

These are tough times. Our economy may be growing again and the downward trends may be ending, but we are still suffering through the effects of last year's economic implosion. There is no one in San Antonio immune to the effects of this slowdown. When you're going through a rough patch such as this one, it can be easy to get caught up in how bad things are, to focus on how much you don't have or what you have lost. So I'd like to encourage you to take some time this week to focus on the other side, on how much we have to be thankful for.

Somebody once forwarded me one of those chain emails that are so often silly and sometimes annoying, but this one really hit home. It was a list of really counterintuitive takes on life, things like, "I'm thankful for the pile of laundry and ironing, because it means my family has clothes to wear, clean water to wash them in, and a home to keep them in." (You can find a version [here](#) ; I'm not sure just who wrote the original.) It's a good point, that we too often take for granted what we have in our focus on what we do not have. Why get upset if Aunt Mary always brings the same, overcooked, green bean casserole when it means that your family can be together for Thanksgiving?

There are many people, too, in San Antonio who would love to have Aunt Mary's green beans. While so much of the news these days is about what the Christmas Shopping season will be like, there are millions of people in South Texas who are struggling to keep their families fed. This year marks the 30th anniversary of the [Raul Jimenez Thanksgiving Dinner](#) . They're expecting to feed 25,000 of the neediest San Antonians at this year's dinner. This news, too, is a mixed bag. We wish there wasn't such a need, but how wonderful is it that 4,000 volunteers are coming together to create such a wonderful event? That we live in such a community where people help their neighbors like that? That's something for which I am truly thankful.

We must also remember that hunger isn't a one day problem. Texans have long suffered disproportionately from food shortages, and the economic troubles have made things even worse this year. The [San Antonio Food Bank](#) , which supplies food pantries, senior centers, and homeless shelters in 16 counties across South Texas, is hoping to distribute 12,000 thanksgiving turkeys this year, three times as many as last year. That's not just because they're doing a better job, but because they're facing record need for help. They're trying to turn hungry holidays into Happy Holidays. It's a wonderful thing that they're doing, and thousands of San Antonians have donated their food and their time to help, although, of course, the Food Bank could always use more help.

Thanksgiving is as American as it gets. Since President Lincoln established the first

Thanksgiving in 1863, in the middle of the most terrible war in our nation's history, we have celebrated this holiday through good times and bad. Wherever we are, our families and friends come together. Instead of focusing on what we don't like and what we haven't got, we take the time to give thanks for what we have. We give thanks for the freedoms and liberties on which and for which our country stands. We give thanks for the men and women who dedicate their lives to defending those liberties and keeping us safe, at home and abroad. And we give thanks that we are a people that comes together when times are tough. Because we know that, when we are united, there is no problem we cannot overcome, no challenge we cannot meet. That's something we can all be thankful for.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Annie".