

harvest

A NEWSLETTER OF THE BLUE RIDGE AREA FOOD BANK



Weathering the Storm

Working Families Continue to Find It Difficult to Make Ends Meet

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BLUE RIDGE AREA
FOOD BANK

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FEEDING
AMERICA

WEATHERING THE STORM

Working Families Continue to Find it Difficult to Make Ends Meet



The McFadden Family

IN LYNCHBURG: Financial Hardship and Natural Disaster

Lynchburg area residents Edward and Deena McFadden find it difficult to pay their bills *and* keep food on the table.

In 2012, Deena's mother had to move in with them. At one point they also took in a family friend who needed a place to stay. With more people in the house but not more income, they fell on hard times.

For the past two years they've been visiting Candlelight Ministries to get the extra food they need. The pantry is run by husband and wife team Larry and Cheryl Randall who were a blessing for Edward and Deena when they first found themselves in need.

"One Wednesday the fridge was empty and I had no money," recalls Deena. "I

got Cheryl's number from my mother-in-law, and I made the trip from Appomattox to Concord. I was able to receive food at the delivery site and have dinner on the table for my family that evening." In hard times, they have continued to rely on Candlelight.

Edward works as a heating and air assistant for a company in Farmville. At times he becomes frustrated with how little he earns even though he works hard. While their children have medical insurance coverage, Edward and Deena do not. Deena is a stay-at-home mom and contends with multiple illnesses that require medical attention. Her treatments incur healthcare expenses that add to the family's financial stress.

Deena sometimes has to make her medicine last longer by skipping doses. This is just one of many difficult choices the couple has to make.

"It's exhausting. You have to choose which is more important — you have to choose which bill will hold for another week and which one needs to be paid immediately," Deena said. "Sometimes you pay a little less than what you owe and use the, say, leftover \$20 and buy milk, bread and other items."

To make things even more difficult, the family was forced out of their Appomattox rental property in early 2016, and after a tornado upended the county they weren't able to locate another affordable house. A move to Campbell County disrupted the school year for their six children, and the family's life in general.

"Living in Brookneal was a last resort for us and our landlord has not been as cooperative as we had hoped," said Edward. "I'm looking for other places to live back in Appomattox."

"I grew up poor and I don't want my children to grow up the same way."

—DEENA MCFADDEN

Edward has hope that conditions for his family can improve, especially for his children. Fifteen-year-old Tiler, the couple's eldest son, wants to become a welder and join the National Guard.

"Tiler did well at his former school in Appomattox," Edward said. "He had already started welding classes before we had to move."

When Deena picks up food for her family, she sometimes brings Tiler and his younger brother, 12-year-old Dakota. The two volunteer to carry food boxes to the cars of other clients who can use the help.

In the meantime, the McFaddens yearn for happier times and a future in which they won't need to rely on food boxes.

"One day I want to be able to say I bought that food and my house," Deena said. "I grew up poor and I don't want my children to grow up the same way."

IN CHARLOTTESVILLE: Rain Can Cost Family a Day's Wages

Marisa, her husband, and their two children rely on Loaves & Fishes Food Pantry, a Food Bank partner agency in Charlottesville, to make sure their family has enough to eat. Marisa is a manager at a fast food restaurant. Her husband is a landscaper. Both of them work hard to keep their family afloat, but for Marisa's husband, a rainy day can result in a smaller paycheck.

The pantry has provided a lifeline for Marisa's family and it helps them get by from month to month.

"It especially helps me provide the kids with snacks for school and daycare," said Marisa. "It's a great supplement."

In addition to receiving healthy lunch and snack options for her two young children, Marisa also gets the assistance she needs for

her family during lean times of the month.

"SNAP benefits do not arrive until the 9th of the month," Marisa said.

"So the food we get helps us out as a whole."

"I also love all the fresh veggies and meat. It's like going to a mini mart, but you don't have to pay for it when you don't have the money," Marisa said of the pantry's client choice system.

Marisa is grateful for those who give time and money in support of hunger relief.

"I'm thankful that there are people who care about others in their community," she said.

