



## Who Are We, and How Do We Do What We Do?

An Outreach Director for a church in the US recently told us that after extensive research, her organization chose to support FTH because of how responsibly the money from donations is used. The operation is indeed a finely-tuned machine. As it should be by now—this year, we celebrate 35 years of changing lives through our hot meals program for children and nutrition education for families. The program has grown to 37 school kitchens and 7 charities, providing close to 5,000 meals per day.

People often ask, how do we do it?

In spite of the rising costs of food and fuel, we are able to maintain the cost of a fresh, well-balanced meal at just around 50 cents. The secret? Operational efficiencies, strong local relationships, an incredible (uncompensated) board of trustees, a small staff, and a dedicated corps of volunteers. We also receive weekly in-kind donations from a local dairy farm, a local bakery, and a local vegetable grower.

Less than 10% of revenue goes to fundraising. FTH employs a paid staff of 18 at our headquarters. We have also created jobs for 33 mothers in the campo, as cooks for the school kitchens.

Here are some of the key players that make this all work:



### Seasoned Operations Management



The Operations team is critical to the well-being of the thousands of children, their families, and the communities served through Feed the Hungry programs.

Gifford ("Giff") Moody is the President of Feed the Hungry A.C. Established in 2007, the A.C. (asociación civil) enables FTH to accept Mexican peso tax-deductible donations. It also applies for, and receives, funds from several Mexican government agencies through grants which Giff oversees. FTH A.C. employs the Mexican staff who plan, purchase and collect in-kind donations, and who supervise the operation of all the school kitchens.

Operations Manager Olivia Muñoz Rodríguez has been directing our food program for nearly 25 years. Olivia has helped shape the direction of the organization. She is at the forefront of our relationships with school districts and governing bodies and responds to requests for new FTH kitchens, investigating the viability and working closely with all parties involved to make dreams a reality.

Her team of chefs, nutritionists, and warehouse staff plan seasonal menus, assess the health of the children in the FTH program, educate the mothers and train the cooks. They also monitor the work of the employees and volunteers who prepare the meals at the community school kitchens. Every week of the school year, the supervisors visit every school kitchen (as well as the seven charities FTH supports) to take inventory, inspect the kitchens for cleanliness, and to monitor adherence to FTH guidelines.

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*Photos in this issue by:*

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## Responsible Financial Management

Board of Trustees President Al Kocourek started as a FTH volunteer driver 10 years ago, and then joined the board in 2013. His background in systems analysis and financial services has served us well, because when he joined the board, the organization was in serious financial trouble. After the 2008 financial meltdown, donations were low and we had just taken on a large debt to finance our new warehouse. Thanks to the hard work of our board, the staff, and volunteers in reducing expenses and finding funding, we are debt free and financially stable under Al's inspired leadership.



With oversight from the Board of Trustees, day-to-day financial management is handled by Treasurer Steve Livingston and Finance Director Chris Peeters. Before retirement, Steve's business career spanned more than 45 years, during which time he held major line and consulting positions in the US, Latin America, and Europe, with companies ranging from capital goods and consumer products to service and financial firms and governmental agencies.

Chris arrived in San Miguel in 2001 by way of the Republic of Malta where he spent 10 years in the financial industry and, before that, his home country of Belgium. He began work with FTH in 2006, developing the multi-layered food acquisition and distribution system that is still being used today. Chris's other current responsibilities include maintaining FTH's various databases. He also oversees the ongoing preparation, submission, and monitoring of many federal, state and municipal grants, ensuring parallel requirements for our Mexican non-profit entity, Feed the Hungry A.C.



## Volunteer Power



Feed the Hungry's dedicated volunteers fill needs in a variety of ways and in many different capacities. They are led by Volunteer Coordinator and Trustee Jenna Stratton, and Chip Swab, Feed the Hungry's Driver Coordinator. Jenna recruits and orients volunteers who package the required food items for each school kitchen, every week during the school year. She also coordinates volunteer support for our events and fundraising campaigns and distribution of Three Kings Day gifts for the children.

Chip has one of the most challenging volunteer positions in the organization: he has to round up 34 drivers every Tuesday morning, to ensure that all the food gets delivered to the school kitchens, come rain or shine. He has the perfect background for handling this complicated task: Chip is a former Marine.



