

# Leon County Food Pantries

Reflecting on Their Impact in 2020

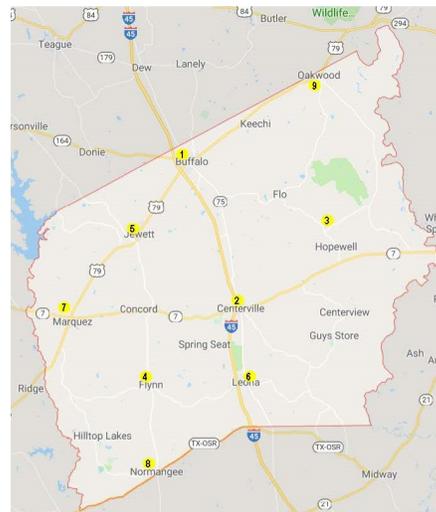
Leon County is blessed to have nine food pantries, providing families throughout the county with much needed food and supplies.

In June 2019, the Leon County Food Pantry Coalition was formed to bring pantry representatives together to share ideas and join forces on county-wide efforts. The first task of the coalition was to compile a list and map of all the pantries within Leon County. This was completed and distributed to all pantries and media outlets, via social media and made available on the Leon County Extension website at <https://leon.agrilife.org>.

## Leon County Food Pantries:

1. The Lord's Pantry of Leon County ©
2. Pantry of Grace (1st Friday Produce) ©
3. North Creek Baptist Church Food Bank ©
4. Daily Bread Food Pantry ©
5. Leon Community Food Pantry & Clothes Closet ©
6. Lord's Pantry of Leona
7. All Around Cowboy Church
8. Normangee Food Pantry
9. Oakwood Community Food Pantry ©

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This list/map has made the community much more aware of local food assistance both for those in need as well as those who can give.

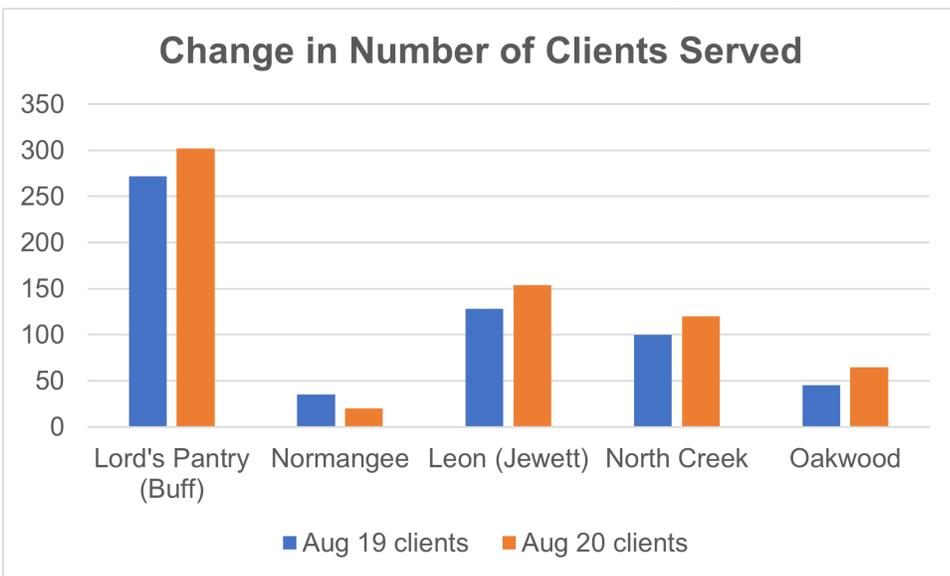


The *Nutrition Know-How Newsletter* is compiled, printed and distributed bi-monthly to all nine pantries, who share them with their clients. Each issue, available in both English and Spanish, provides nutrition information and recipes. About 400 copies (300 English and 100 Spanish) are provided on a bi-monthly basis with an additional 130 copies being provided to shut-ins. Newsletters are also posted on our Extension website and Facebook page.

