



SNAP WORKS

Real Stories of How SNAP is
Helping American Families



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- 1 LETTER FROM BILL SHORE
- 2 THOMAS
- 4 ROSEMARY
- 6 STEPHANIE
- 8 EVANNIE
- 10 SAM
- 12 NAQUILA
- 14 MORE STORIES
- 16 WHY SHOULD YOU CARE ABOUT SNAP
- 17 WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP HUNGRY KIDS?

WHAT IS SNAP?

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, SNAP (formerly known as food stamps), is an important federal program that helps low-income families across the country put food on the table. Today, 46 million Americans rely on SNAP to ensure their families have access to nutritious foods. Nearly half of all SNAP recipients are children, making the program the first line of defense in the battle against childhood hunger. The program is a critical lifeline for families who fallen on hard times, helping them to get back on their feet. In fact, the average amount of time a new SNAP recipient receives benefits is only 8-10 months. SNAP has been proven to be one of our most effective anti-poverty programs.

A LETTER FROM SHARE OUR STRENGTH'S CEO AND FOUNDER, BILL SHORE



Recently, I had the pleasure of visiting with friends who have been supporters of Share Our Strength for years. This husband and wife have been extremely successful in business, and recently turned their attention to philanthropy full-time. Our conversation turned to the debate over SNAP, and the importance of sharing the voices of the millions of Americans who rely on this program to feed their children.

My friend looked up and said, “We were on food stamps for almost a year when we were first out of college.” Her husband followed, “I was terrible at business when first starting out...I remember the day we went to enroll. Fortunately it was just temporary. We were on food stamps for less than a year, and provided a really important safety net during a time we were struggling to make ends meet.”

They’ve been married almost 25 years, have four children, and have made a huge impact fighting poverty in the U.S. and overseas.

Their story represents why we fight to protect SNAP. This poverty-relieving program is a critical lifeline for millions of families and works just as it should - as a temporary safety net to ensure families who are struggling to make ends meet are able put food on the table for their kids. Nearly half of all SNAP recipients are children. SNAP truly is our first line of defense against childhood hunger and will help us make No Kid Hungry a reality.

At Share Our Strength, we often say that those who are hungry are not only vulnerable but voiceless. The men and women in this book are determined to make themselves heard. Please share their stories with others to help us bring urgency and accountability to protecting SNAP and to our efforts to achieve No Kid Hungry in this nation.

Billy Shore
Chief Executive Officer and Founder



THOMAS

THOMAS LOST HIS WIFE A FEW YEARS AGO AND IS CURRENTLY RAISING HIS PRE-TEEN DAUGHTER ON HIS OWN. Thomas has worked all of his life and is pained that he is currently unemployed, despite his repeated efforts to find work. In this difficult season, he often relies on his church, the Federal School Lunch Program, and his SNAP benefits to put food on the table. Thomas believes he and his daughter “would not be able to survive” if not for food stamps and reduced-price school meals.

“I HEAR PEOPLE ON THE NEWS SAYING, ‘GET RID OF FOOD STAMPS’ BUT IF YOU HAVE NEVER BEEN IN THAT PERSON’S SHOES HOW CAN YOU MAKE THAT JUDGMENT?”



ROSEMARY

ROSEMARY HAS FULL CUSTODY OF HER THREE GRANDCHILDREN, whom she has been caring for since her daughter passed away from cancer several years ago. Rosemary used to work full-time in healthcare but has been unable to work in recent years due to illness and family responsibilities. She struggles financially to care for her grandchildren. She sold her home and moved into a smaller apartment to cut expenses but relies on SNAP to help feed her family. “I’m used to working, buying what I need. I’m not used to doing without and I didn’t want to accept it.” She is very grateful for the assistance. Without SNAP, her grandkids “probably wouldn’t have food to eat.”

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STEPHANIE

STEPHANIE FLED A DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SITUATION IN ORDER TO MAKE A BETTER LIFE FOR HER TWO YOUNG DAUGHTERS. They spent six months in a shelter during this time. Stephanie, 41, currently works full-time in a medical office while her girls are in daycare/pre-school. She wants her kids to understand the importance of hard work. She lives frugally, adheres to a strict budget and does not use credit cards. She also looks for fun things to do that will not cost her a lot of money so her daughters can enjoy life as much as possible.

SNAP is essential for her to feed herself and her children. It's tough to cover monthly expenses and this month was particularly hard because a window in their home broke during a storm. They don't have the extra money to get it fixed.

She believes without SNAP she and her daughters would be back in a shelter, and she wants elected officials to understand that SNAP helps working families.

“I WORRY ABOUT EVERYTHING, I WORRY ABOUT MY DAUGHTER GROWING UP STABLE...IF IT WASN'T FOR THESE PROGRAMS I DON'T KNOW WHAT I WOULD DO. [I GET] \$300 A MONTH IN FOOD STAMPS, IT HELPS TREMENDOUSLY.”



EVANNIE

SINGLE MOM EVANNIE, 28, RAVES ABOUT HER BEAUTIFUL, SMART, FUNNY DAUGHTER LILY, 7. With no support from Lily's father, Evannie works hard to care for her family. She works as a waitress and is struggling to put things back together after having lost a much higher-paying job at another restaurant.

She was unemployed for months before finding her new job. She believes she has a good job, but lives check to check and struggles to eat healthy food. Evannie has had many obstacles in her way—health problems, car accidents—but manages to put her daughter first through it all (“I had to leave the hospital against doctor’s orders because there was no one to look after Lily”).