## Sustainability and Empowerment: The Future of Feed the Hungry

Now in our fourth decade, self-sustainability is an important priority; broadening the organization's approach through community education and empowerment is essential. Feed the Hungry is enhancing collaboration with both government agencies and other NGOs to promote lasting community-based initiatives. We are fortunate to have such an experienced team to lead us into the future and enable us to serve the needs of even more members of the San Miguel community.



[feedthehungrysma.org](http://feedthehungrysma.org)

# President's Letter

I was recently asked by a donor, "Could you expand the Feed the Hungry program to serve other impoverished parts of Mexico?" My answer was simply "NO"—because the base of volunteers would not be available. Here in San Miguel, we have a unique advantage because of the dedicated volunteers that help in a myriad of ways.

FTH will serve more than one million hot, nutritious meals in 44 locations this school year. We do that with a paid staff of 18 working at our headquarters, plus 33 cooks hired from the communities, whom we train to prepare meals from our menus in the school kitchens.

However, our entire infrastructure is supported by the efforts of literally hundreds of vitally important unpaid volunteers who supplement the labors of our staff. These include nearly 50 food packers, 34 drivers, mothers who help in the 37 school kitchens, our Board of Trustees, and our Advisory Board. We even have an English language educational program in the Los Ricos community that is run solely by volunteers.

It costs FTH approximately 55 cents USD (11 pesos) for each meal served. Raising the funds to cover these expenses is a never-ending endeavor. I cannot even estimate what the cost per meal would be if it weren't for the volunteers. The value of their contribution is priceless.



—Al Kocourek, President

## Feed the Hungry Board of Trustees 2019

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## By the numbers

School kitchens supported:	37
Charities supported:	7
Pounds of food delivered weekly:	12,000+
Miles driven by our volunteers:	1,000+
Meals served every school day:	4,500+
Budgeted meals for the 2018—2019 school year:	1,049,000

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View videos of the weekly packing process, visits to schools for health assessments and nutrition workshops for mothers, and more!

[fthvideos.org](http://fthvideos.org)



# A Community We Support: Nuevo Cimatario

Last September, a new Feed the Hungry school kitchen opened in Nuevo Cimatario, a community on the municipal government's list of rural populations in greatest need. We now provide breakfast and lunch to 41 children in elementary school and 20 children in preschool.

This community of 285 inhabitants in 72 homes is 65 km from the FTH center; one of our farthest delivery locations. None of the homes have piped water into the house. Fewer than 2% of the homes have an indoor bathroom and only half have a refrigerator. The average level of schooling of the adults is 4 years, and 17% are illiterate (2010 INEGI Census).

## Condition of the Children

Soon after opening the school kitchen, our nutritionists conducted a baseline assessment of the students' height, weight, and muscle mass. They found that 35% of the children were underweight, with 12% moderately to severely underweight. Signs of nutritional deficiencies were evident: white patches on arms and faces, dry skin, brittle nails, discolored and dry hair, short stature for their age, and decayed teeth.

These deficiencies are related to the lack of vitamins and is primarily due to how far away they are from stores where they can get a variety of vegetables, fruits, and other foods necessary for development. A main diet of tortillas may soothe the appetite, but does not satisfy the nutritional needs of children.



## A Safe, Clean Place to Learn and Dine



FTH had outfitted a building, provided by the State of Guanajuato, to serve as the school kitchen and dining room. However, it was too small for all of the children to be seated at mealtime, so the majority of them had to take their meals outside.

It was wonderful to see the children enjoying their hot, balanced meals. But when we toured the grounds and saw 14 very young children attending preschool in a cold, dark outbuilding—built with adobe and asbestos 80 years ago—our hearts sank.



Rafael Franco, who offers his professional expertise as an architect to our organization (completely pro-bono), was with us that day, and he said, "Something has to be done!" Thankfully, Mr. Franco pledged to donate materials and construction for a new kitchen/dining room so that the current kitchen could be repurposed as the preschool classroom.



## The Community Comes Together

There are no stores in the area that sell construction supplies, so access to building materials, especially gravel and concrete, was a very challenging aspect of the construction process.

However, with tenacity, ingenuity, and the assistance of the parents, the new kitchen/dining room opened on December 3.

We are grateful for Mr. Franco's support and quick action to create a healthier, happier environment for learning and for dining—especially before the onset of winter.



# Feed the Hungry & Caminos de Agua Partner to Evaluate Water Quality at FTH School Kitchens



Availability and quality of water are problems that threaten the more than 680,000 people who rely upon the Alto Río Laja Aquifer for their drinking water—including the entire San Miguel de Allende area. These problems have a direct impact on the children who receive school meals from Feed the Hungry.

