SURGE

Mercy Chefs

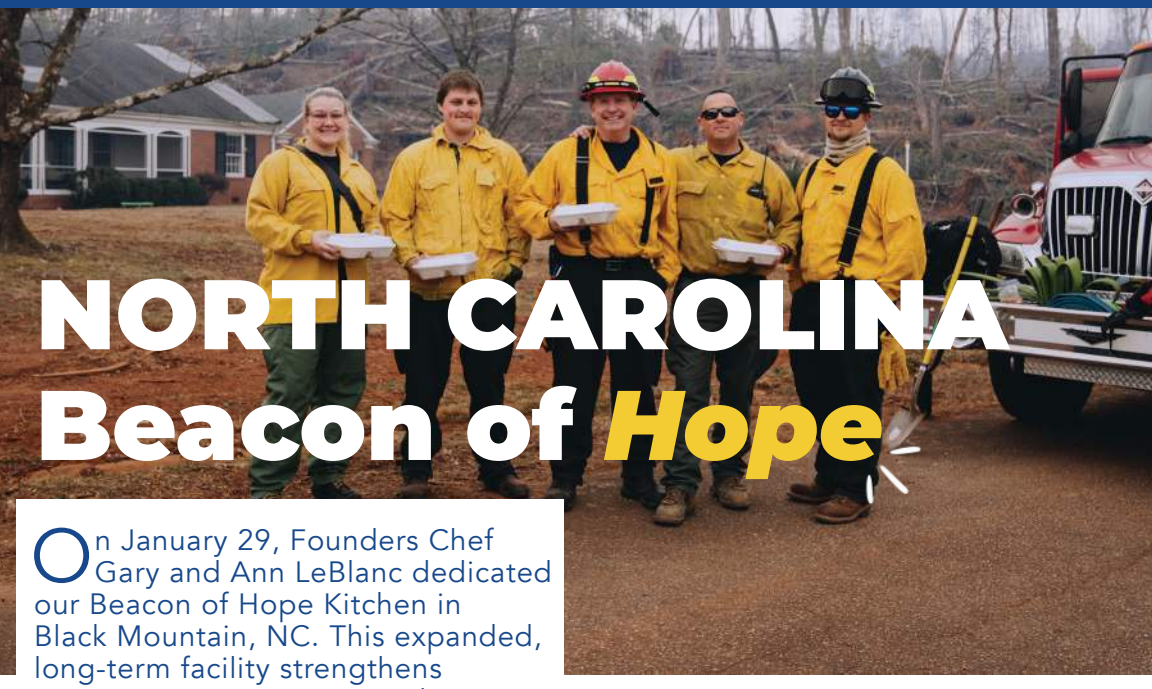
MERCY CHEFS NEWS SPRING 2025



STANDING IN THE GAP

THIS SEASON, MERCY CHEFS IS CREATING A LASTING IMPACT THROUGH MEALS AND SKILLS TRAINING, HELPING COMMUNITIES RECOVER LONG AFTER DISASTER.

Mercy Chefs goes beyond immediate relief—we're committed to leaving a lasting impact. **When disaster strikes, a hot meal and a helping hand create ripples of hope that endure long after a crisis.** Recovery is never easy, but with ongoing support, families facing hardship can begin to rebuild with resilience and strength. Our teams pour their hearts into each community, praying their efforts will inspire lasting change. Through every hot meal, grocery box, and act of care, we remind those facing hardship they are not forgotten. **Your generosity allows us to stand in the gap, uplifting communities as they find their way forward.**



NORTH CAROLINA Beacon of *Hope*

On January 29, Founders Chef Gary and Ann LeBlanc dedicated our Beacon of Hope Kitchen in Black Mountain, NC. This expanded, long-term facility strengthens our commitment to serving hot, nutritious meals and groceries to families recovering in Western North Carolina—a region still reeling from Hurricane Helene's impact.



That same day, **just miles away, the Crooked Creek wildfire erupted in Old Fort,** prompting evacuation orders. Our chef team quickly prepared chicken pot pie and fresh green salad for first responders battling the flames. **Another disaster so soon after Helene was unexpected, but God positioned us to serve a community still on its long road to recovery.**

Since our response to Helene, **Mercy Chefs has served over 500,000 meals across Western North Carolina**. Each week, our Beacon of Hope Kitchen prepares thousands of hot meals while also providing Family Grocery Boxes filled with essential ingredients—up to 50 meals per box—empowering families to cook, nourish, and restore a sense of normalcy for their loved ones.



