

A Story of Compassion

USDA Faith-Based and Community Initiatives

Angel Food Ministries

Monroe, Georgia

"Thank you Angel Food Ministries for all the food that my family and I have been able to purchase with our "Food Stamps". By using this wonderful food distribution program through our local church, we have had plenty of nutritious meals that last until the next monthly food distribution". Betty Smathers of Terre Haute, Indiana, is but one of the many individuals and families that have been helped by the food boxes distributed by Angel Food Ministries: "We are very grateful for what you are doing for people all across the USA."

Pastor Joel Osteen of Lakewood Church also sings the praises of Angel Food Ministries, "Lakewood Church is honored to be a part of the Angel Food Ministry team. We are committed to their mission of helping individuals and families by meeting their physical and spiritual needs. Angel Food plays a unique and vital role in our outreach efforts and is a catalyst for creating an environment of unity and support throughout our community."

How the Initiative is Helping

Doug Canup, area director for USDA Rural Development, said the \$6.97 million loan was the largest the USDA has done for a faith-based organization under the president's Faith-Based and Community Initiative, an effort designed to assist churches and ministries as they serve their communities.

In order to receive a community facilities loan of this kind, Canup said, the applicant has to be an established non-



profit recognized by the state and IRS, has to be community-based with community support, and has to have a broad-based reach to different groups.

"This is a big deal," he said. "We have an organization right here in Georgia, in Walton County, that is feeding families in 30 states and now we are helping them expand their ability to serve their local, state and national communities."

About the Organization

Angel Food Ministries is a non-profit, non-denominational organization dedicated to providing grocery relief and financial support to communities throughout the United States. The program began in 1994 with 34 families in Monroe, Georgia (between Atlanta and Athens), and has grown to serve over 165,000 families every month across 30 states.

Angel Food's groceries are sold in a quantity that can fit into a medium-sized box at \$25 per unit. Each month's menu is different than the previous month and consists of both fresh and frozen items



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with an average retail value of approximately \$70. Comparison shopping has been done across the country in various communities using a wide range of retail grocery stores and has resulted in the same food items costing from between \$42 and \$78.

Generally, one unit of food assists in feeding a family of four for about one week or a single senior citizen for almost a month. The food is all the same high quality one would purchase at a grocery store. There are no second-hand items, no damaged or out-dated goods, no dented cans without labels, no day-old breads and no produce that is almost too ripe. Also offered are specialty boxes such as steaks, chicken and pork. Many participants in this bonus program appreciate the expanded choices. Additionally, there is no limit to the number of units or bonus foods an individual can purchase, and there are no applications to complete or qualifications to which participants must adhere. Angel Food Ministries, like most retail grocery stores, also participates in the U.S. Food Stamp program, using the Off-Line Food Stamp Voucher system.

Food sales and distribution are handled by church or non-profit organization host

sites. Orders and payments are collected by the host sites during the first part of each month. These orders are then turned in to the Angel Food main office in Monroe, Georgia, on a predetermined date. Several days later, in the same month, the host site either picks up the food from



Angel Food's 160,000 square feet warehouse to fill the orders on Distribution Day or, because this ministry is growing nationwide, food is delivered to the host site by a pre-arranged delivery mode. In most cases, as long as there is a truck headed in the direction of a community who wants this program and sees its ministry

influence, there are no extra transportation costs.

One added benefit is that the cost of each box (\$25) includes \$2 for transportation cost. If the organization picks up the boxes at the Angel Food Warehouse, this \$2 is refunded to the organization. In addition, \$1 of the cost of every box is automatically refunded to the host organization for use in benevolent purposes to help the needy in their area. Rural Development's loan of \$6,970,776 has been made to purchase the warehouse site, install large freezers and coolers to offset the fuel costs now incurred to keep the food refrigerated, and to add office and meeting space to accommodate the staff

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and provide training space host organizations.

“We are just so pleased and so proud that the president has put this kind of faith in a church and a ministry in Walton County, Ga.,” said Pastor Joe Wingo, founder and CEO of Angel Food Ministries and pastor of Emmanuel Praise Church. “Angel Food is growing every day, and with the devastation in the Gulf region, our mission has become even more important. This will enable us to serve even more families locally and across the nation.”

“This organization has a proven track record in serving families in need,” said F. Stone Workman, state director of USDA Rural Development. “This building renovation should make operations more efficient. This organization will now be able to grow and serve even more families.”