The current agriculture boom in this area is driving water usage up, lowering the water table 2-3 meters (or roughly 6-10 feet) per year. This is leading to an increase in unhealthy levels of arsenic and fluoride, creating serious health risks for local communities.

In many cases, water test results in community drinking wells show levels of arsenic and fluoride higher than what the World Health Organization (WHO) considers acceptable. Some wells have tested

as much as 12-15 times above the WHO recommendations for both arsenic and fluoride.

These contaminants are associated with dental and painful skeletal fluorosis, renal problems, skin disease, cognitive disorders, numerous cancers, and other serious medical conditions. Children are the most vulnerable, as their growing bodies absorb these dangerous minerals at a much higher rate. With more than 60% of residents living at or below the poverty level, bottled water is simply unaffordable.

Feed the Hungry operates kitchens in schools in some of these affected areas, where children are drinking suspect water, which is also used in food preparation.

## Working Together to Create a Healthier Community



Feed the Hungry has teamed up with Caminos de Agua, an organization committed to determining the nature and seriousness of the water issues as well as helping affected communities design and implement water solutions. Caminos de Agua has been working in partnership with Feed the Hungry since early 2017 when they first tested 31 of our school locations, a number of which exceeded WHO limits for arsenic, fluoride, or both.

At three schools (Los Galvanes, Loma de Cocinas, and Emiliano Zapata), filtration systems donated by Aqua Clara International were installed that produced water free of arsenic contamination, an important first step. And in coordination with other San Miguel NGOs, cisterns for rainwater harvesting were installed in Alonso Yáñez and Palo Colorado (rainwater is naturally free of arse-

nic and fluoride).

Most recently, Caminos de Agua has provided testing on Feed the Hungry's newest kitchens (results pending), and they also help consult with Feed the Hungry for those sites that exceed the WHO limits. This effort is critical to Feed the Hungry's mission of improving the health and well-being of children in the San Miguel area. By working together, and with adequate funding, we can significantly minimize the impact on the health of both this and future generations.

## World Water Day 2019

The situation surrounding water availability and water related health risks affects all of us who depend on the Alto Río Laja watershed. Feed the Hungry, Caminos de Agua, and other partner NGOs concerned with this issue are planning a week of important educational events around World Water Day in March 2019. Included will be opportunities to learn how to make sure your own water is safe and healthy and how to act to protect our shared water resources. Meanwhile, to learn more about the water issues affecting our region and the work of Caminos de Agua today, visit [caminosdeagua.com](http://caminosdeagua.com).



[feedthehungrysma.org](http://feedthehungrysma.org)





## 2018 Volunteer Appreciation Picnic

In November, Hacienda Santa Clara generously hosted our annual Volunteer Appreciation Picnic for another year. At this merry gathering, volunteers enjoyed music and delicious food and drinks, also sponsored by our gracious hosts.



Jonna Stratton

Jonna Stratton and Al Kocourek gave heartfelt speeches during which they emphasized how essential volunteer support is for the existence of our organization. Tony Adlerbert, member of our Advisory Board and an influential previous president of FTH, gave a wonderful summary of the challenges and blessings FTH has encountered throughout its history, and took us all back in time as he narrated, with visible emotion, how Feed the Hungry became what it is today.

Oscar Ortega and his wife Irene Fuentes were named Volunteer Packers of the Year. Oscar is the regional coordinator for Microsoft Philanthropies Latin America. Irene is a tourism consultant on children's safety.

Chip Swab, Driver Coordinator, announced



Harry Macy, Volunteer Driver of the Year

the identity of the Volunteer Driver of the Year: Harry Macy. Harry's delivery route covers Pozo de Balderas and Loma de Cocinas—one of the most distant and worst routes we have. Roads are very dusty during the dry season, and awash with mud during rainy season; finding a reliable driver willing to cover this route, and stick to it, was a challenge indeed. If anyone deserved this award, it was certainly Harry.

Without our volunteers, we wouldn't be able to meet all our goals or perform even the most basic day-to-day operations. While this celebration is annual, we certainly acknowledge and are grateful for the support of our volunteers every single day.



