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# INSIDE *the* GATE

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FALL 2020

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Gene Buzzard (1946-2020)

Rev. John C. Powers

# Dear Friends of Iron Gate —



As we take a moment to sum up the past six months into the pandemic, the word that still comes to mind is GRATITUDE. Yes, it's been unpredictable. There have been moments of fear and joy—but the thing that resonates is hope. We are still here; we are still delivering on our mission; and we are grateful for the donors that make it possible. I am grateful for our board of directors and advisors who have stood by the staff, listened to our needs and concerns, and helped us create a safe environment where we can continue to feed the hungry and homeless every day.

These words from Iron Gate Board President, Shane Saunders, eloquently capture the moment:

“In normal times I am grateful for the work Iron Gate does to provide for our most vulnerable neighbors but, as we all know, these are not normal times. What I've witnessed in the last several months is nothing short of miraculous. I'm grateful to serve on a Board where members reacted quickly and responded to the highly pressing need caused by the sudden onset of poverty related to the pandemic. I'm grateful for the staff we have at Iron Gate who are the most committed team of professionals I've ever seen. The way our staff dug in and adapted on the fly to ensure that our services continued uninterrupted (we didn't miss a single day of service) has brought me to tears on more than one occasion. Perhaps the most inspiring part of this year and for which I am most grateful is the outpouring of support from our community. Tulsans realized that, just because they couldn't volunteer in person, didn't mean they couldn't help in some other way. Businesses, civic organizations, and families organized food drives. Our philanthropic partners stepped up and provided the monetary resources we needed to operate safely. Our leadership, specifically Mayor G.T. Bynum and Commissioner Karen Keith at the City and County, worked hand-in-hand with us to make sure we could serve the hungry of Tulsa at a time where that need grew (and continues to grow) exponentially. Sweetest of all has been the kind words of encouragement and thanks that our friends, neighbors, and guests sent us over the past several months. Sometimes those words alone gave us the strength and motivation to press on amid daunting circumstances. I have such pride in the way that Tulsa came together to support us and to support each other. I hope you share that same sense of pride with me, because it is nothing short of amazing.”

You are amazing. Along with our guests, you inspire us to keep going. Thank you for being the light.



With Gratitude,

**Carrie Vesely Henderson, CFRE**

Executive Director

918-879-1707

[chenderson@irongatetulsa.org](mailto:chenderson@irongatetulsa.org)

**Carrie and Shane Saunders, Iron Gate Board President,  
at Cooking for a Cause 2019.**



Lawyers Fighting Hunger and Iron Gate distributed 1,000 turkeys in 2019.

## IT'S ALMOST TURKEY TIME

Iron Gate and Lawyers Fighting Hunger are teaming up once again to help put the turkey in Thanksgiving for hundreds of families. This year, the holiday meal could mean more than ever, as many families are struggling to make ends meet. This will be the 11th year for the annual turkey distribution. Lawyers Fighting Hunger, led by **Hugh Robert**, raises all of the money to provide the dinners. Iron Gate helps recruit recipients of the dinners and coordinates the distribution. Thanks to the generosity of Robert and area lawyers, Lawyers Fighting Hunger has provided more than 8,100 turkey dinners since 2010. While the festivities will change to accommodate Covid-19 public health regulations, Lawyers Fighting Hunger leaders were determined to make sure the turkey distribution happened this year. “Lawyers Fighting Hunger is just an incredible organization,” said Carrie Vesely Henderson, Iron Gate’s Executive Director. “They have been making Thanksgiving possible for so many Tulsa families. And I’m thrilled they wanted to come back this year, despite some of the challenges created by the pandemic.” Recipients will receive a turkey along with several side items to make the holiday festive. “We could all use a dose of normalcy and making sure Tulsa families can have a good Thanksgiving is a real gift this year,” said Henderson.

## IRON GATE STEPS UP

Most people know that Iron Gate provides a hot meal to people every morning. But you might not know that twice a day, Iron Gate workers are packing up dozens of meals to deliver to a new temporary shelter.

“It’s just one of those pandemic challenges,” said Carrie Vesely Henderson, Iron Gate’s Executive Director. “Community leaders saw a need and we stepped up to help fill it.”

