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# INSIDE *the* GATE

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WINTER 2020



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Gene Buzzard (1946-2020)

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# Dear Friends of Iron Gate —



How do you even summarize a year like this year? It was a roller coaster—full of many highs and lows, but overall, it left us feeling stronger, and maybe a little tired. From the unknown in March, as things slowly shut down, to the cautious re-openings, and life as we now know it, it has been a ride.

A thank you, first and foremost, to the Iron Gate board and staff. To the board, for supporting the staff and encouraging us to stay safe. To the staff who has worked tirelessly to make sure the hungry and homeless are getting fed EVERYDAY—I will never forget those days, when there was so much uncertainty and the staff just persevered. The one thing we know for sure, is people need food and we have delivered. A multitude of thanks to our donors on every level—to the foundations, who immediately stepped up with generous COVID relief grants, the Tulsa County CARES act and to new donors, who gave to alleviate the new hunger that they saw in their own neighborhoods, to our tried and true donors who just kept giving. We are so grateful and appreciative of you all because it is YOU who keep us going.

We reflect on those we serve. Our community meal guests have had to adjust to a new way of life, with even more limited access to shelter and information. Despite it all, they greet us every morning with a smile and a thank you. Iron Gate remains their constant. The grocery pantry drive-thru line is full of stories. Guests tell us of lost jobs, reduced hours, adult children moving in with parents, endless job applications with no interviews. These are people who have never been to a food pantry. And even as they receive help, they are already asking how they can volunteer, already planning their path to pay-it-forward. And so much gratitude, tears of relief and words and notes expressing thanks. We have seen it all.

Iron Gate has answered the call and worked with other agencies to provide solutions to new challenges created by the pandemic. We are providing meals at the temporary shelter that is managed by the Day Center, Mental Health Association of Oklahoma and Salvation Army. We have partnered with DVIS, Community Service Council and Family & Children Services to provide groceries for clients living in hotels and outreach teams seeing clients who are sheltering in place. We were called to do more and we are.

We know the recovery will take time, but we have seen the resilience in the faces of our guests. We will continue to serve and look for ways to innovate in the delivery of our services. We are humbled by the meal guest who received an unexpected windfall and shared his bounty with us. We are in awe of the previous pantry guest, who upon receiving her Christmas gift, bought groceries to give to Iron Gate. We are amazed by the church community, who brings donuts for our guests every Sunday, but also brought gift cards for every staff member to acknowledge their service. And we are so thankful for the restaurant that is still adapting to their new normal, but still took time this holiday season to donate cooking staples to the Iron Gate kitchen. There truly are a million stories at Iron Gate, each one restoring our faith in humanity and reassuring us that we will get through this together.



Wishing you the joy and peace of a new year. Happy 2021.

**Carrie Vesely Henderson, CFRE**

Executive Director

918-879-1707

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Lawyers Fighting Hunger volunteers and Iron Gate staff loaded up 589 turkey dinners for 18 social service partner agencies.

## THANKSGIVING BLESSINGS

It was looking like a bleak Thanksgiving for so many families struggling to make ends meet. The pandemic and economic downturn continued and many couldn't put food on the table for dinner, let alone a Thanksgiving feast. But Iron Gate and **Lawyers Fighting Hunger** once again worked together to put the turkey in Thanksgiving for 1,000 Tulsa families.

"We weren't going to let Covid-19 stop us," Lawyers Fighting Hunger Founder, **Hugh Robert**, said. "We knew the need would be greater than ever this year. So we were determined to figure out a way we could provide turkey dinners to people in a safe way."

In the past, the turkey distribution occurred all in one day with hundreds of people waiting in line to receive their holiday dinners. In order to abide by Covid-19 safety precautions, the turkey distribution was spread over several days and handed out through Iron Gate's low-contact drive-through grocery pantries.

"Iron Gate has been doing drive-through grocery pantries since March, so we thought this was the best way to distribute the turkey dinners this year," said Iron Gate Executive Director, Carrie Vesely Henderson. "Our grocery pantry program is up more than 90% over last year, so we know the need is real. And we're so grateful to Lawyers Fighting Hunger for providing this special turkey dinner for pantry recipients."

Lawyers Fighting Hunger purchased 1,000 turkey dinners with trimmings. They recruited 57 volunteers to pack more than 14.5 tons of food. Together, Iron Gate and Lawyers Fighting Hunger provided 18 social service agencies with 589 turkey dinners for their clients.

