

Leading Lake Houston – Serving Others

We can all agree on one thing: nobody should have to go hungry.

“Needing help with food isn’t uncommon,” said Millie Garrison, Executive Director of HAAM. “We saw more than 16,000 unique individuals last year at HAAM, and that doesn’t include the thousands who come through our food fairs every month.” Those families are typically food insecure, meaning that they often make the difficult choices about buying food or visiting a doctor, purchasing bulky but low-nutrient foods instead of fruits and vegetables, and relying on schools and food banks to round out the monthly food allocation.

Jenniffer Gisclair, Coordinator of HAAM’s Food Pantry, witnesses this struggle every day. When funds are available, Gisclair is able to purchase [fresh and frozen fruits, vegetables and lean meats](#) to provide to area families. But the vast majority of the time HAAM’s food pantry can only distribute what has been donated: non-perishable, easy-to-prepare foods like pasta, canned fish, rice, beans, and canned vegetables. While incredibly grateful for those much-needed donations, “I always wish we could provide healthy, nutritious foods to our families every time they come to HAAM,” said Gisclair.

Not inclined to sit around waiting for a miracle, Garrison and Gisclair came up with an idea, submitted a proposal, and today that idea is becoming a reality. Along with her classmates from Leadership Lake Houston, Gisclair is putting her shovel in the dirt to build a garden. “This group is absolutely amazing,” said Gisclair. “Millie put forth a service project proposal to build a garden and of all of the innovative proposals that were submitted, we were blessed to be selected.”



The outdoor garden will have an indoor partner – a “tower garden” that is a stacked, hydroponic growing system. “We’ll be able to grow herbs and vegetables year round,” Gisclair explained. “We’re planning to partner with a nutritionist to hold healthy eating classes, learn more about preventing and managing disease through proper diet, and then provide those nutritious foods to our clients.”



Every year, 20 emerging and existing leaders from the Lake Houston Area spend eight months together learning about the critical needs of our community; building the tools to

meet those needs; and serving the community. Organized by the Lake Houston Area Chamber of Commerce, Leadership Lake Houston is currently graduating its seventh class.

According to Jenna Armstrong, President and CEO of the Chamber, "Leadership Lake Houston grows community leaders by educating, enabling and encouraging them to make a positive impact on our community. As our community continues to recover from the devastating floods, it's more important than ever that we have leaders well connected and well educated about our community to further identify opportunities for improvement and growth."

"We were honored to be selected by Leadership Lake Houston," said Garrison. "This project really moves HAAM forward as an innovator in client services for the Lake Houston Area."