It started back in late April. It was the early days of the pandemic. The city had practically shut down. Area homeless shelters were encouraged to sharply cut their numbers to allow for social distancing to stop the spread of Covid-19. Faced with turning people out in the streets in the middle of a public health crisis, city, county and nonprofit leaders came together to come up with a solution. Led by **Housing Solutions**, a nonprofit dedicated to alleviating homelessness, the temporary homeless shelter at the old juvenile justice building in West Tulsa was created. The shelter’s purpose was to provide another location for those experiencing homelessness to stay safe in the pandemic. It currently serves

as a day shelter for as many as 100 people and an overnight shelter for 55. Those staying at the shelter have access to showers, medical care, food and laundry services. When it came to feeding those staying there, Iron Gate answered the call.

“This is what we do,” said Henderson. “Our team knows how to deliver quality meals on the scale needed. So, of course, we stepped up to provide food for the shelter.”

“It’s been quite an undertaking,” Henderson continued. Iron Gate is currently providing meals twice a day to the shelter—100 meals at mid-day and 55 meals in the early evening.

“Our staff has really risen to the occasion, cooking additional meals, working longer shifts, to provide meals for those sheltered at the old juvenile justice facility. But we are proud to do it and have received a lot of compliments from our nonprofit partners on the quality of the food.”

The temporary shelter has operated since April with a brief hiatus over the summer and is expected to continue through the end of the year.

### IRON GATE STAFF

Carrie Vesely Henderson  
*Executive Director*

Ashli Sims  
*Development Director*

Matt Mitchell  
*Operations Director*

Caroline Kitalong  
*Kitchen Manager*

Christina Maxwell  
*Volunteer Coordinator*

Carissa Gutierrez  
*Development Coordinator*

Claudia Cravens  
*Accountant*

Jamie Blocker  
Colton Cooper

Kia Davis

Adam Gross

Ashlee Haley

Clay Henry

McKenna Kolb

Liz Lopez

Cliff Manuel

Brandon Piercy

Jerrod Piercy

Will Powell

Kenny Reynolds

Sherwood Siskind

### INSIDE THE GATE

Ashli Sims

*Writer/Editor*

Carrie Vesely Henderson

*Editor*

Annie Tyndall

*Designer*



Sherwood Siskind and the Iron Gate Kitchen Crew prepare 155 meals every day for the temporary shelter.

# GRATITUDE



Iron Gate is so grateful for Southminster Presbyterian Church for hosting their "Feed Me Friday" food drives. They've gotten the whole neighborhood involved, collecting 2,000 pounds of food since May.

During these turbulent times, the challenges are front and center. Uncertainty, worry and grief can rule the day. At Iron Gate, we've seen it first-hand: the furloughs that became layoffs; the first-timer who became a repeat customer; the

need that did not abate. But we also get to witness what doesn't make headlines: gratitude. From our guests to our partners to our staff and board, there's

an overwhelming sense of gratefulness. And we wanted to share that with all of you. For all of the challenges, there are those who are rising to the occasion. For all the uncertainty, your support means we can be the one thing that is certain. For all the worry and grief, there is relief and comfort in a hot meal and trunk-full of groceries. So thank you on behalf of all of us for your support.

We're thankful for the surprise donations like this one from Coca-Cola Southwest Beverages. They brought three pallets full of 3,000 bottled teas that we served with our daily carryout meals.

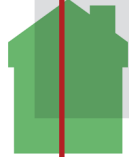


## OUR STAFF THANKS YOU...

“Thank you all for all of your continued support through these difficult times. It means the world to our staff to have you all in our corner. Your belief in what we do helps drive us to carry out our critical mission.”

**Matt Mitchell**

*Iron Gate Operations Director*



“Thank you guys for all you do for us. Without you all, we wouldn’t know where we would be. We’re so grateful that you guys have always been there for us.”

**Will Powell**

*Iron Gate Kitchen Staff*

“When I think about how many people are impacted because of Iron Gate, I think about every person who makes that possible. You put a smile on someone’s face, when they receive food. Donors and supporters like you help us continue to do what we do. Thank you for your generosity and support. You give us the strength to push on during these times. Because people need us, just like we need you.”

**Carissa Gutierrez**

*Iron Gate Development Coordinator*

## OUR GUESTS THANK YOU...

*This means so much for my family. Thank you for thinking of others!*

*I am a single Mom of 3 and am so very thankful for all your help. You have no idea how much you are helping.  
Happy & Appreciated Mom!*



“Thank you so much for your wonderful donation. My family appreciates you! The times are hard and you’re making it possible for me to pay my bills through providing food. Thank You!