Then, Iron Gate distributed the remaining 411 turkey dinners to our guests over four days. Many of these guests wouldn't have had a turkey dinner this holiday without your support.

"Thank you so much for blessing my family. You made this truly a Thanksgiving," said the Crawford Family, who visited Iron Gate's grocery pantry the week before Thanksgiving.

"Thanks for the Thanksgiving blessing. Me and my family will be able to have a good meal," said another Iron Gate guest.

2020 marks the 11th year that Iron Gate has worked with Lawyers Fighting Hunger to provide turkey dinners for our neighbors in need. The groups have worked together to provide 8,175 turkey dinners since 2010. They also team up in the spring to provide ham dinners.

The mayor of Tulsa declared Friday, November 20th Lawyers Fighting Hunger Day in honor of the groups' commitment to provide holiday dinners to our neighbors in need.



### 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*

Jamie Blocker

Colton Cooper

Kia Davis

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Sherwood Siskind

### INSIDE THE GATE

Ashli Sims

*Writer/Editor*

Carrie Vesely Henderson

*Editor*

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*Designer*

Iron Gate's, Brandon Piercy, loads a turkey and potatoes into a pantry recipient's vehicle during a Thanksgiving pantry. Recipients received a bag of staples and fresh produce, in addition to the turkey.



# HOLLYFRONTIER SPREADS CHEER

“This is one of those calls you never expect to get, but you’re so thrilled when you do,” said Carrie Vesely Henderson, Iron Gate’s Executive Director. “I was just tallying the bills for our grocery program, when I got this call from HollyFrontier. I mean it was right on time.”

Seven hundred Tulsa families will have a happier holiday thanks to a Tulsa oil refinery. HollyFrontier is spreading a little holiday cheer by donating \$15,000 to Iron Gate. The gift will underwrite groceries for 700 Tulsa families struggling with food insecurity.

HollyFrontier employees also put together 2,500 kid’s packs for Iron Gate’s youngest guests. Kid’s packs are quart-sized bags of kid-friendly snacks, like juice boxes, crackers, and granola bars. Iron Gate provides a kid’s pack for every child who comes for the community meal and every parent who comes for groceries takes a kid’s pack home for each child in their home. Iron Gate has distributed more than 14,000 kid’s packs this year.



“We know that the COVID-19 pandemic has been especially hard on our most vulnerable families and that is why we partnered with Iron Gate,” said Skipp Kistler, Vice President and Refinery Manager, HollyFrontier Tulsa. “We wanted to bring a ray of hope to people in need this holiday season. The funds were

made possible in lieu of our annual holiday party and our employees are grateful for the opportunity to give back.”

“This gift will provide 700 families with 21,000 pounds of groceries and 2,500 children with snacks. HollyFrontier will make the holidays a lot merrier for a lot of people,” Henderson said.

# RESTAURANT PARTNER GIVES BACK



Dine at Phryme and provide dinners for Iron Gate guests. The holiday initiative has already provided almost 1,000 pounds of food for Iron Gate’s kitchen.

Iron Gate chef friend, Justin Thompson, is ending the year by doing good. His restaurant group in partnership with US Foods and Straight Line Paint & Remodel launched Dining for Dinners program this holiday season.

For everyone who dines at Phryme Steakhouse, Iron Gate will receive a pound and a half of food.

“We’re very excited to be launching a new initiative to help supply non-perishable foods to those in need. Until December 31st of this year, Justin Thompson Restaurants will donate one pound of food for each person who dines at PRHYME Steakhouse, each gift card sold, and each take out meal ordered. In addition, Straight Line Paint & Remodel and its principal, Stan Roper, will match 50% of each donation,” Justin Thompson said.

“Based upon our daily numbers and what we anticipate over the holiday season, we could be looking at donating 350-500 pounds of food [to Iron Gate] per week from now until the end of the year. That will make a huge difference to this organization that has been stressed with the demand that this year has brought,” Thompson added.

In the first three weeks of Dining for Dinners, Iron Gate received more than 1,000 pounds of pasta, beans, rice, potatoes, chicken broth and cream of mushroom soup.

Another Justin Thompson Restaurant is also supporting the Community Food Bank of Eastern Oklahoma.