Many are finding hope through these meals, even amidst hardship. Jillian, a teacher from Black Mountain Primary, reflected, **"It's gonna be a long time before we're really okay again. It will be a new normal—it won't be the same, but it will be good. It will be good again one day."**

Watch Jillian's story below.



Our expanded reach would not be possible without the support of friends like you. **Thank you for helping us feed body and soul in Western North Carolina.**



CALIFORNIA WILDFIRES

This year began with devastation as wildfires raged across California, forcing families to flee their homes with little more than the clothes on their backs. Entire neighborhoods were reduced to ash, leaving thousands without shelter. In the face of such loss, Mercy Chefs served over 31,300 meals to displaced families, schoolchildren, first responders, and volunteers.

For many, these meals were a source of comfort. Despite evacuating with his family, Altadena-resident Wayne found solace in the jambalaya we served, a dish that reminded him of his grandmother's cooking. He shared, **"Food first is great, and then when somebody goes to the extreme of getting something special, that just makes it even better for the people who are victimized and gives them an opportunity to exhale."**



That's why Mercy Chefs exists—to stand in the gap when disaster strikes and beyond, offering not just meals but hope and dignity in the darkest hours. Your generosity allows us to respond to crises and remain for the journey ahead.

SERVING AVESON CHARTER

When Mercy Chefs arrived in Pasadena, we restored an abandoned kitchen for relief operations, never expecting it to become a vital lifeline for Aveson Charter School, which lost its facility to the fires. This kitchen ensured students and staff had hot meals on their first day back, and it continues to nourish them as they rebuild. Before transitioning out, we equipped staff with training and groceries to sustain their program, ensuring no student goes without a meal.



Read the full story about Aveson Charter School here.



HISTORIC FLOODING in Eastern Kentucky

In February, Mercy Chefs responded once again—this time to the devastating floods in Eastern Kentucky, West Virginia, and Virginia. **Within days after the deadly flooding, a severe winter storm blanketed the region in snow, leaving already food-insecure and isolated communities even more vulnerable.**

Our team quickly deployed to Pikeville, KY, setting up a food distribution site at Shelby Valley High School. **Across the river in Raysal, WV, we transported hot meals and grocery boxes to a small community that sustained significant flood damage.** Many families feared they'd been forgotten until Mercy Chefs showed up.

In total, **we served over 70,000 meals across three states.** To our pleasant surprise, the school's kitchen included a tilt skillet, a powerful tool for large-scale cooking that had rarely been used. Before wrapping up our response, our chefs trained the school's cafeteria staff on how to use the equipment.

"I have learned a lot about our tilt skillet," shared Yolanda, a lunch lady at Shelby Valley High School. "I didn't know you could make so much in it. We could make one pot, and it would feed all of our students here."

Beyond providing meals, Mercy Chefs is equipping others to carry on our mission long after our trucks roll out. The impact of our work continues here as these struggling communities begin to rebuild. From the meals served to the knowledge shared, **all this was made possible through your unwavering support.**









MISSISSIPPI TORNADOES

A powerful storm system tore through the Midwest and South in mid-March, and **Mississippi endured one of the worst tornado outbreaks in recent history**. In towns like Tylertown, homes were leveled, trees uprooted, and families left with nothing.

Mercy Chefs partnered with Salem Baptist Church to serve Tylertown and surrounding communities, delivering more than 19,000 hot meals to tornado victims, first responders, and linemen working tirelessly to restore power. More than nourishment, each meal was a reminder that families were not alone.

Amidst the grief, we heard incredible survival stories. Mario and his family huddled in their bathroom as the storm passed. A massive tree crashed onto their home, preventing the tornado from tearing off the roof. Through it all, **they believe God protected them, and they found comfort in the hot meals we served.**

Whether it's a meal for a weary first responder or a grieving family, Mercy Chefs stands beside those who might otherwise feel forgotten. Your generosity ensures hope reaches those who need it most.

REMEMBERING VICTIMS

Among the lives lost was a precious seven-year-old boy and the youngest tornado victim. His parents lost their home and greatest treasure. As they faced the unimaginable, Mercy Chefs lifted the burden of a meal as they laid their child to rest, serving a Spider-Man-themed menu in his honor. Knowing he asked for pizza rolls every day after school, we baked special ones—a small but heartfelt tribute to his memory.



"*We say eight seconds.* Everything changed and now we see all the devastation, but the Lord protected us."

- Mario, Mississippi tornado victim



Mercy Chefs GLOBAL

FEEDING PAKISTAN









Since early 2024, Mercy Chefs Global has been partnering with churches in Pakistan to provide vital relief to a Christian slave community whose village was destroyed in an act of religious persecution. More than four and a half million bonded slaves must make 1,000 bricks a day, earning mere cents, trapped in an endless cycle of poverty and oppression. Children as young as three are forced to labor alongside their parents, and for many, this life is all they will ever know.

In these often-forgotten corners, communities endure severe food scarcity, but **through your generosity, hot meals and groceries are bringing hope and healing and transforming lives.** We've expanded our reach to serve multiple communities across Pakistan, including an orphanage that hadn't received consistent food in months. During our February trip, our team members baptized 12 individuals.

In the remote Hindu Kush, where harsh winters and impassable roads cause starvation, **we are delivering groceries to families hearing the Gospel for the first time.** We are witnessing how your support is opening doors to not just nourish the body but feed the soul.

Mercy Chefs Global exists to serve hot meals and local, nutrient-dense groceries to those facing hunger and hardship in the most isolated and persecuted regions, filling empty stomachs and making room for things of lasting, eternal value.

Your compassion empowers us to reach more families and communities, from Christian slave villages to distant tribes in the Hindu Kush Mountains. Thank you for helping us feed body and soul in Pakistan and beyond.



A MESSAGE FROM THE FOUNDER

Looking back on this spring, I am filled with gratitude. Every page of this SURGE issue holds a story—one of heartbreak, resilience, and hope restored. Each story is a powerful reminder of what happens when friends like you choose to show up for others, time and again.

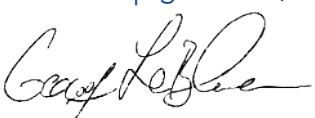
In places like California, Kentucky, and Mississippi, your compassion has met families in the wake of disaster with more than just a meal. It has brought comfort, dignity, and the reassurance that they are not alone. **Whether it's a warm meal or a grocery box to make home-cooked meals, your support reminds families in crisis that they are seen and loved.**

One of the most meaningful moments this year was the ribbon-cutting for our new Beacon of Hope Kitchen in Western North Carolina. This kitchen has already responded to wildfires, serving high-quality meals to firefighters on the front lines. **But it's more than a building; it's a promise that we will continue showing up, whenever and wherever we are needed.** I remain in awe of God's timing—how He led us to Western North Carolina months ago, preparing us to serve even more people.

Our mission doesn't stop at home. As we extend our reach into some of the most remote and desperate corners of the world, we are seeing lives transformed because of your willingness to say yes. Our global outreach continues to grow, and we are just getting started in bringing healing and restoration to communities in need, like those in Pakistan.

Thank you for standing in the gap with us as we ***"just go feed people"*** around the globe. We cannot do what we do without you.

With deep gratitude,



Gary LeBlanc
Founder & CEO

Introducing Planned Giving

The Mercy Chefs Legacy Society

The Mercy Chefs Legacy Society honors those who include Mercy Chefs in their estate plans, ensuring their commitment to ***"just go feed people"*** extends for generations. Through wills, trusts, beneficiary designations, and other planned gifts, members play a vital role in sustaining our mission.

Mercy Chefs
Feeding Body and Soul

711 Washington Street, Portsmouth, VA 23704

By joining you will:

1. Provide meals to families in need for years to come.
2. Empower Mercy Chefs' swift disaster relief efforts.
3. Expand long-term initiatives addressing food insecurity and community enrichment.

As a member, you will enjoy exclusive benefits. Scan the QR code or visit **mercychefs.com/legacy-society** to learn more and connect with us!

