

# harvest

A NEWSLETTER OF THE BLUE RIDGE AREA FOOD BANK



## Creative Volunteer Opportunities

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## School Kids Learn to Love Their ABCs and Veggies Too!

Teaching kids to embrace and prepare healthier food options

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BLUE RIDGE AREA  
FOOD BANK

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AMERICA



# Kids Will Eat Their Veggies

**“I love corn – this corn is sweet,” said Preston, a first grader. He took a giant bite out of a corn cob and smiled a toothy grin.**

In 2017, the Food Bank got kids and teens crunching on something other than chips. In one program, we mixed produce with literacy, while in another, we got teens prepping food in the kitchen. The results proved that a little creativity and smart collaborations can get kids excited about healthful food.



COVER PHOTO: COPYRIGHT NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC, COURTESY OF FEEDING AMERICA

## **The Gus Bus Program:**

Through a partnership with The Reading Road Show/Gus Bus, a mobile education-outreach program operated by James Madison University, the Food Bank brought free produce markets to Harrisonburg neighborhoods during the summer.

The Food Bank and the Gus Bus were already partnering to distribute non-perishable food to families at neighborhood stops. The new “Market Days” program added fresh produce to the mix of food regularly distributed on the bus.

**“People make assumptions about what kids will eat, but the children who came to our free produce market were so excited about the food they took home,” said the Food Bank’s Eileen Emerson,**

**recalling how several children munched on apples, peppers and corn before even getting the food home.**

In addition to encouraging children to eat fresh produce, the program also broadens access for food-insecure families in general.

The truth is children and teens who are hungry come from families who also need food. “Child hunger is family hunger,” said Emerson. “Parents tell us they often hide the reality that they are going without food so their children can eat.”

At the Food Bank, our goal is to provide food to all of our neighbors in need.

Additional “Market Days” have been scheduled for the fall.



**EILEEN EMERSON** joined the Food Bank team in August 2016 as a member of the Child Hunger Corps, organized by Feeding America and funded by ConAgra Foods. The Corps is a national service program designed to help food banks increase their capacity to serve children and families. For the past year, Emerson has been conducting a Community Needs Assessment to get to the heart of how best to help hungry children in the Blue Ridge area.

In addition to identifying priorities and strategies that the Food Bank is evaluating before implementation, Emerson's efforts also promote solutions that communities can develop on their own to feed hungry children.

## Healthy Bites and Mini Markets

This past spring in Waynesboro, we partnered with the Boys & Girls Club and local schools to get older kids to sample healthy meals they prepared with adult supervision.

"Getting kids involved in the food preparation process can be the key to convincing them to eat more fruits and vegetables," said Robin Swecker, partner services coordinator at the Food Bank.

Swecker visited the Teen Zone at the Boys & Girls Club of Waynesboro to coach young people into trying foods with fresh ingredients, and less fat and sodium.

Teens can be picky when it comes to what they eat, but the boys and girls who prepared their meals with Swecker didn't put up much of a fight when it came to finishing all of their broccoli and chicken parmesan served over whole wheat pasta.

This experience was part of an initiative called "Healthy Bites" which began last year in Lynchburg as a way to introduce healthy food options to kids in afterschool programs.

Kristi West, partner services coordinator for the Food Bank's Lynchburg branch and Jeanell Smith, a nutrition educator with the Virginia Cooperative Extension, work together to provide a healthy menu for afterschool sites.

## Why it Matters

More than 47,000 children are living in food-insecure households in our service area, and for them regular access to nutritious meals is especially important.

Research links food insecurity in children with learning difficulties and delayed development in their early years. Children without enough to eat may also face behavior problems and anxiety when they are in school.

Thank you for supporting our work to restore options for struggling families and help to nourish the future for children who might not otherwise have enough to eat.



# MAKING OUR PARTNERS STRONGER

Thank you for the grant that enabled us to get the industrial refrigerator. We are giving out up to 120 bags of food now every Saturday at Pumpkin. The refrigerator has greatly helped us in doing that. Once we decided to start our food ministry things have just seemed to fall into place and your generous gift is just another example of God answering prayers and meeting needs.

Thank You Again & God Bless

By His Hands Volunteers



We know the 212 food pantries, soup kitchens, and shelters on the front line of hunger relief are showing signs of strain and growing pains. Many pantries lack high-capacity coolers and freezers to accommodate the changing mix of food available — healthy options that increasingly include fruit, vegetables, and other perishable foods. Others are operated and staffed by faithful volunteers who have been doing this work for decades and who need digital tools to make their jobs easier.

Last year we created the Agency Capacity Fund to help ease the strain. Our focus was on their greatest needs — cold storage equipment, and technology upgrades that will ensure their ability to serve more people and provide more nutritious food.

Thankfully, many of our donors share our commitment and stepped up to help.

We offered resources via a grant RFP (Request for Proposal), and agencies were more than happy to respond with a list of their needs.

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“Our clients are coming in so excited, asking how we did this. We tell them the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank fulfilled our dreams...more perishable items can now be kept inside where clients can view them and have more choices.”

— FAUQUIER COMMUNITY FOOD PANTRY

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**The Agency Capacity Fund** supports two strategic goals currently guiding the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank's work:

**FEED** our neighbors in need, providing equitable access to basic sustenance and sound nutrition.

**STRENGTHEN** our food assistance network of partner agencies (food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters)

We received 61 proposals totaling \$261,970 in requests – seeking everything from coolers and freezers, to computers, shelving and step ladders. The requests came from throughout our 25-county, 8-city service area.

The Food Bank was able to provide every agency that applied with at least one item (a cooler, a freezer and/or a laptop or tablet) to help them build their capacity.

The program was so successful we will repeat it again in 2017-18, with a

focus on equipment that will continue to replace aging residential coolers and freezers with commercial-grade units, electronic hardware to support new software designed to make processes easier to manage and minimize report requirements, and warehouse equipment like floor scales and pallet jacks to move food.

Many partners in our network have experienced challenges. That is why we made a big investment in their capacity, and the healthy returns earned on that investment will directly benefit thousands of neighbors in need.

## AGENCY CAPACITY FUND

DONOR HONOR ROLL  
2016-2017

- ★ Anonymous
- ★ C-ville Weekly
- ★ All 52 Charlottesville-area restaurants participating in two 2017 Restaurant Weeks
- ★ John & Kim Conway
- ★ Kraft Heinz Company Foundation
- ★ Manning Family Foundation
- ★ Walmart Foundation

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## You're Invited: Join The Will to End Hunger Society



### Create a Legacy of Hope and Security

When you include the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank in your will or estate plan, you help ensure that your neighbors – and your children's and grandchildren's neighbors – will have access to nutritious food, when they need it.

### A Partnership for a Lifetime

Joining *The Will to End Hunger Society* is as simple as letting us know that you've included a gift for the Food Bank in your will or that you've established some other form of future gift. Let us know by May 31, 2018 and you will be considered a charter member of the new society. Requests for anonymity are honored.

Visit [brafb.org/plannedgift](http://brafb.org/plannedgift) for estate gift ideas you might consider, or contact Karen Ratzlaff at (540) 213-8404 or [kratzlaff@brafb.org](mailto:kratzlaff@brafb.org).

# Thinking Creatively About Volunteering

After the loss of his wife, