

Needy Families in Georgia Receive Food Because of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act

Story and Photo by Debbie Haston-Hilger, USDA Food and Nutrition Service SERO



AUSTELL, Ga. -- Six hundred needy families in Georgia each received an additional 56 pounds of food thanks to the American Recover and Reinvestment Act and The Emergency Food Assistance Program, or TEFAP, on Aug. 29, in Austell, Ga. The food each family received Saturday was provided through the Georgia Department of Human Services and the Atlanta Community Food Bank by the USDA Food and Nutrition Service. It consisted of chicken, deli turkey, cheese, and fruit and was distributed by volunteers of C.A.M.P or Christian Aid Mission Partnership located in Austell.

Regina Stewart, a recent resident of Marietta, Ga., heard about the distribution from a neighbor and was very grateful to receive the much needed food. “This is a real blessing for me and my family,” she said. “I am a disabled mom of two young boys and I need help feeding them.”

Stewart, who recently lost her 18-year-old son who had just started college to a drive-by shooting in California, moved to Marietta with her two remaining 11-and 9-year old sons. She said her 9-year-old son is a diabetic and it’s important that he has nutritious food.

“It’s expensive to eat healthy and buy nutritious foods which my son needs. God bless everyone who helps me out and makes it possible for me to feed my kids good food,” Stewart said.

Iesha Smith of Smyrna, Ga., who has three children, is also a Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program recipient (formerly known as “food stamps”). She said she saw an article in the local newspaper so she came to the distribution “because my family needs it. This is extra food that we don’t have the resources to buy,” Smith said.

“The article I read said the food comes from USDA and I would like President Obama to know that I am very appreciative of these types of nutrition programs and they are needed in these tough times,” Smith said. “It’s more costly to eat healthy so when we have this type of assistance we can purchase more nutritious foods,” she added.

The state of Georgia ordered over \$3.1 million worth of TEFAP Stimulus Commodities from USDA which consists of proteins and fruits. This is in addition to what they normally receive in TEFAP commodities. Once received the state provides the food to local Food Banks and Georgia Community Action Agencies which distributes the food to the needy.

Jay Cantrell, Food Pantry Manager with C.A.M.P., said the food they received was an increase from what they normally receive and it included more meats and fruits. “We normally get about 30 pounds of TEFAP food per family but because of the Stimulus we were able to give out 56 additional pounds of TEFAP food than what we normally provide,” Cantrell said. “We had a much larger turn out than we expected and should have planned for more than the 600 families we were able to provide for. We are definitely going to do this again and are going to schedule another distribution for 1,000 families sometime in October,” he added.

Bill Boiling of the Atlanta Community Food Bank, who was also on hand, had special praise for all the volunteers from several area churches and community organizations who came together to support C.A.M.P. with the distribution. “With all the uncertainty we need a dose of this – people coming together to help their neighbors,” he said.

For more information on USDA Food and Nutrition Service and The Emergency Food Assistance Program, please visit www.fns.usda.gov