** Contributed by Loaves & Fishes food pantry*

Do You Have What It Takes to Be Poor?

Could your household survive on \$24,300 or less per year?

To experience (virtually) how your neighbors on the margins survive from month to month, visit <http://playspent.org/>.

Each year, the US Census Bureau determines who is poor and who is not. They use a measure called the **federal poverty threshold**, which is determined by a family's household income relative to the costs of life's most basic necessities.

A family's poverty threshold changes depending on the number of individuals living within the household.

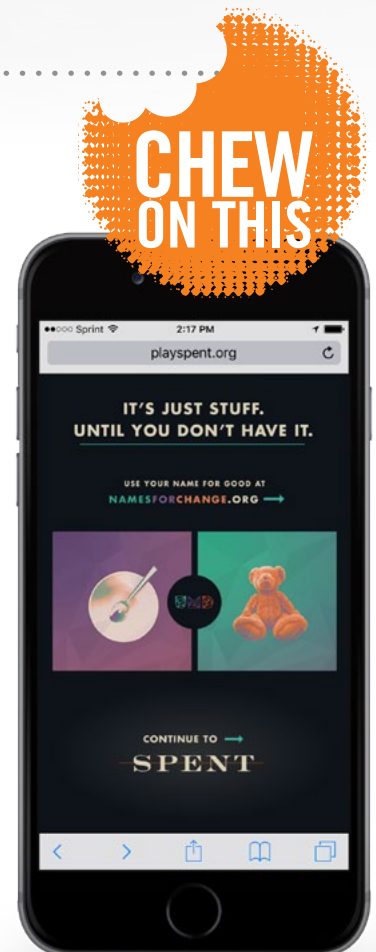
For example, in 2016, if a family of four earned \$24,230 or less per year, they are considered poor.

The measure was created in the mid-1960's by economist Mollie Orshansky. According

to the Census Bureau, this measure was based on the cost of the smallest amount of food a person needs to survive and multiplied by three in consideration of additional household expenses.

The federal **poverty guidelines**, a slightly simpler measure, are used by the government to determine who is eligible for federal aid benefits, such as SNAP (food stamps) and Medicaid, and in most cases the guidelines are very close to the poverty threshold algorithm – up to \$24,300 in income for that same family of four.

The term "poverty line" is often used to refer to the federal poverty threshold or federal poverty guidelines. While not the formal term for these measures, this has become the most recognizable way to describe who is or isn't considered poor.



FOCUS ON PHILANTHROPY

Pulling Together for Neighbors in Need

Loyal and faithful donors make a BIG difference

The nicest people in the world are those who support the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank.

Our donors choose to help people they never meet; they decide to be a force for good in their own communities, year after year; and they work together to support their neighbors in need, regardless of changes in our economy or elected leadership.

The Food Bank's most steadfast donors — numbering 1,568 this year — have made gifts every year for at least 10 consecutive years, providing food and hope.

"It's truly remarkable that so many people have made the decision to include us in their charitable plans, year after year," reflects Karen Ratzlaff, chief philanthropy officer. "These are individuals

and businesses who helped their neighbors through the worst recession in modern history, and supported the Food Bank at a time of unprecedented growth."

"We also deeply appreciate the vote of confidence these annual gifts represent."

Last year, the collective contributions of Steadfast Givers totaled almost 16 percent of the dollars contributed by all donors.

The importance of this support cannot be overstated. Faithful donors provide a stable foundation of income for the Food Bank and see our budget through leaner months.

A growing number of donors give faithfully and more frequently — they are members of the **Supper Club**, recognizing those who choose the

Giving FoodDay

You helped us make Giving Tuesday a Giving FoodDay — Thank You!

On November 29, with help from a group of faithful friends who pledged \$5,000 to match the first \$5,000 donated on Giving Tuesday, you provided \$29,789.

That's 119,156 meals generated for hungry neighbors, in just one day!

THANK YOU

convenience of monthly gifts paid automatically by bank draft (ACH), credit card, or bank bill pay. Just \$25 donated each month adds up to 1,200 meals provided each year.

