The Times-Picayune
Mandeville Moments

Angel Food brings savings on groceries

Wednesday, June 11, 2008
Andrew Canulette

Everywhere you go, people are talking about the economy. Or perhaps more precisely, just how expensive it is to make ends meet these days. I don't have to tell you that the cost of gas is $4 a gallon and pundits are saying it could be $6 a gallon or more by the end of summer. That drives up the cost of food and goods; just about everything, really.

That's bad news for just about all of us. But I've got some good news for you. Sorry, I can't do anything about the price of gas, but I can refer you to a great program that can save you money on the price of groceries.

It's a collaborative effort between Angel Food Ministries of Good Hope, Ga., and the First Baptist Church of Mandeville. For the past 14 months, FBC Mandeville and Angel Food have teamed to offer a grocery relief program that is open to everyone, regardless of how much money they earn. There are other churches in St. Tammany Parish that have an Angel Food program, but FBC Mandeville is a distribution site for several of those churches, which makes the church a hub of activity on days when the food is delivered.

Here's how Angel Food works. For $30 cash or in food stamps, anyone can stop by the church on Saturday between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. to place an order. Then, on June 28, the food will be delivered to the church and distributed from 8:30 until 10:30 a.m. Inside each box is 17 items including six kinds of frozen meats, pantry staples, frozen vegetables and pizza, fresh eggs and a dessert. For an additional $16 to $20, a box of specialty meat also may be ordered.

That's a real deal, if you ask me.

And according to Evelyn Scott, the host site director for FBC Mandeville's Angel Food program, plenty of people have been inquiring about it. Scott said that each month they hand out approximately 350 boxes of food to people in the community.

"The people we serve the most are the elderly who are on fixed incomes, and a lot of young families who are trying to stretch their food budget," Scott said. "It helps because there a lot of people who are struggling who don't necessarily qualify for food stamps or aid."

Angel Food is a nonprofit outfit. The food is purchased in bulk from wholesalers and restaurant suppliers, which allows for the reduced cost of resale. For each order FBC

Mandeville places with Angel Food, the ministry returns $1 to the church. That money goes to FBC Mandeville's benevolence fund and to rent a forklift, which is needed to unload the truck upon arrival in Mandeville. When the truck arrives, a team of volunteers goes to work unloading the material and distributing it to those who placed orders.

"It's all volunteers who give a lot of their time and energy," Scott said. "You should see them unload the truck. They've got it down to a science."

FBC Mandeville also purchases three additional boxes of food each month and Angel Food donates another to the church. That food is given to the needy or donated to Safe Harbor or the Samaritan Center, Scott said.

Scott said that while many people utilize the program for themselves, there are many others of greater means who purchase food to donate to the needy.

"That's the great thing about having no requirements about who can purchase the food," she said. "If you can save your money on groceries, than maybe you'll have it to help someone else."

If you're interested in the Angel Food program at First Baptist Church, you can see the full menu and future ordering and distribution dates by going online to www.fbcmandeville.org. Additional information on participating churches closest to you can be found at www.angelfoodministries.com.

FBC Mandeville is located at 1895 U.S. 190.