**Jessica & Family**

*Iron Gate Pantry Guests*

“Always grateful for all the help during these trying times. Thank you from my family to yours.”

“Thank you for taking your time and hard-earned dollars to help me and my family. And for those that can’t say these simple words: thank you.”

**R.P., Iron Gate Pantry Guest**

## OUR PARTNERS THANK YOU...

“Thank you so much! Without your donations we would go hungry.”

**The Malone Family**

*Iron Gate Pantry Guests*



“This is amazing... it’s been the best place to go. Iron Gate gives us such a variety of things that other places don’t offer.”

**Katie, Caseworker for CREOKS Behavioral Health**

## OUR BOARD THANKS YOU...

“I’m so thankful for our community. In a year when it’s easy to focus inward on our own challenges, the encouragement we have received from our Iron Gate supporters has been overwhelming. Iron Gate serves more people now with a greater need than ever before and we are so grateful that so many have responded with notes of encouragement, food drive gifts and donations.”

**Lindsey Bristow, Iron Gate Board Member**

# FOOD DRIVES GO VIRTUAL

They arrive several times a week. At times, the cardboard boxes with the cheery smile across the side have stacked up nearly to the ceiling.

“We’ve been so surprised and thrilled at the number of Amazon boxes that we receive,” said Christina Maxwell, Iron Gate’s Volunteer Coordinator. “It feels like the holidays around here, when we get in 20-30 Amazon boxes filled with food.”

Food drives are an important source of food for Iron Gate, supplementing the groceries we receive from the Community Food Bank of Eastern Oklahoma.

“These food drives really answer a specific need and allows us to obtain a variety of items we wouldn’t have access to otherwise,” Maxwell said.

And at the beginning of the Coronavirus pandemic, Iron Gate leaders were concerned this key source of food might evaporate.

“Back in March, the food supply was a real concern for us,” Maxwell continued. As part of her work

coordinating volunteers, she also helps organize food drives.

“With the volunteer program on hold, we were really missing our partners that normally would host food drives at their offices,” Maxwell said. “By creating these Amazon Smile Wish Lists, we were able to engage with our partners in a different way and it allowed them to continue to support the food insecure in our community.”

Iron Gate supporters have provided more than 9,601 items through our Amazon Charity Wish Lists this year. That’s a 25% increase over last year. Several organizations are participating, including Mid-Continent Insurance Group, CEC Corporation, and Harvard Avenue Christian Church, which have been the top three contributors so far this year.

“We’re so grateful for everyone who takes the time to click over to Amazon to help,” said Maxwell. “This does so much to provide groceries for those in our community who are struggling.”



Iron Gate supporters have bought more than 9,000 items from our Amazon Charity Wish Lists.

If you’re interested in hosting a virtual food drive, please contact Christina Maxwell [cmaxwell@irongatetulsa.org](mailto:cmaxwell@irongatetulsa.org) or 918-879-1714.

Click over to <https://amzn.to/2SMJIMN> to shop Iron Gate’s Amazon Smile Charity Wish List.



Angel is one of the guests featured in the Faces of Iron Gate portrait series. She says: “You don’t know how many lives you’re changing and how many people you’re helping just by giving them a smile and a warm meal.”

## FACES OF THE PANDEMIC

With masked portraits, this year’s Faces of Iron Gate could just as well be dubbed Faces of the Pandemic. The story of this unprecedented global public health crisis was captured by veteran Photojournalist, Mike Simons. He is no stranger to Iron Gate, having covered the organization for years for the Tulsa World. “The work Iron Gate does is essential and important,” Simons said. “When approached about the Faces of Iron Gate project, I leapt at the opportunity. Right now is such an important time for Iron Gate and other organizations that serve people experiencing homelessness and others in need. I wanted to be able to spend time with clients and get to know a little bit about them. I enjoyed working on the project. I met some incredible people, and I hope the photos do them justice.” Since 2011, Iron Gate has worked with local photographers to capture the Faces of Iron Gate as a way to humanize the issue of hunger. The portraits are meant to challenge who we think of when we think about the hungry and also show it affects people from many different walks of life. You can view the whole collection on Iron Gate’s website: [www.irongatetulsa.org/our-guests](http://www.irongatetulsa.org/our-guests)



