

Heredia, 1, and Jose Heredia, 2. Her husband, she explains, gets sporadic work in the garment industry. Now things are slow and he brings home as little as \$50 a week. Marbella virtually inhales an orange she grasps in her tiny right hand. The juice cascades down her chin, trickling onto her white sweater. "I try to feed them something every day. Sometimes, it's just rice and beans," she says.

Mae prepares to leave, but Jose's brown eyes look pleadingly at her as he stuffs the orange into his mouth. "More?" he asks.

Mae's last stop of the day is Tarlee McCrady's house on Raymond Avenue. Mae peers inside the two-story house from her truck and, seeing no sign of life, drives on. But a loud pleading wail comes from behind the front door: "I'm here! I'm here!"

Mae parks in the shade. "You want a pumpkin?" she asks. The woman, who has sweptback gray hair, runs out and nods.

A 65-year-old living on Social Security, she met Mae in church nearly two decades ago. When her body is up to it, she goes out on the truck with Mae, helping distribute food. Today, she says, she is fretting over how to pay her water bill. She, too, gets much of her sustenance from Mae.

If not for the help, she says, "I'd be down on Skid Row. What else would I do?"

"She doesn't do a lot of talking. But she does a whole lot of doing," says Brenda White, who works at Church of the Harvest, which Mae attends. She says she's seen Mae take a bed out of her house—even the food in her own refrigerator—and give it away. Brenda, who has two daughters, was divorced six years ago and had a breakdown, leaving her temporarily unable to work at her hair salon. She was too embarrassed to ask for help from relatives. Mae didn't need prodding. Every other week, she began to bring bags of food.

In addition to her Social Security, Mae receives a modest income from caring for her foster children. Everything that's left after paying bills—about \$100 a month—is put in a coin purse and slowly given out to people in need. The only hand-out she's taken from the government is some cheese.

"People have millions of dollars, they die, and their children fuss over it. I give my surplus money for children," she says.

Mae, nearing exhaustion, steers her truck home.

Wheeling into her driveway, Mae still has a third of the food. "Hi, Mother Raines!" a little girl from next door cries, waving. Other neighbors drop by. "What kind of bread you need? Brown bread? White bread? Your grandma feel better today?" Mae asks Erick, 8. He nods. Mae knows that many neighbors skip some meals each day but are too embarrassed to ask for food. "I know which ones won't come out," she says. "Some people would rather die than ask for help." For these, she packs boxes, which Donell begins delivering on people's stoops.

"I work in the shadows of an inner city overrun by gangs and riotous living. But when I can ease someone's pain, or can encourage them, I feel good," Mae says. "If I never do anything for the community I live in, why am I here? I don't want to hear the baby next door cry from lack of milk or see a child walk by without shoes.

"It's not hopeless. Everyone isn't extending themselves."

On Thanksgiving Day, Mae says, she will bake 17 traditional dishes. In the morning, her natural and foster children will gather, and read prayers. "Thanksgiving is for my family," Mae says, closing her front gate as the last of the food is dispensed and dusk approaches. That said, Mae concedes that last year, she gathered her leftovers at the end of the day, some paper plates and plastic silverware and summoned her children to help.

She went to the corner of her street and served food to the thankful until every crumb was gone.

#### EPILOGUE

Three weeks after this series ran, the West Covina Unified school board voted to institute a government-subsidized breakfast program at Edgewood Middle School and at seven of its elementary schools, thus assuring breakfast—and a chance to learn unimpeded by hunger—to thousands of children.

West Covina's move to join the program was part of a rush by 60 schools in California. Thirty-three of these schools were in Southern California. They were among a group of 193 Southland schools that the state says should offer breakfast because a high proportion of their students are low income, but did not do so for a variety of reasons.

The Times reported on these schools and their struggles over whether to serve breakfast in a follow up to the series on Dec. 12.

Back at Edgewood, donations poured in. More than \$22,500 had been pledged or delivered by Dec. 13. A citizens group, formed spontaneously after the series to fight hunger in West Covina Unified schools, used the money to serve breakfast to children until the government-funded breakfast could begin.

West Covina residents were not the only ones moved to get involved. One donor offered a secondhand truck to Mae Raines, the food angel of 42nd street, to replace her old clunker. Several churches and temples read the story about "the Muffin Lady" during weekend services. At the Ahavat Zion Messianic Synagogue, 40 worshippers passed a plate and collected \$307 for Raines. Then, they planned a food drive.

"It really made us look in the mirror and say: 'We aren't doing enough,'" said Ron Bernard, synagogogue board president.

Others pledged \$12,000 to the Charity Dock, an innovative hunger program at the Los Angeles Wholesale Produce Market.

Hundreds of callers flooded the newspaper with offers of help for some of the people profiled in the series. Many called crying, saying they wanted to know how they could help a food pantry, a food drive, or assist a family in need.

"My husband is ill on life support. And I'm crippled from arthritis," wrote Majorie B. Walker of Los Angeles in halting handwriting. "But never have we went without food." She sent \$50 to one family profiled in the series.

"My wife and I found your article to be a rude awakening to a problem which we did not know existed," wrote Bob J. Ratledge of Palm Desert, who fired off a letter to the West Covina Unified school board urging that it adopt a breakfast program. Other letters to the board were more blunt, threatening a recall if action wasn't taken. Some who sent checks apologized that they couldn't afford to send more. Others said they sat their children down and read them the stories of hunger.

Lisa Drynan, who was profiled with her three young sons, received more than 200 calls from readers offering to help. She said the assistance promised to make this the best holiday season ever for her children.

The story also sparked calls from hungry people seeking food assistance. At the Southern California Interfaith Hunger Coalition, a stream of people called to ask how they could apply for food stamps. The Self-Help and Resource Exchange—a program that helps people pool their resources to buy wholesome food at half the retail cost—has also seen an uptick in activity.

And at the Los Angeles Regional Foodbank, which struggles to get a decent

share of corporate salvage food products to feed the hungry, this series helped focus new attention nationwide on the difficulties private efforts are encountering in stemming hunger. Pointing to subsequent national TV news and magazine stories touching on the issue, executive director Doris Bloch said, "these stories have built a fire under people."

#### SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 1995, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maryland [Mr. WYNN] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. WYNN addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California [Mr. RIGGS] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. RIGGS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

#### TAKING FOOD OUT OF THE MOUTHS OF CHILDREN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Missouri [Mr. VOLKMER] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. VOLKMER. Mr. Speaker, we are now at day 65, if my math is right, of 100 days and we are now getting to see toward the final 35 days of that 100 days. And when we look at it we look to see that we are going to have severe reductions in food stamps, school lunches, nutrition aid, the Women, Infants and Children's Program, hearing assistance for the elderly, and all because we have to give a big tax cut for the wealthy. It is not going to deficit reduction, it is not going to balance the budget. It is going to go to the wealthy, and it is going to be coming up from the young kids down here that are hungry and need that nourishment.

When I look at the school lunch program, we contacted our State Department of Education, we contacted the Governor's office, we contacted some of our local school districts, and the analysis of that school lunch program is in. Members do not have to take my word for it. The Governor of Missouri, the school superintendent of Missouri, the experts who operate the school lunch program in Missouri all agree. The majority party, led by NEWT GINGRICH, is taking food out of the mouths of children by cutting the school lunch program. Even worse, the majority party at the same time is cutting the same children's food stamps. Poor children in this country not only will not get a hot meal in school, but when they get