

harvest

A NEWSLETTER OF THE BLUE RIDGE AREA FOOD BANK

**In Their Words:
Children Discuss
Hunger and Hope**

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help us move more
food to more people**

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**BLUE RIDGE AREA
FOOD BANK**

a member of
**FEEDING
AMERICA**

In Their Words.

CHILDREN DISCUSS HUNGER AND HOPE

It's that time of year. Backpacks are stuffed with school supplies and books. And moms and dads scurry around the kitchen, making breakfast, packing lunches and prepping for the day ahead.

For one in six children in our area, however, leaving the house with a full belly and a packed lunch is not always the norm, and they look forward to eating their breakfast and lunch at school.

That's why we offer four after school feeding programs all school year – to help keep children healthy, strong and ready to learn. Your support of our feeding programs gives children a fighting chance to grow into healthy, productive adults. Thank you.

Here are the stories of two children being helped through our national network of after school feeding programs and food banks – in their own words.



Wenona

My name is Wenona and I'm nine years old.

I think a lot of kids are happy to get this food, because they aren't getting fed at home. I know it helps my family a lot. My mom has gone without so many times because she feels like my sister and I are not getting enough to eat. It makes me feel very bad that my parents struggle so much.

This food program makes me happy though, because it helps kids here get a balanced meal every day. All kids should be able to have a good meal each day. This is a very good program and it needs to continue. They should have it in lots of different places because it's not just kids in my neighborhood who need help – kids need help all over.



Jayden

My name is Jayden and I want to tell you about my family's experience with hunger.

I got used to eating from cans – whatever was left. I actually like kidney beans from the can now. I used to be sad when we had no food. Now we go to food pantries and we get fresh food and cool snacks. I even volunteer at the pantries now. We will never be hungry again.

Our After School Feeding Programs

We serve nearly 6,900 children each year through these programs:

The **Family Backpack Program** meets the needs of hungry children and their families by providing snacks and the foundation of family meals for weekends and extended breaks, when children cannot access school-based programs.

Kids Cafe™ and **Kids CanTeen** provide a nutritious meal or snack, respectively, to children enrolled in afterschool programs.

Operation Angel Food provides a nutritious take-home snack to at-risk preschoolers enrolled in school-sponsored, early childhood education programs.



For The Little Artist in Your Family

You've felt it before. That pep in your step after receiving a call or greeting card from a friend, just to let you know they're thinking of you.

We're offering the little ones in your life a chance to share a little joy with the children we help through our feeding programs. All you have to do is give your child a blank paper plate and ask them to draw a picture for another child whose life is affected by not having enough food to eat. Tell them that their picture can be anything that expresses support, encouragement and love. Feel free to add a message that also reflects those sentiments. Send it to the Food Bank (see our address on the back of this publication), and we'll make sure it's placed in the food packs of the children enrolled in our Family Backpack program.



MORE FOOD FOR MORE PEOPLE

* RECLAIMING 1,400 SQUARE FEET OF WAREHOUSE SPACE FORMERLY USED FOR OFFICES

* NEW PRODUCE COOLER WILL TRIPLE OUR FRESH PRODUCE STORAGE, HOLDING 3 TRACTOR-TRAILER LOADS OF FRESH FRUITS AND VEGGIES

* NEW CLEAN ROOM TO REPACKAGE BULK PRODUCE AND DRY GOODS WILL SAVE US APPROXIMATELY \$25,000 A YEAR IN PACKAGING FEES

* NEW SALVAGE AND VOLUNTEER ROOMS TOTALING 2,000 SQUARE FEET TO TRAIN AND UTILIZE MORE VOLUNTEERS

Headquarter renovations will help us address growing need

All trails eventually run through Verona — home to the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank's headquarters for the last 33 years.

It's where we move nearly 210 tons of food a week — the equivalent of 10 tractor trailers bursting with food. And it's where millions of pounds are delivered, then transported to hundreds of partner agencies throughout our 25-county service area.

Our headquarters have served us well over the course of three decades — a span during which few improvements were made to the facility. The last significant capital project was the addition of a warehouse in 1999.

Our Board of Directors agreed it was time to make long-deferred improvements, and approved headquarter renovations in June.

It became clear that our facility is no longer suited to meet today's level of need or mix of food.

Back in 2006, we were supplying about 7 million pounds of food a year to our neighbors in need. Today, it's a whopping 24 million pounds. That rapid growth in demand also paralleled a new challenge: a significant decline in donated dry goods from major food manufacturers.