Oscar Ortega accepting Volunteer Packers of the Year award

## Get to Know "Kitchen Angels" Les and Jane Wilbrecht



One year after Woodrow Wilson was sworn in as the 28th president of the United States, Lester Wilbrecht was born. The year was 1914. At 104 years young, Les assures us he will fulfill his three-year pledge of support for our school kitchen in Montecillo de Nieto. He and his wife Jane have lived full time in San Miguel de Allende since 2012 and have been Feed the Hungry Kitchen Angels since 2017. Their generous contribution helps provide nearly 13,000 nutritious meals per year for the young students in the community.

Les grew up on a small farm in Minnesota and remembers using a team of horses for plowing the fields. He graduated from the University of North Dakota with a major in science and engineering and established a successful manufacturing company in Minneapolis that made components for hearing aids. To draw on his science background, we asked him how many elements were on the atomic chart back in the day. He jokingly responded, "Only three: Earth, Wind, and Fire."

Though approaching his 105th birthday, Les still works out with a personal trainer twice a week. He said he started using a cane last year, though he felt it really was only necessary for old people!

Jane, a former music teacher from Indiana, is both an avid golfer and an accomplished pianist. In fact, she gives free lessons to three Mexican children every week. Les being a late bloomer, decided to take up skiing at age 72, but retired from the slopes at 87. He gave up golf two months ago after realizing every golfer's dream: shooting his age! He now focuses on perfecting his skills on the harmonica, which he began playing as a young boy on the farm.

Jane and Les met by chance 32 years ago in Jupiter, Florida. They discovered that they had much in common, such as their love of boating and dancing. Together they have been doing both ever since. They have traveled on 35 cruises, including one around the world, and they have covered most of Mexico by car and with various tour groups.

Every year, Les and Jane drive to Tyler, Texas to visit family, accompanied by their 5-year-old cockapoo, Chico. (Jane does the driving.) The last surviving member of Les' nine siblings is his baby sister, Carol, who recently turned 90. The father of four children, Les lost a son to the Viet Nam war—a fighter pilot who was shot down at age 27. Les has seven great-grandchildren, and was proud to say that they all stay in touch with letters and art projects. They call him "Bop."

When we asked Les the secret of his longevity, without hesitation he said, "I stay mean and lean!" Our impression is that he also personifies optimism, generosity, and the spirit of someone forever young at heart.

*Thank You*  
TO OUR FABULOUS  
*Volunteers*



## Autumn Magic Tour 2018: An Unforgettable Experience



For an entire week in October, special guests from around the US got an insider's view of San Miguel de Allende while contributing to the well-being of disadvantaged children. Profits from the tour support the ongoing operation of FTH's school kitchen in the rural community of La Campana, serving 163 elementary students and 63 kindergarten students. The latest health assessment by FTH nutritionists revealed that only 42% of those children are at normal weight; in fact, 24% are severely underweight.

The week was full of unique experiences: a mask-making workshop; a tour and lunch at a former maguey plantation; a private visit to the Mask Museum; a tour, olive oil tastings, and lunch from the garden at an organic farm in the countryside; a guided tour of the Sanctuary of Atotonilco (a World Heritage Site); sumptuous private parties in historic San Miguel homes, and more.

During a tour of the Feed the Hungry warehouse facilities, participants got an in-depth perspective of our processes and operations and all the elements that make it work. After the tour they enjoyed a delicious buffet lunch made up of all of the Fall menu items served at our school kitchens.

Highlights of the week included a visit to the school and kitchen in the community of La Campana, the Hogar de Los Angeles Daycare Center, and Centro Infantil San Pablo preschool, where the visitors interacted with the children who receive meals through FTH. These were joyful, heart-warming experiences yielding bittersweet memories for all involved.

The tour came to a close with a farewell dinner at a magnificently restored 18th century mansion, where a 10-piece mariachi band had attendees singing and dancing, enjoying the final hours of a life-changing trip.

"Our visit was an eye-opener in many ways. The gracious hosting of so many events provided us with an education and an opportunity to visit with those involved in this mission. We are honored to be a part of this family as contributors and look forward to doing what we can to assist you. We'll never forget this experience or the people we met." – Autumn Magic 2018 tour participant

To be added to our mailing list for invitations to future excursions, please contact [donna@feedthehungrysma.org](mailto:donna@feedthehungrysma.org). The next Autumn Magic will be held in October 2019 and participation is limited to 25 guests.



**SAVE THE DATE: SUNDAY, MARCH 31, 2019**

### FEED THE HUNGRY'S FIRST ANNUAL SUNDAY FUNDAY

Come help us celebrate Feed the Hungry's 35th anniversary! Join us for tennis, bridge, bocce ball, and board games, along with food, drinks, and music in an idyllic country setting just minutes from San Miguel Centro.