# T O G E T H E R we give

7,420 meals and groceries for 1,272 families. That's the kind of good we can do, when we come together. Iron Gate is so grateful to everyone who participated in Giving Tuesday on December 1st. Giving Tuesday is a global day of generosity held on the Tuesday after Thanksgiving. The Iron Gate community came together to make a difference for those who are struggling to put food on the table this year. Thanks

#GIVING  
TUESDAY™

to the generosity of our friends at the **Mike and Leslie Moore Charitable Trust** supporters were able to double their impact. Every gift donated on Giving Tuesday was matched for a total of \$55,696.85. Funds raised during Giving Tuesday will help Iron Gate continue to meet the rise in demand for meals, which are up 20%, and groceries, which are up 90% over last year.



Iron Gate guest grabs a hot meal and a warm sleeping bag donated by the Coretz Family Foundation.



AEP's Warm for Winter provided dozens of cold weather items like coats and scarves for guests, as well as cash donation providing for 200 hearty meals.



## WARM *for* WINTER



It was the one of the first truly cold mornings of the year. Guests were lined up and waiting for a hot meal, when we wheeled out a surprise thanks to the **Coretz Family Foundation**. Just about everyone in line took a sleeping bag and the outpouring of gratitude was palpable.

“I really needed this,” said one guest as he grabbed the blue sleeping bag.

So many of our community meal guests make their home on the streets. The Coretz Family Foundation donated 400 sleeping bags, which Iron Gate staff distributed to our guests. Between the thank you's, there were many people who said how much they needed this bundle of warmth. One guest even commented on the temperature rating.

“It's good for 35 degrees—that's awesome,” the guest exclaimed.

In addition to the Coretz Family Foundation gift, **AEP** continued their annual Warm for Winter drive, providing 100 pounds of coats, scarves and blankets as well as enough money to provide 200 hearty meals. Iron Gate is so grateful for both of these organizations for thinking of our guests when the temperature drops.



# VOLUNTEERING FROM HOME

By Contributing Writer, Sue Ramsey,  
Iron Gate Volunteer

Every year our family gathers at Thanksgiving from all over the country for many traditions including ways that hopefully give a little back and give thanks for our bountiful blessings.

For years, we have enjoyed serving a Thanksgiving meal to the homeless and hungry of Tulsa at Iron Gate. But our one day of service is insignificant compared to the Iron Gate mission of serving others 365 days a year, an enormous task filled by a

dedicated staff working tirelessly to fill these needs every single day.

We all look forward to ways we can “get back to normal” during Covid. Although we couldn’t physically return to Iron Gate for Thanksgiving 2020, Christina Maxwell, Iron Gate’s Volunteer Coordinator, suggested a way we might still be able to brighten someone’s day.

On a bright and warm Thanksgiving morning we gathered in our backyard and assembled more than 200 kid’s packs. Even our littlest ones, ages 3-years-old and 5-years-old, felt happy to do something for other kids!



*Sue Ramsey has served every Wednesday in Iron Gate’s grocery pantry stocking shelves, sorting produce and filling hundreds of grocery bags, for several years. You and your family can also support Iron Gate from home. Contact Christina Maxwell at [volunteers@irongatetulsa.org](mailto:volunteers@irongatetulsa.org) or 918-879-1714 for more information.*

# CELEBRATING NATIVE HERITAGE

By Contributing Writer, Cherrah Giles

November is Native American Heritage Month. Since 2009, Iron Gate has celebrated with FRYBREAD! Frybread is a common dish found across most tribal nations and enjoyed by everyone. Frybread is the foundation for the “Indian” taco. Traditionally, Native Americans from all over Oklahoma would travel in the early hours to Iron Gate to prepare and serve frybread and Indian Tacos to our brothers and sisters. This year looked a little different.

Nowadays, anyone can search the internet for frybread recipes and how-to videos but it will never be the same as being made with love by a Frybread Diva! **Debbie Ridge**, a.k.a Frybread Diva, is an award-winning frybread-maker and a citizen of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, who has been making frybread for family, friends, federal officials, and celebrities for years. However, the Frybread Diva’s favorite time to make frybread is for the guests of Iron Gate. The first year she was asked to make frybread for Iron Gate the request was for 1,000 pieces. Debbie did not hesitate and said, “I know I can do it, but let’s try to find some help.” Help came from far and wide, youth and elders, male and female—all the frybread-



makers and helpers wanted the guests of Iron Gate to know they were not forgotten and preparing frybread was one simple gesture to honor all.