Even with SNAP, Evannie says by the middle of the month she struggles to get food on the table and cannot

imagine life without this help. She is crushed that she cannot provide small things for her daughter (“no class pictures this year, and that feels terrible as a mom”). SNAP is a tool she has to rely on to “make it.” She knows what it is like to feed Lily and not eat herself. She knows it is awful to skip meals but she does it for Lily.

Evannie believes that hunger goes hand in hand with education. “If your child is hungry, she is not going to learn and retain information. If you don’t have a child that is well nourished they are going to get sick and not learn as well.” So she makes sure Lily has enough because she knows that food and hunger are tied to every other part of growing and life.

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SAM

SAM IS A MARRIED FATHER OF TWO YOUNG CHILDREN. He earned a decent living selling cars without a college degree. He wanted to be a better role model for his children and secure a better life for his family, so with the help of Federal Pell grants, he went back to school full-time to earn his bachelor's degree. To help support the family while Sam is in school, his wife went back to work but can only get part-time hours from the healthcare center where she is employed. The family has struggled financially since Sam went back to school, but he was too proud at first to apply for government assistance. He broke down one day when he realized there was not enough money in their checking account to buy diapers and milk for his son. SNAP has been a huge help to their family in this challenging season.

“WHEN MY WIFE FIRST TOLD ME SHE THOUGHT WE MAY BE ABLE TO GET ASSISTANCE THROUGH THE SNAP PROGRAM I SAID NO, I HAVE TO TAKE CARE OF THE FAMILY. I HAVE TO DO IT. I AM SUPPOSED TO DO IT. MY GRANDFATHER DID IT, MY DAD DID IT, I CAN DO IT, AND IT’S A KICK IN THE FACE WHEN YOU ADMIT YOU CAN’T.”



NAQUILA

NAQUILA HAS STRUGGLED MOST OF HER ADULT LIFE TO SUPPORT HER CHILDREN. She has 12-year old twins and a 4 year-old son. When her twins were younger, she worked two jobs to support her family but barely got by. (She did not qualify for any benefits at the time.) There were times that her electricity was cut off because she failed to pay the bills on time. She would skip breakfast and lunch and just eat a small dinner to ensure there was enough food for her kids. Even then, they had to improvise to make what little food supplies they had last the week.

Things finally started to look up when she got a job, but she did not qualify for maternity leave when she had her third child, so she received SNAP benefits during the first six weeks after having her baby.

“THERE WERE A LOT OF NIGHTS THAT I CAME HOME AND JUST CRIED. IT WAS A LOT OF TIMES WHEN I DID NOT KNOW WHERE I WAS GETTING THE STRENGTH TO KEEP GOING, BUT I KNEW THAT I HAD TO.”

MORE STORIES...

“As a young child my mother had to rely on food stamps to feed us. Luckily for us that was a temporary situation while my mom worked her way through college. As an adult I am now a registered dietitian and active community volunteer working to advocate for kids and healthy lifestyles. I worry very much about the families that may not be able to feed their children every day—especially if our existing programs are cut.”

Nancy - North Carolina

“I was desperate, and applied for food stamps. My family began to eat well. Their health increased. They became carefree, not having to be hungry. I am grateful to my government for helping us when we needed it.”

Kimberly - Indiana

“There was a time when I nearly lost everything that I had worked an entire life time to achieve: 401K, job, home, etc. I had applied for food stamps and this was a life line until I could get back on my feet. I was one of those individuals that you would never suspect needed this help because I was a former director of 32 companies but good people can experience difficult times...these individuals aren't lazy. I was grateful for the existence of this program.”

Anonymous - Georgia

“I am 16 years old and my mother is a single mom trying her best to keep us afloat. She works five days a week and goes to college. Most of the time we are struggling. We use food stamps to get our food. If we didn't have food stamps I don't know what we would do. Most think people on food stamps are sponges, but my mother is everything but a sponge. We don't struggle because my mom doesn't work hard enough. We struggle because of the economy and simply because what cards we were dealt.”

Kaitlyn - Idaho

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE ABOUT SNAP?

SNAP FEEDS KIDS STRUGGLING WITH HUNGER



FOOD & FRESH VEGETABLES

More than 85% of benefits are spent on fruits and vegetables, grains, dairy, meat, and meat alternatives.



LESS THAN \$23,000

Net income of a family of 4 who qualifies for SNAP.



\$1.48 PER MEAL

Average monthly SNAP benefit per person.



Nearly 50% of SNAP participants are children



SNAP Assistance is Temporary:
Half of all participants leave within
10 MONTHS OF RECEIVING BENEFITS

SNAP helps the economy



\$5

of SNAP

= \$9

in Community Spending



WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP HUNGRY KIDS?

Contact Congress. Enlist your friends. Take action.



SEND A MESSAGE

to Congress



SEND A LETTER

to the Editor



SHARE

Your Story

VISIT [PROTECTSNAP.ORG](https://protectsnap.org)

to take action on behalf of children that depend on SNAP



NO CHILD SHOULD GROW UP HUNGRY IN AMERICA

But one in five children struggles with hunger. Share Our Strength's No Kid Hungry campaign is ending childhood hunger in this nation by connecting kids in need with nutritious food and teaching families how to cook healthy, affordable meals. You can help surround kids with the nutritious food they need where they live, learn and play.

Visit NoKidHungry.org and protectsnap.org to get involved.