**CHILD HUNGER SUMMIT 2017**

**Food Pantries**

Woody Woodin, Upper Sand Mountain Parish

Jonny Flynn, Grant First Baptist Church

Gloria Hollins, Food Bank of North Alabama

Matt Ward, The Well Family Worship Center

**About**

Woody Woodin

* Began in 1969, group of churches, covers 1,000 sq. miles, “Man on the Mountain” backpack program
* 75% of children are on free & reduced lunches in his area
* All elementary schools in his area have backpack programs
* Provides emergency services
  + five sessions a week offering client choice food pantry services
* Offers counseling services (holistic and spiritual needs)
* Working to reduce redundant agencies to help prioritize spending
* “counselors are referral agents”
* “we have the abundance to help those in need”

Johnny Flynn

* Grant First Baptist Church connected with the food bank to create Monday night meals with nutritional value
  + hard to serve healthy food, but that’s not helpful
* Their program was around for about six months before starting emergency food boxes
  + two days a week for three hours they give out about 130 “banana boxes” averaging at about 3,000 lbs. of food a week
* Every Wednesday night they pick up kids with busses to feed about 100 kids total
* Offers free Thanksgiving and Christmas meals with optional delivery
* Held a fall festival to engage the community and supplied free meals for 400 people
* Block party, Easter egg hunt (both supply interaction and food for children)

Matt Ward

* “we are not in the food business, we are in the people business”
* “12 Bushels” is their food distribution program
  + thrift shop funds the purchase of food
  + no advertisement, just kindness to spread the word
  + relies on connections made within the shop
  + works with Feeding America
* Food distribution center
  + Feeds 150-200 families (800 per/week)
  + Seven “touch points” including smiling, love, Jesus, etc.
  + Talk to people who wait in line- clients show up very early and this is a great time to form connections

Gloria Hollins

* The food bank provides food donated by local networks and businesses to partnering banks
  + Part of the feeding America connection
  + “The middle man” in combating hunger
* Food purchasing program is available
  + Backpack program
* Over 200 programs use the North Alabama Food Bank
  + Everyone is hard working and dedicated to helping those in need

**Questions**

1. ***Tips for early stages of this business?***
   1. Woody: “start small” “whatever you do, do well” “before you launch, train your volunteers” “every voice is valid, listen to your volunteers about solutions to problems” “keep your eyes and your heart open to little miracles”
   2. Matt: “Get to know Laura Fincher” “don’t try to reinvent the wheel” “rely on those who have a lot of experience in the field” “operate in faith”
   3. Johnny: “look at it from a small perspective” “obstacles should be your driving motivators- always be searching for solutions” “we don’t have a budget, we run on volunteers. Yet we have accomplished so much”
2. ***Gloria, what changes have you seen over time at the food bank? How are we addressing child hunger?***
   1. “I started when the staff was small and it was a big feat to say we distributed 3 million pounds of food. Now we are distributing over 8 million Pounds of food annually. This includes backpacking programs. Backpacking programs became more popular after a mother let three of her children die from starvation. This situation brought attention to the need for children feeding programs. It’s programs like these that help us fight child hunger.” “grown in our ability to store more food”
3. ***Do organizations need a tax-exempt status to use food bank food?*** 
   1. Yes
4. ***Are there certain food items to focus on to give people?***
   1. Gloria: canned foods since they are nonperishable and easy to store. Also, complete meal items like soups cereals, and macaroni and cheese. Peanut butter, rice, and dry beans are also good staple items.
   2. Woody: don’t presume people have a fridge or freezer but still try to find nonperishable items that fit the criteria for a healthy diet
5. ***How can we transport people to food banks that are far away from people? Should we open more food banks in areas without them?*** 
   1. Gloria: the food banks website refers people to various food banks by location (what is closest to the individual seeking them)
6. ***What are some ways to fund a small food pantry? Are there any grants***?
   1. Woody: advertise and network your food pantry. This will get people’s attention from many places that might donate or help fund your pantry. Give people receipts for tax deductible donations.
   2. Gloria: non-profits that aren’t affiliated with the food bank should affiliate. This can allow agencies to connect and work together to provide ideas and solutions to your funding issues.
7. ***What is your hope or vision for the future?*** 
   1. Woody: for god to continue to provide
   2. Johnny: to connect our communities more
   3. Gloria: the word spreads and there are more people concerned with child hunger that are willing to support the cause. That one day there will be no families that are hungry since there is enough food, we just need the agencies to distribute it.
   4. Matt: to have less people who need to come to a food bank or benefit from these services. To help people get back on their feet!