We've turned that obstacle into an opportunity to advance the nutritional value of our food by

providing more fresh produce, which is available in abundance. As a result, we're moving 10 times more produce through our network than we were six years ago — more than 5 million pounds each year.

But food banks were designed to house mostly nonperishables, so we must make some significant changes to our physical plant to accommodate more fresh fruits and vegetables.

The renovation is now underway, led by Nielsen Builders of Harrisonburg, and is made possible by existing cash and reserves funded largely by estate gifts received over the past few years. We also must raise nearly \$1 million in designated capital contributions this year from foundations, businesses and major donors. The total project will cost an estimated \$3.6 million and is scheduled to be completed by July of 2015.

It's important to know that unrestricted financial contributions made during this period will not fund the renovation, unless you choose to designate your gift for that purpose. Your donations will continue to fund programs and operations, including the purchase and distribution of food.

If you want to learn more or discuss a gift to this project, contact Karen Ratzlaff, Chief Philanthropy Officer, at (434) 213-8404 or email kratzlaff@brafb.org.

* NEW ADMINISTRATIVE SPACE OF 7,585 SQUARE FEET WILL BE ADA COMPLIANT, FAR MORE ENERGY EFFICIENT AND INCLUDE A COMMUNITY TRAINING/MEETING ROOM THAT SEATS UP TO 50

* OVERALL FOOD STORAGE CAPACITY WILL INCREASE BY 14%, ALLOWING US TO PROVIDE AN ADDITIONAL 13.7 MILLION MEALS PER YEAR

* EXTERIOR SITE WORK WILL ADDRESS STORM WATER MANAGEMENT, ADDITIONAL PARKING AND LIGHTING FOR SAFETY



Join CEO Michael McKee on a video tour at www.brafb.org/renovation for a visual and comprehensive explanation of the project.

PACKING PARTY

Volunteers band together weekly to help feed kids



don't have to worry about where they'll get their next meal.

On a Thursday evening in late August, Bob and five other volunteers gathered in the basement of Fort Hill United Methodist Church in Lynchburg, as they do every Thursday during the school year, tearing open boxes of peanut butter, canned peaches and green beans and

packing the items into bags for children in need.

In 30 minutes time the group had assembled 136 bags and loaded them onto a pick-up truck bound for William M. Bass Elementary School. The food was distributed that Friday to students enrolled in our Family BackPack Program, which provides meals and snacks for children in need over

Bob Bliss, a retired mental health counselor and former probation officer, saw firsthand what happened to people when their basic needs weren't met.

"In my 30-year career I used to hear two questions over and over: Where am I going to lay my head and where am I going to find food?"

Those experiences now motivate him to make sure children and their families

weekends and extended school breaks.

"I hope that the students can go to bed restfully, because they'll have this food to take home," volunteer Carolyn Phelps said.

Kendra Toney, who coordinates the packing each week, arranged to bring the volunteer operation to Fort Hill United Methodist last year. They've had up to 14 volunteers at a time, and the helpers come from colleges, Boy Scout troops and one of the local banks.

"It's important that this remain a community effort," Kendra said. "It's fun, and everyone has a good time together."

To all of the volunteer groups throughout our service area who pack bags for children and families enrolled our Family BackPack Program, we say thank you.



ONE DAY, MAYBE ALL FOOD BANKS WILL GO OUT OF BUSINESS.

Unfortunately, when the line of people we serve today is so long, that's hard to imagine.

You can help provide food for hungry Virginians well into the future with a bequest.

If you have already made the decision to include a gift for the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank in your will, please let us know so we can say, "thank you!" If you want to remain anonymous, be assured we will respect your wishes.

For information about bequests and other future gift options, visit www.brafb.org/plannedgift or contact Karen Ratzlaff at (540) 213-8404 or kratzlaff@brafb.org. All inquiries will remain confidential.



Teaching Healthy Habits

Allegheny Mountain School fellow heightens nutrition awareness

Nine-year-old Kashaun gobbled down a Greek salad in a classroom at Staunton's Booker T. Washington Community Center. His plate was covered with a bed of lettuce topped with olives, tomatoes, green peppers, cucumbers, feta cheese and a simple dressing of lemon and olive oil.

"This is good," he said excitedly, scraping his plate clean. "I really like the cheese."

From the front of the room, cooking instructor Mandy Henkler encouraged Kashaun and a roomful of about 20 other children to eat up. All of the children had a hand in making the salad. Some had chopped the vegetables while others mixed the dressing.

Kashaun's taste buds have been introduced to new flavors and foods thanks to a hands-on cooking program hosted by the Boys and Girls Club of Waynesboro, Staunton and Augusta. It's a partnership between Project GROWS and Mandy, an Allegheny Mountain School nutrition fellow at the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank.

Mandy came to the Food Bank in January to provide nutrition education and healthy food options for people at risk of hunger. Since her arrival, Mandy has tackled nearly 10 nutrition projects. Some of the most significant include developing a community garden in partnership with the Waynesboro Church of the Brethren; providing healthy food samples and recipes at food distributions; and teaching cooking classes for children at the Boys and Girls Club.

Mandy said her eyes have been opened to the challenges experienced by both the Food Bank and its clients when it comes to providing and accessing wholesome food options. Her job has been to find workarounds, and the children's cooking class has been one of her favorite solutions.

"I really enjoy watching kids' faces light up when they enjoy a vegetable," Mandy said. "The students were always really excited when I arrived; giving me hugs and asking about the day's meal."

Mandy will continue her stint at the Food Bank through January 2015, and afterward plans to continue advocating for a healthy, sustainable food system for all.

HUNGER HEROES

We are deeply grateful to the following Hunger Heroes for hosting events that have helped us provide relief to people in need. We're also thankful to everyone who supported these events with their time, food, funds and talent.

Charlottesville Restaurant Week

More than 30 Charlottesville area restaurants donated \$1 of every meal purchased to the food bank. All together, the event raised enough to provide 65,620 meals for children, families, and seniors throughout the Thomas Jefferson area.

Canstruction Lynchburg

The Lynchburg community raised awareness by building sculptures out of food cans at Bank of the James, the Craddock Terry Hotel and City Hall. The event brought in 15,185 pounds of food and, along with financial donations, enough for 12,348 meals.

Music Feeds Us

The 3rd annual series featured chamber music concerts in Staunton and Charlottesville by four accomplished classical performers and raised \$3,285, or more than 13,000 meals for the Food Bank. *We honor the memory of cellist Dmitry Volkov, who died on May 10.*

Mt Rushmore Dinner

The top culinary minds in Charlottesville came together and created a meal to remember, one that brought in more than \$25,000, the equivalent of 103,244 meals.

Stamp Out Hunger

Postal workers across the country make the extra effort to collect thousands of food donations left by residents at their doorsteps. This year, they collected 204,335 pounds of food in our area, which allowed us to provide 170,000 meals for people facing hunger in our communities.

Sysco

Sysco Virginia, LLC generously donated \$10,000 to help us provide 40,000 meals to individuals and families in the Blue Ridge area.

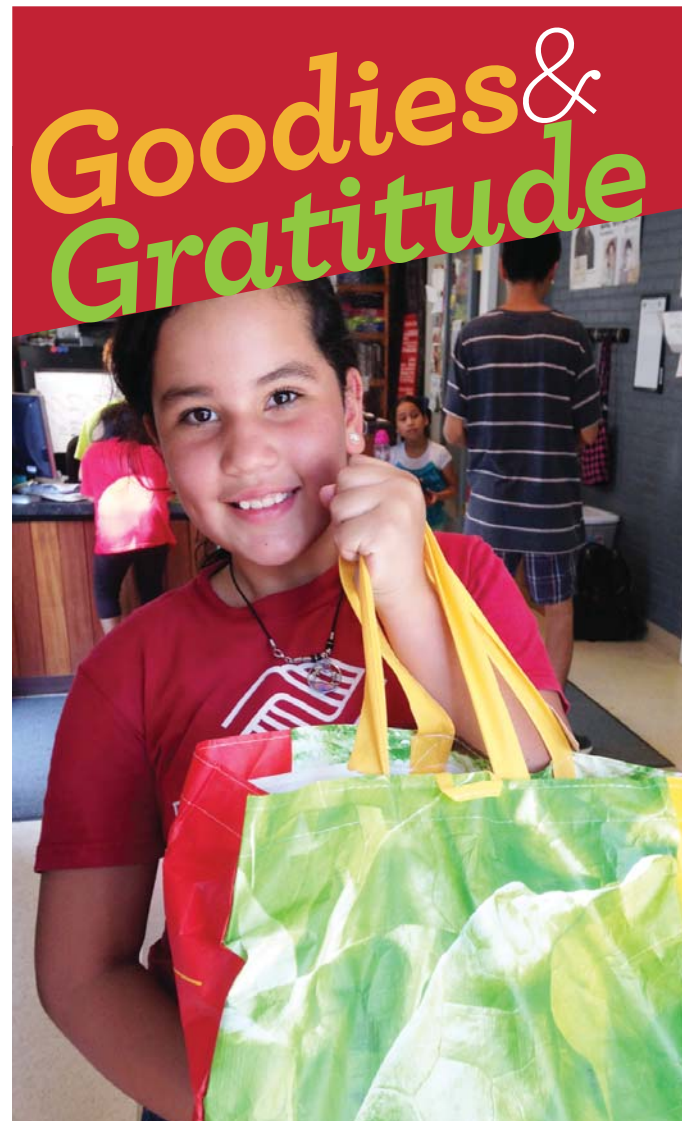
They also gave more than 12,300 pounds of food, including 444 pounds from their company food drive.