# cooking FOR A cause



## **EVEN WITHOUT A PARTY, WE'RE STILL COOKING.**

For 14 years, Iron Gate has partnered with Tulsa People and Metro Appliances & More to put on the tastiest party in town, featuring some of your favorite chefs cooking up some of their favorite dishes. Unfortunately, the party won't be happening this year. But we're still cooking and we need

you more than ever. Iron Gate has served throughout the Coronavirus pandemic without interruption. Iron Gate is providing 30% more meals and helping 80% more families with groceries. We're so grateful to our patrons who are helping to keep us cooking.

## **THANK YOU TO OUR 2020 PATRONS!**

### **THE BIG CHEESE**

George Kaiser Family Foundation  
Charles & Lynn Schusterman  
Family Foundation  
Anne and Henry Zarrow  
Family Foundation

### **CREAM OF THE CROP**

Cherokee Nation Businesses  
Coretz Family Foundation

### **SALT OF THE EARTH**

Hille Foundation  
Joanne Davis Talbot

### **SPICE OF LIFE**

Indian Healthcare Resource Center  
Simmons Bank  
Carol Tandy  
John and Mindy Morrison Taylor

### **THE GOOD EGG**

Anchor Stone Co.  
Capital Advisors  
Flintco Construction  
GH2 Architects  
Paul and Lucy Loving  
Til and Raymond Lucien  
Cyndy and Michael Phillips  
Bob and Leslie Pritchard  
Tom and Betty Rains  
Joyce and Ambrose Sims  
Ken Underwood Law Office

### **ICING ON THE CAKE**

Carrie and Jason Henderson  
Mrs. Meredith Howard  
Charlie Jackson and Tamara Rains  
Gina and Mike Lodes  
Dr. and Mrs. Tom Stees  
Amy and Carey Waters

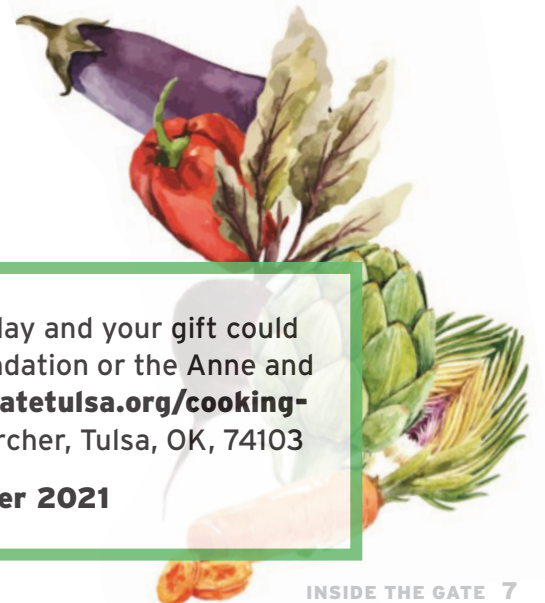
### **DONATIONS**

Delores Andrews  
Keenan and Starre Barnard  
Sharon and Mike Bartlett  
Michael Christian and Paige Shelton  
Linda Goldenstern  
Hawkins Oil  
Tim and Kelly Heuback  
Loving Eyecare, Inc  
Sue Phillips  
Allison Taylor  
Pat and Clay Woodrum

\*Donations after 10/15/20 will be acknowledged in the next newsletter.

It's not too late to support Cooking for a Cause. Donate today and your gift could be matched by the Charles & Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation or the Anne and Henry Zarrow Family Foundation. Donate today: [www.irongatetulsa.org/cooking-for-a-cause2020](http://www.irongatetulsa.org/cooking-for-a-cause2020) or send a check to Iron Gate at 501 W. Archer, Tulsa, OK, 74103

**Save the Date Cooking for a Cause – October 2021**





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Tulsa, Oklahoma 74103

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***THANKS FOR HELPING  
SCARE AWAY HUNGER  
THIS HALLOWEEN***

**Halloween Drive-Thru Food Drive**

**Saturday, October 31**

**Thanks for skipping the candy  
and bringing the canned goods.**

**You can still help scare away hunger, by  
shopping our Amazon Wish List.**

**<https://amzn.to/3kZz1SZ>**

