Eating fast food is expensive when you live in a tent, because you don’t have a refrigerator or a stove or anything,” Stephanie added.

“We are a husband and wife housekeeping team at a local hotel,” Timothy explained. “A lot of husbands and wives can’t stand to be with each other all day long, but it’s the opposite with us. We would rather be together. We pray at every meal and thank God for everything He’s ever given us.”

Timothy and Stephanie’s persistence is paying off. “We’re on our feet. We live in a cabin. We’re extremely lucky. We waited an entire year to get this cabin, and now we’ve got a little-bitty house that’s just ours. We’re very thankful to have what we have. Thank God. We worked hard for it,” said Timothy.

For a while, both were missing meals just to stay afloat. “We’ve been at the bottom. We worked our way up, and we’re not going back,” explained Stephanie. Even so, they’re not making enough to pay for their basic needs. Getting paid every two weeks means, “The first week, we pay rent, and then gas money, and food and stuff. That second week, we’re struggling so hard, we don’t know what to do. We’re eating ramen noodles,” Timothy said.

That’s why they turned to our pantry partner, Roaring Fork Baptist Church in Gatlinburg. “It’s a big help, because we can’t make enough to live, but we make too much for food stamps. We don’t qualify so this helps a lot,” said Stephanie. “We get some food here and can buy the rest to make a meal.”

Because of your faithful support, Second Harvest is able to supply much needed food to our agency partners who are helping hard working families like Timothy and Stephanie. Without your help, they wouldn’t make it. “We’re very, very thankful because when we first came here, we had nothing. This is absolutely wonderful,” said Timothy with a big smile.

Save the Date

- Hunger Action Month — September
- Tim Kerin Power Towel Drive — September 26 @ UT vs. FL football game
- Giving Tuesday — December 1
- 10th annual Double Your Donation Day — December 10, 2020

Support Second Harvest Food Bank of East Tennessee, and you support more than 550 local nonprofits and programs.