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Stretching The Food Dollar In Tough Times

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Les Bishop stood in line with his groceries, amazed.

He had four laundry baskets filled with meat, eggs, frozen vegetables, breakfast items and four pies. Three cardboard boxes held fresh fruits and vegetables. His total bill: \$190.

"I didn't realize there was going to be so much food," said Bishop, who was with his three children when he recently bought the groceries at Kingdom Builders Worship Center in Joliet.

The Joliet church is one of 21 sites in the Chicago area participating in the Georgia-based Angel Food Ministries, which provides struggling families with food at a significantly reduced cost.

The food ministry was started in 1994 by Pastors Joe and Linda Wingo, who head Emmanuel Praise Church in Monroe, Ga. The couple began buying food in bulk and passed the savings on to other families.

"As other churches in the area saw what he was doing, they started to join in," said Doug Metcalfe, Director of Media and Marketing for Angel Food.

The \$190 the Bishops spent, plus such staples as bread and milk, got them through nearly two weeks in late July.

At a retail grocery store, they would have spent \$300 to \$400 for the same amount of food.

"It helped because we're going through a rough time right now, and our money is very, very tight," said Bishop's wife, Lynda, who likely will order again this month.

She said the chicken nuggets and fresh produce she received was a big hit. "It was just a blessing the amount of food we got for the price."

www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/chi-angel-food_08aug08,0,7860961.story