



# 600,000 Pounds Of Food Distributed: Red Hill Church, Pastor, Volunteers, FDA Program, Made It Happen

by Dan Brannan, Content Director  
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EDWARDSVILLE - Red Hill Church in Edwardsville took a simple concept - providing food to help families during the COVID-19 Pandemic - and made it into an astronomical giveaway of 600,000 pounds from August to December 2020.

Red Hill Pastor Rayden Hollis said his church and other volunteers participated in the Farmers To Families program coordinated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Red Hill's group bid on routes set up as destination places by the FDA and almost every single week, two semi loads of food would come to be distributed.

"We were connected through a distributor and we were able to help connect churches in Colorado, Belleville, Kansas City, Indianapolis, Michigan, Las Vegas, Iowa, and Chicago to the program," a proud Hollis said. "We started the food program in August and had two in September and October and three or four weekends in November and then a couple of December. Every time it was offered we distributed the food."

Red Hill utilized its church congregation and other volunteers to help distribute the food at Liberty Middle School Edwardsville drive-through area. There was one occasion where traffic was backed up all the way down Governor's Parkway. Hollis said the line that day showed the desperate need people have for food supplies during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

"It was incredible," Hollis said of the impact of the fall food distribution.

"The longest we heard of the line on Governor's Parkway was all the way back to Schnucks," he said.

Hollis said several of the people who drove through the distribution would tell their personal stories and each time, it touched the church congregation and the volunteers. Some who obtained food had tears in their eyes at the impact the simple food distribution had on that particular time in their lives.

Volunteers came from everywhere from Liberty Middle students to the Edwardsville High School wrestling team and honor society group, to Edwardsville-Glen Carbon Rotary, SIUE and numerous area churches had members assist.

"I have a deep conviction in my heart and with the members of our church that we should be the best citizens in our community and as a result have some type of action from this. We had this food distribution opportunity and the school district was gracious enough to let us use this site and leave our forklift at Liberty for multiple weeks."

Hollis said the food distribution also left a lasting impact on those who volunteered. With a church base of about 100 in his congregation, Hollis' group and the volunteers were so proud of the food distribution effort to those in need this past fall.

Hollis said just by observing the people, and lines he had never witnessed in Edwardsville, he and the volunteers knew in their hearts, the impact the church and volunteers left was lasting to those who needed assistance.