Whole Foods

Whole Foods tackled summer hunger by sponsoring a food drive, collecting nearly 500 pounds of peanut butter. They also donated more than 1,700 pounds of fruit for children enrolled in our summer feeding program.

Legal Food Frenzy

Thirteen law firms raised the equivalent of 138,815 pounds of food this year, one of the most successful in the event's eight-year history.



School Pantry pilot ends, but kids get summer hope

Children like Stephanie (pictured left) living in Charlottesville and Loudoun County got an extra boost this summer when they received monthly distributions of Summer Kid Packs—a bag full of healthy goodies for children at risk of hunger. This was possible thanks to gifts from a number of foundations and agencies that supported School Pantry, an in-school feeding program we piloted last school year. School Pantry gave families the opportunity to visit their child's school and select foods to carry home.

After a year of testing the School Pantry program, we determined that children are still best served through our traditional Family BackPack Program, through which we send bags of food home for weekends or extended school breaks. So, we took some of the funds provided for the School Pantry pilot, and rallied volunteers to put together summer food bags for thousands of families with children who might not have known where they'd get a meal all summer long. We also provided boxes of healthy food to seniors in need.

We are grateful to the following foundations and agencies for their generous and compassionate support of the School Pantry pilot: CAPSAW, the Community Foundation of the Central Blue Ridge, Food Lion Charitable Foundation, Gannett Foundation, Newman's Own Foundation, Our Family Foundation, Target, the United Way of Greater Augusta, Walmart and you.



After participating in a national hunger study, *Hunger in America 2014 (HIA)*, we have brand new local data about the situations of our clients. HIA is comprehensive study done every four years that provides us with in-depth information about how our clients benefit from our services, the characteristics and effectiveness of our partnerships and programs, and how our clients cope with hunger. The data will also inform important decisions about our programs and strategies over the next several years.

Here are some of the most thought-provoking things we learned.



60%
ARE EMPLOYED



40%
HAVE NO HEALTH INSURANCE OF ANY KIND



78%
HAVE A HIGH SCHOOL DEGREE OR GED



24%
HAVE A POST-HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION



71%
USE MULTIPLE COPING STRATEGIES* FOR GETTING ENOUGH FOOD

* COPING STRATEGIES INCLUDE: WATERING DOWN FOOD OR DRINKS, EATING FOOD PAST THE EXPIRATION DATE, PAWNING OR SELLING PERSONAL PROPERTY, PLANTING A GARDEN



Governor's Volunteerism Award

Gov. Terry McAuliffe presented Nicole Muller with the Governor's Volunteerism Award in April for her work as founder of the local and national food drive program, Neighbors-4-Neighbors. Nicole began the food drive when she was 16, and the program has brought in more than 675,000 pounds of food across 40 states. Congrats!

* Remember that face?

Nicole was featured in the Winter 2014 issue of *Harvest*. Read about her (again!) at brafb.org/NewsAndEvents/Publications.aspx



Painted ORANGE

Hunger Action Month activities raise food, awareness and fun

The community went all out this year to infuse Hunger Action Month with fun and energy, wearing and displaying orange—the symbolic color of hunger—on Sept. 4 (Hunger Action Day). It was all part of a national movement that takes place every September to raise awareness about the growing problem of hunger in communities across the country. Many other community partners came together throughout the month of September to make a lasting difference through events like Stuff A Truck, the 4th Annual Misty Mountain Music Festival, and the Staunton Mall 4th Annual Car Show.