To learn more about joining The Supper Club, visit brafb.org/supperclub or contact Karen at (540) 213-8404 or kratzlaff@brafb.org.



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

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

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

If you have already made the decision to leave a legacy gift to the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank in your will or estate plan, 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 brafb.org/plannedgift or contact Karen Ratzlaff at (540) 213-8404 or kratzlaff@brafb.org. All inquiries will remain confidential.

A Role for Everyone

FOR MORE INFORMATION, contact our Volunteer & Food Drive Coordinator Jennifer Clark Robertson at volunteer@brafb.org or 540.213.8402



The LPD's Community Action Team distributes food at Hillcrest, a senior community in Lynchburg.

Serving While Protecting

A group of officers from the Lynchburg Police Department are taking community policing to a new level. Their Community Action Team (CAT) is making its presence known not just by patrolling the streets, but also by making a difference for hungry seniors. They are volunteering for the Food Bank's Reach Program to distribute food boxes in senior housing complexes. Despite their busy schedules, the members of CAT stepped up to help. This year, they plan to grow their involvement by coordinating food box distributions with officers' "beat" assignments.

As we grow the Reach Program, the **Food Bank is recruiting additional Lynchburg volunteers** willing to help feed seniors, once a month on a regular basis. If interested in serving as a Senior Food Program volunteer, visit brafb.org/volunteer and click on Volunteer Now, then Lynchburg to see available opportunities.



Scouts collect food during their annual Scouting for Food drive.

Help from the Youngest Among Us

Parents often ask Food Bank staff how their children can get involved in hunger relief. For safety reasons, warehouse volunteers must be 12 years of age or older and must be accompanied by a parent or chaperone, and 16 years of age or older to volunteer without a chaperone.

However, fighting hunger certainly isn't limited to warehouse work —there are many ways for children and youth to engage their communities in the fight against hunger.

Annual storefront food drives like Stuff A Truck (Fall) and the Holiday Food Drive (end of year) provide great opportunities for children to help hungry neighbors. Young people accompanied by a parent or guardian distribute lists of most-needed-items

to shoppers. Who can resist the smile of an eager, earnest child?

With assistance and encouragement, kids can coordinate food drives within their neighborhoods, churches, schools, and youth organizations. A Hunger Hero toolkit is available on our website offering resources and ideas.

A Virtual Food Drive is a great way to help a child celebrate a milestone and help others at the same time. Party guests can make an online donation to the Food Bank in the birthday boy or girl's name.

Visit our website at www.brafb.org/getinvolved to find suggestions to help you teach your children about hunger in their community and to review family activities to fight hunger.



>> CURRENT OPPORTUNITIES IN THE CHARLOTTESVILLE AREA
 Help with Mobile Food Pantry distributions including senior food boxes.
 Visit brafb.org/volunteer and click on Volunteer Now, then Charlottesville.

Our Retail Partners:

Helping Rescue Food from Landfills

The Good Samaritan was a traveler in a biblical parable who helped a man left for dead after two others passed him by and refused to help. Today, the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act encourages grocery stores to donate their leftover food items to food banks rather than throw away what they can't sell. The act also protects retailers and other food donors from liability, assuring that they won't be penalized for their good deeds — a valuable provision that helps the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank provide more food for neighbors in need.

The Food Bank's retail donation program is called *Partner Pick Up*, so named because our partner agencies — the pantries, soup kitchens, shelters and nonprofits on the front lines of feeding clients — pick up donated food directly from stores and use it to fill their shelves. The Food Bank serves as "matchmaker"— identifying opportunities, matching nearby pantries with stores on a set schedule, and reporting donation totals back to the retailers.

As a result, the program is extremely efficient and saves significant money and time. It also reduces the chance of food spoilage by shortening the time food is spent in transport. More than 150 retailers and 96 partner pantries located in the Food Bank's 25-county service area participate. Through safe guards established by the Food Bank and grocers and carried-out by the agency partners, we make sure that food is acceptable for distribution.

Last year, seven million pounds of perishable and nonperishable foods provided 6 million meals for Food Bank clients.

"In addition to saving money, partner agencies can also provide clients with a greater mix of foods," said Greg Knight, food sourcing manager for the Food Bank. "For stores, it's nice because the donated food stays in their zip code."

Kroger grocery stores are just one of many retail partners participating in this food rescue initiative. Partner Pick Up helps Kroger meet their number one charitable mission — feeding the hungry.

"The Partner Pick Up program enables Kroger to be a good steward in the community by feeding hungry families with nutritious meals. The program also helps keep food out of landfills, thereby protecting the environment," said Michael Herrmann, district manager of Kroger.

When a Food Bank partner agency becomes eligible for the program, they are assigned to stores within their service region and introduced to the stores' managers. The agencies also receive program and food safety training.

With support provided by donors who make unrestricted gifts to the Food Bank, we provide scales, cooler blankets, coolers and thermometers to partner agencies without charge — items vital to helping them safely secure food from retailers and distribute the items directly to neighbors in need.

Grocery stores in the Food Bank's service region are encouraged to join the Partner Pick Up program by visiting our website at www.brafb.org/retail-donation or calling Greg Knight at (540) 213-8421 to learn more.



Participating Grocers and Other Rail Partners

- Abuelita Mexican Foods
- Albemarle Baking Company
- Aldi Supermarket
- Big Apple Bagels
- Big Lots
- Bimbo Bakery
- CARGILL
- Chipotle
- Costco
- Fauquier Education Farm
- Food Lion
- Fresh Market
- Great Harvest Bread
- Harris Teeter
- Hot Takes
- KFC
- Kroger
- Little Caesars
- Long John Silvers
- Longhorn Steakhouse
- Martins Foods
- McKee Bakery Store
- Miller Bakery
- Olive Garden
- Panera Bread
- PIZZA HUT
- Red Lobster
- Relay Foods
- Safeway Foods
- Sam's Club
- Sharp Shopper
- Sheetz
- Shop N Save
- Shoppers
- St. Lucy
- Starbucks
- Take!Away
- Target
- Trader Joes
- TreefLife
- Walmart
- WaWa
- Wegmans
- Weis
- West Oak Farm Market
- Whole Foods Market

List includes grocers and other businesses that donate food through the Partner Pick Up Program.



HUNGER ★ HEROES ★

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



PepsiCo 20,808 meals
Kellogg Company 32,056 meals
 PepsiCo and Kellogg Company joined Walmart's "Fight Hunger. Spark Change" campaign, an initiative that raised funds for food banks through the purchase of branded products and customer donations at the register.



Red Nose Day Fund 44,000 meals
 Run by the non-profit organization Comic Relief Inc., Red Nose Day aims to make a difference in the lives of children in need. Their donation will support Family Backpack programs in Winchester, Waynesboro, and Augusta County.



Food Lion 71,128 meals
 Food Lion Feeds continues to make a difference! Their reusable bag campaign plus a \$10,000 donation to fund our Kids Café will provide many nutritious meals to children and their families.



Scouting for Food 85,516+ meals
 Scouts collected more than 100,000 pounds of food from the doorsteps of generous neighbors in Winchester, the Shenandoah Valley and Charlottesville to help feed individuals and families in need.



Virginia Hunger Symposium 24,446 meals
 Students and faculty alike were moved to action through a host of informative and entertaining activities during the 10th annual Virginia Hunger Symposium at Blue Ridge Community College. The event raised awareness about hunger, as well as food and funds for neighbors in need.



First Baptist Waynesboro \$5,800
 This church donated funds for two local Food Bank partner pantries to purchase two-door coolers to store fresh produce and other perishable food.



Giant Food, Inc. 68,564 meals
 We are grateful to customers at Giant Food Stores who donated to local food banks during the company's Bag Hunger campaign in September.



Draft Taproom, Charlottesville 52,832 meals
 This generous business is paying a living wage to its employees so that tips can be contributed to local charities. The Food Bank was the first recipient when the Taproom opened this past fall.



Misty Mountain Music Festival 19,012 meals

This special two-day event showcased bluegrass, country and folk performances alongside local businesses and artisans. Admission ticket sales resulted in a record return — thank you, organizers!



Homebrew for Hunger 20,000 meals

This annual event showcases local beer made by homebrewers and craft breweries at the Fifth Season Gardening Co. in Charlottesville, with proceeds benefitting hungry neighbors in need through the Food Bank.



Sumitomo Drive Technologies 24,000 meals

A new and generous partner! The employees stepped up to help solve hunger, and the company matched their efforts.



Enterprise Rent-a-Car Foundation 74,400 meals

Enterprise Rent-a-Car is fighting hunger around the globe. Their "Fill Your Tank" donation program fueled the potential of thousands of hungry neighbors in the Blue Ridge.



Holiday Food Drive 8,253+ meals

NBC29, Lite Rock Z95.1 and The Daily Progress called on Kroger shoppers to fill our food barrels at stores in Waynesboro, Staunton, Charlottesville, and Harrisonburg.



Shop to Stop Hunger Charlottesville 31,746 meals Staunton 29,542 meals

For the inaugural event in Staunton, local celebrities raised money and collected food for hungry neighbors with as much gusto as Charlottesville's local luminaries! Special thanks to **Home Instead Senior Care** and **Kroger** for co-sponsoring the supermarket sweep in both areas.



Left to right, Farm Credit of Virginia's outgoing CEO Dave Lawrence, Michael McKee, CEO of the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank, and Farm Credit of Virginia's incoming CEO Peery Heldreth



Farm Credit of the Virginias \$25,000

For the second consecutive year, our friends at Farm Credit of the Virginias have donated matching funds to the **Farm Fresh Fund** with an aim to help ensure that hungry individuals and families in need have access to nutritious, fresh produce.

The fund allows the Food Bank to acquire a variety of fresh produce harvested by Virginia farmers at a deep discount, while also helping growers cover the cost of picking and packing the food left in their fields. We are deeply grateful to Farm Credit of the Virginias for their commitment to match donations up to \$25,000, a gift that will offer more healthy choices to our most vulnerable, hungry neighbors. Thank you!

This list recognizes Hunger Heroes who generously supported our cause between early September and mid-December 2016.

Planting Seeds of Hope for the Hungry

Many a gardener has expressed joy in planting seeds and watching them grow. It's an activity that feeds the soul, they say. It also provides a sense of satisfaction for area gardeners who help feed the minds and bodies of the hungry — gardeners such as Tom Timmerman.

After Tom and his wife MJ left the Midwest and settled on a 28-acre horse farm in central Virginia, they built a series of raised vegetable beds and planted 18 fruit trees on a one-acre plot, achieving their goal to grow nutritious, organic produce for neighbors in their new community who were less fortunate but who desired healthy and fresh produce.

“We soon discovered the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank via their local branch in Charlottesville,” said Timmerman. “At that time, many food banks across the country discouraged receiving and distributing fresh produce because of its perishability. Blue Ridge acknowledged the role of fresh produce in meeting the needs of those they served.”

Since the Timmermans began donating, they have grown and supplied the food bank with asparagus, tomatoes, potatoes, broccoli, cucumbers, and squash—sometimes a hundred pounds at a time; on other occasions, one bushel at a time.

“Being able to give something that is so beneficial while connecting with nature fulfills my desire to contribute and help the community where I reside,” said Timmerman.

If you are an avid gardener and want to help fight hunger by donating healthful foods, visit our Pantry Locator at www.brafb.org to find a partner pantry near you. Delivering your donation directly to a frontline food pantry, soup kitchen, or shelter saves time and gets your produce to a family in need while it's in peak condition.

Alternatively, you can contact the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank branch in your region to make delivery arrangements (see locations and contact information on the back cover).