The coalition has discussed the impact of the pandemic on their operations, clients and volunteers. The group felt it was important to let the community know how local food pantries have stepped up during an even greater time of need. Food pantry representatives were asked to complete an online survey to provide feedback on the impacts of the pandemic. Five of our nine (55%) pantries responded.

### Impact of Pandemic

4 of 5 (80%) pantries reported an increase in clients when comparing August 2019 and August 2020. They reported how they implemented required changes to their distribution

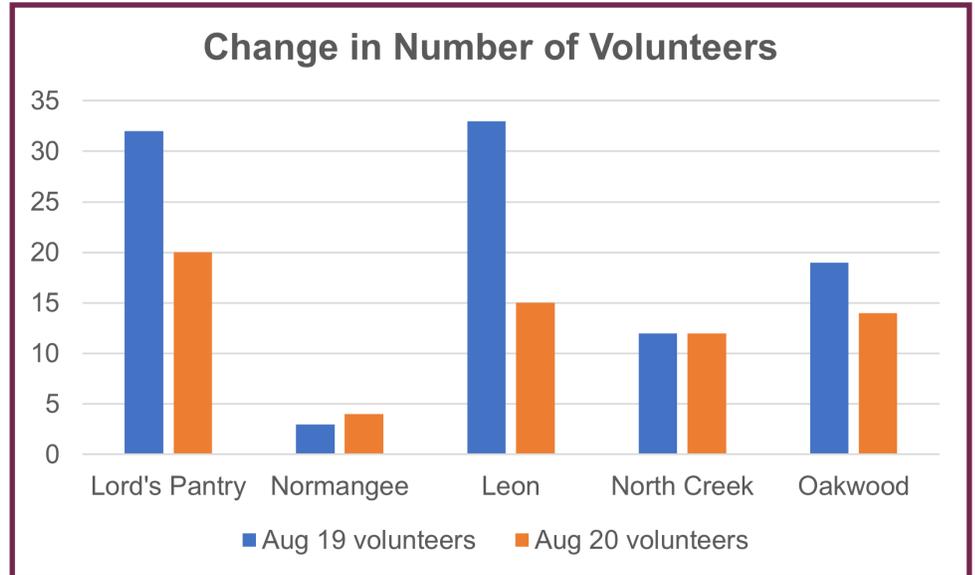


process with most moving to a drive-up/drive-thru format. Some also added additional distribution days to accommodate families. These pantries report that they are continuing to serve more and more families as 2020 has progressed.

One pantry who experienced a decrease in the number of clients said they could not determine why our usage has dropped while other pantries had significant increases.

3 of 5 (60%) reported a decrease in the number of volunteers - the backbone of these organizations. One had no change in their volunteer involvement while the fifth said they added one additional volunteer. Some pointed out the curbside service was difficult for older volunteers while others said their volunteers were staying home, afraid of COVID.

One pantry representative reported, however, that they added new volunteers who were able to streamline the distribution process of serving their clients with fewer volunteers.



One pantry said food availability has stayed the same although the East Texas Food Bank has not been able to offer the variety they have offered in the past. They also reported that their donations had gone up during the initial months of COVID, but have since dropped off considerably.

Another pantry representative reported that their area is considered a "desert location." With no businesses to support them, they must rely on churches, individuals and food drives at the school to provide food and financial contributions.

Another pantry shared that they are in the planning stage of re-modeling and expanding their facility in order to store more food offer clients the opportunity to choose food.

When asked what needs their pantries have now, they shared the following:

- ⇒ **Need** more volunteers
- ⇒ **Need** more space to store food
- ⇒ **Need** 1-2 additional freezers
- ⇒ **Need** to have the parking lot and driveway paved
- ⇒ **Need** an additional laptop or desktop computer
- ⇒ **Need** kid-friendly snacks for the backpack program
- ⇒ **Need** paper goods, dish detergent and cleaning supplies
- ⇒ **Need** funds to purchase breads and other items

## How Can I Help?



*For more information about food pantries in Leon County:*  
903-536-2531

Leon Co. Extension website: <https://leon.agrilife.org>

Leon Co. Extension Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/leoncountytextension>