To all who participated, donated and “went orange,” thank you for making Hunger Action Month a real success by calling attention to the issue and providing thousands of meals for our neighbors. With every additional voice comes an even stronger message—that together, we can solve hunger.



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Food is Medicine

The numbers are in.

Our latest hunger study – Hunger in America 2014 – is complete, and we have new and revealing information about the people asking for our help.

For us, some of the most concerning data are connected to the health conditions of our clients – 57% reported that they have high blood pressure, while 30% have diabetes.

This tells us two things: 1. Clients with these health conditions are most likely relying on medication to treat their condition, and 2. a healthy diet is extremely important in managing their disease.

In other words, food is also their medicine.

“Food is medicine” is a phrase we’re hearing more often among our peers and health professionals alike.

Eating the right foods can improve the health of a person living with Type 2 diabetes or hypertension. In fact, both of these conditions can be cured or minimized with a healthy diet and weight loss.

Many of our clients cope with limited financial resources by purchasing inexpensive, processed and unhealthy foods. The Food Bank is positioned to intervene in this cycle. As we determine long-term strategies for providing our clients with nourishment, fresh produce is playing a major role in our present and future plans. We’re often one of the first agencies people turn to when in need, and during a slowly recovering economy, we’ve become an integral source of food for an extended period of time.

More than ever, it’s important for us to be well positioned to provide healthy food to neighbors in need well into the future. As you read in the story about our headquarter renovation, we’re making way for lots more fresh fruits and vegetables. We’ll be able to store three additional truckloads of produce in our renovated space, enough to serve up thousands more healthy meals each week.

Together, we’ll provide more wholesome options to help our neighbors thrive. Thank you for your continued trust and generosity.



With gratitude,

Michael McKee, CEO

BLUE RIDGE AREA FOOD BANK

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F: 540.722.4217

GET INVOLVED

For more event details, visit our [News and Events page](#) at [brafb.org](#), or call 540.248.3663 and press 0.

October

WHOLE FOODS' NICKELS FOR NONPROFITS

Visit Whole Foods in Charlottesville through Jan 18; for every reusable shopping bag you use you can donate \$.05 to the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank to help feed your neighbors throughout the holiday season.



8TH ANNUAL VIRGINIA HUNGER SYMPOSIUM

Blue Ridge Community College will host events and activities that educate and promote awareness of food insecurity. This year's eighth symposium will be held Oct. 21 through 26, and features an *Empty Bowl Dinner*, a screening of the new documentary "Hunger in America" and the play "The Last Five Years." Get details on our website.



SCOUTING FOR FOOD

Area Boy Scouts will be scavenging neighborhoods for food donations during their largest annual fall food drive. Leave a bag of food at your doorstep on Oct. 25 in the Shenandoah Valley and Charlottesville, and on Nov. 8 in Winchester, and they'll do the rest.



HOMEBREW FOR HUNGER

The second Charlottesville Homebrew for Hunger will take place on October 26th at Fifth Season Gardening. Look for bigger and better things this year; more homebrewers and more money raised to fight hunger. Get details on our website or at [homebrewforhunger.com](#).



November

HOLIDAY FOOD DRIVE

NBC29, Z95.1 and The Daily Progress are asking you to join them in nourishing hungry neighbors for the winter holidays. Just drop non-perishable food donations in marked Food Bank barrels at Kroger stores in Staunton, Waynesboro, Harrisonburg and Charlottesville from Nov. 20 to Dec. 18.



VALLEY BUSINESSES GIVE BACK

Support area businesses participating in this community-wide food and fund drive Nov. 17 to Dec. 31. Proceeds will be distributed by the Food Bank to individuals and families in need throughout the Shenandoah Valley.



December

CHRISTMAS AT AUGUSTA STONE

Join us for the 18th annual benefit Christmas concert on Dec. 8 at Augusta Stone Church in Fort Defiance. Enjoy acoustic and folk holiday tunes from Rhythm Road, as well as other talented performers. Freewill offering.

TWELFTH NIGHT CONCERT

It's your last chance to savor the sounds of the holiday season. Choirs from the Staunton Church of the Brethren Choir and the Olivet Presbyterian Church will combine to perform in their 14th annual post-holiday concert on Jan. 4. Freewill offering. Visit our website in December for more details.



We're proud to be awarded four stars for sound fiscal management, the highest possible rating by America's largest charity evaluator, Charity Navigator.