Please visit [feedthehungrysma.org/category/events](http://feedthehungrysma.org/category/events) for more information.

## HOW TO VOLUNTEER

Feed the Hungry couldn't function without our staff of dedicated volunteers, filling needs in a variety of ways and in many different capacities. One of our biggest needs is for **regular and substitute drivers** to deliver food every Tuesday of the school year to our FTH schools and charities. Our drivers wouldn't have anything to deliver were it not for the corps of **food handlers and packagers** who donate their time on Saturdays and Mondays getting food ready to be delivered.

Individuals with skills in areas such as **event support, database management, writing, graphic design, and photography** are often needed as well.

If you are interested in any of these volunteer opportunities, please contact Volunteer Coordinator, Jonna Stratton:

[jonnainmex@gmail.com](mailto:jonnainmex@gmail.com)



## Ways to Donate

In spite of the rising costs of food and fuel, our operational efficiencies and strong local relationships enable us to maintain the cost of a fresh, well-balanced meal at just around 50 cents.

- ❖ \$20USD feeds 2 children for a month
- ❖ \$100USD feeds 10 children for a month
- ❖ \$250USD feeds 2 children for one school year

By donating to Feed the Hungry, you are contributing **health, hope, and opportunity** to disadvantaged communities in the San Miguel de Allende municipality.

### For a US tax deduction:

Donate by check payable to Feed the Hungry San Miguel, Inc.  
Mail to Feed the Hungry at either of the following addresses:

Feed the Hungry San Miguel  
c/o La Conexión, Aldama #3  
San Miguel de Allende 37700  
Guanajuato, Mexico

Feed the Hungry San Miguel  
Box 636  
220 N. Zapata Hwy, Suite 11  
Laredo, TX 78043-4464, USA



Or make an online donation: [feedthehungryisma.org](https://feedthehungryisma.org) (click on the orange **DONATE** button)

### For a Mexican tax deduction:

Donate by check payable to Feed the Hungry, A.C. Mail to Feed the Hungry at either of the addresses listed above.

### For a Canadian tax deduction:

Donate by check payable to Amistad Canada and note "Feed the Hungry Project" on the memo line. Mail to Amistad Canada:

Amistad Canada, c/o The Tax Management Centre 14  
2530 Sixth Line  
Oakville, Ontario  
CANADA L6H 6W5

Or make an online donation: [amistadcanada.org/donate](https://amistadcanada.org/donate) (be sure to select Feed the Hungry San Miguel as your charity of choice).

## Make a Legacy Gift

Please also consider Feed the Hungry as a beneficiary when planning your will. Through Planned Giving, you can make a lifelong impact on the lives of children in economically disadvantaged communities. Visit [feedthehungryisma.org/how-to-help/planned-giving/](https://feedthehungryisma.org/how-to-help/planned-giving/) to learn more.

## Sponsor a School Kitchen

We encourage individuals, families, friends, coworkers, and businesses to consider the incredible good that can be done by becoming a Founding Donor or a Kitchen Angel. Sponsorship of a currently unsponsored school enables us to extend our reach to impoverished communities that might otherwise remain on our waiting list for years.

Sponsorship of a specific school kitchen also provides donors with a more personal connection to where their donations go. Founding Donors and Kitchen Angels receive regular updates on progress at their sponsored schools and, if they like, tours of the schools as well. Visit [feedthehungryisma.org/how-to-help/school-kitchen-sponsorship/](https://feedthehungryisma.org/how-to-help/school-kitchen-sponsorship/) to learn more.

## Make an In-Kind Donation

Consider opening the door of your home or facility for our events, or to host a visitor attending our fundraising excursions. We also welcome auction items such as art, products, tours, and gift certificates. **If you wish to donate any of these items please email [contact@feedthehungryisma.org](mailto:contact@feedthehungryisma.org) or call 152-2402, ext 103.**

Feed the Hungry San Miguel, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) U.S. non-profit corporation guided by a dedicated Board of Trustees, supported by a small, professional staff and a corps of exceptional volunteers.

Feed the Hungry San Miguel, Inc. raises funds and provides guidelines to its Mexican operating entity, Feed the Hungry A.C.

Amistad Canada is our partner for donations from Canadian residents.

**Donations are tax-deductible in the U.S., Mexico, and Canada.**