Native American Day 2020 at Iron Gate was still a success although we could not all gather to prepare the frybread and serve the Indian Taco meal as we normally would. The challenge was finding local frybread-makers to make the frybread and deliver

to Iron Gate by 7:30am. The original plans included at least 10 frybread-makers to meet the challenge. Well, the best made plans sometimes fall short. By midnight, the day of Native American Day at Iron Gate, we were down to 1 frybread-maker, the Diva herself, Debbie Ridge. In her prime, this would not have been a challenge for Debbie but in 2017 she had a kidney transplant and that was the only year she missed making frybread at Iron Gate. Debbie knew the guests of Iron Gate would be looking forward to Indian Tacos so she prayed over it and said again, “I know I can do it.” Debbie sent her daughter on a midnight run to find an open grocery store with enough flour and oil to make the needed frybread. After 1am, Debbie and her daughter started to make the frybread so it would be hot and fresh for the 7:30am delivery to Iron Gate. Although Debbie did not get to see the guests enjoy her frybread, her heart was full knowing once again they would be served a meal with love and prayers as the main ingredients.

*Cherrah Giles used to work for Iron Gate before she moved to Virginia. Even from thousands of miles away, she still helps organize Native American celebrations for Iron Gate guests. Her mother is the Frybread Diva.*

# SCARING AWAY HUNGER

Thanks for scaring away hunger this Halloween. Iron Gate held its first Halloween food drive on Saturday, October 31st. About 70 cars participated in the drive-through food drop-off, providing thousands of pounds of food for Iron Gate’s grocery pantry program. Dozens of folks also participated online. All in all, Iron Gate collected more than **5,500 pounds** of food.

**Iron Gate staff, dressed in Halloween costumes, collected more than two and a half tons of food during their first Halloween food drive.**





# cooking FOR A cause



## THANKS FOR KEEPING US 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 didn't happen this year. But thanks to your support,

we're still cooking. Iron Gate raised **\$129,144.30** for Cooking for a Cause in 2020! That's enough to provide **18,060 hearty meals and 92,880 pounds of groceries** for our pantry recipients. We're so grateful to all of our supporters 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
- Kay and Win Ingersoll
- Simmons Bank
- Carol Tandy
- John and Mindy Morrison Taylor

#### THE GOOD EGG

- Anchor Stone Co.
- BAMA Co.
- Capital Advisors
- Flintco Construction

#### GH2 Architects

- Paul and Lucy Loving
- Til and Raymond Lucien
- Lee and David Marks
- Julie and Sanjay Meshri
- Cyndy and Michael Phillips
- Sue Phillips
- Bob and Leslie Pritchard
- Tom and Betty Rains
- Joyce and Ambrose Sims
- Ken Underwood Law Office
- Becky and Ricky Young

#### ICING ON THE CAKE

- Debbie and John Favell
- Carrie and Jason Henderson
- Mrs. Meredith Howard
- Charlie Jackson and Tamara Rains
- Gina and Mike Lodes
- Dr. and Mrs. Tom Stees
- Ross Swimmer
- Amy and Carey Waters
- Drs. Peter and Jill Wegner

#### DONATIONS

- Delores Andrews
- Keenan and Starre Barnard
- Sharon and Mike Bartlett

#### Ken Busby

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- Sue Phillips
- Scott Rose and Monica Barczak
- Dr. Eric Sherburn and Leigh Ann Moss
- Kim Shutz
- Maribeth Spanier
- Allison Taylor
- Pat and Clay Woodrum
- David Walter
- Tracey Welcher
- Bruce Wilkin
- Cindi Wright

\*Donations as of 12/14/20



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## End the Year Right

Show your love by giving a gift that will fill a plate and warm the heart. You can donate in your loved one's honor this holiday season and Iron Gate will send them a special holiday card. Donate before the end of 2020 and Bank of Oklahoma will match your gift, doubling your impact. A gift of \$25 will become \$50, providing 14 hearty meals this holiday.



An Iron Gate guest wanted to pay it forward and give back to the place who gives to her. Linda received \$100 and chose to go and purchase food to donate to Iron Gate. She provided dozens of rolls, loaves of bread and desserts for our pantry guests. "I love Braum's," she said. "I thought other people would like it, too. I couldn't have done this if I hadn't been blessed by someone else."



Iron Gate partner, The Greater Tulsa Chapter of the National Charity League, hosted a food drive and collected 569 pounds of food for Iron Gate's pantry.