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The Rewards of Embracing Gratitude

We experience the most amazing thing at the Food Bank during the holidays and into the start of the New Year – we say thank you more times per day than we can count. We have occasion to be grateful every day of the year, of course, but at the holidays, the occasion comes much more frequently. Thank yous to long-time donors, volunteers, food drive sponsors, partner agencies, social media friends, even complete strangers who walk in looking to help in some way.

What makes the experience so remarkable isn't only what comes before it – usually a donation or some form of assistance – but how it makes us feel. Expressing gratitude, like laughing, is mood enhancing even life-changing.

If it is better to give than to receive, then it is better still to give thanks. Gratitude is healing and empowering.

So my New Year's resolution is this: when I find myself worrying about the future, or feeling as though our community and nation seem more divided than unified, I will practice giving thanks.

After all, it is impossible to feel fearful and grateful at the same time.

With gratitude for all you do to improve the lives of those we serve,



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael McKee". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michael McKee, CEO



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PO Box 937
Verona, VA 24482



OUR MISSION is to feed hungry people through a network of community organizations in central and western Virginia, and to engage our communities in the fight to end hunger locally and nationally.

BRANCH LOCATIONS

Shenandoah Valley Area Branch & Headquarters
PO Box 937
96 Laurel Hill Road
Verona, VA 24482-0937
P: 540.248.3663
F: 540.248.6410

Thomas Jefferson Area Branch
1207 Harris Street
Charlottesville, VA 22903-5319
P: 434.296.3663
F: 434.296.9621

Lynchburg Area Branch
501 12th Street, Suite B
Lynchburg, VA 24504-2527
P: 434.845.4099
F: 434.845.6153

Lord Fairfax Area Branch
1802 Roberts Street
Winchester, VA 22604-2342
P: 540.665.0770
F: 540.722.4217

GET INVOLVED

For more event details, visit our Events page at brafb.org, or call 540.248.3663

March 6-24

Neighbors-4-Neighbors School Food Drive

Young people can indeed help fight hunger! More than 30 schools and school administration offices in greater-Charlottesville join forces to collect food for this annual drive. If you want your school to be part of the effort, send an email by Feb. 15 to schoolfooddrives@gmail.com.



April 3-14

11th Annual Legal Food Frenzy

Lawyers across Virginia will compete to raise food and funds for hungry individuals and families in the communities they serve. But you don't have to be a lawyer to participate. Visit brafb.org to learn how you can support us during the Frenzy.



May 13

Stamp Out Hunger

Mail carriers across the country will provide millions of meals to families in need through this annual food drive. Leave non-perishable food donations at your doorstep on Saturday, May 13, to help us stamp out hunger in the Blue Ridge area.



June 5-23

Valley Businesses Give Back

This annual food and fund drive is a friendly competition between businesses and organizations in the Shenandoah Valley to see who can raise the most money and collect the most food to help stock the shelves of the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank during the summer months. If you want your company to participate, email Jennifer Clark Robertson at jjclarkrobertson@brafb.org.



July 2017

Charlottesville Restaurant Week



Whether or not you consider yourself a foodie, this weeklong event is a great opportunity to sample Charlottesville and Albemarle County restaurants as they offer delightful and savory dishes at attractive prices. These generous establishments then donate \$1 from every meal purchased to help hungry neighbors.

September 2017

Hunger Action Month

One in every 10 people in the Blue Ridge continues to suffer from hunger, but together we can make a real difference. We'll be asking you to join us in this national movement to raise awareness about food insecurity during Hunger Action Month in September! Check our website in August to see all the ways you can get involved.



April 2017

Canstruction Lynchburg and Harrisonburg



These cities will showcase their citizens' artistry as they assemble unique structures from canned food and raise awareness about hunger during this annual competition and food drive.

Music Feeds Us

More than 110,000 meals have been raised since the inception of this annual classical music series. You can help neighbors in need by bringing canned food or monetary donations to the free concerts in Staunton and Charlottesville. Visit BRAFB's website in March for more details.



EIGHT YEARS AND COUNTING! We're proud to be awarded four stars for sound fiscal management, the highest possible rating by America's largest charity evaluator, Charity Navigator, for the 8th consecutive year.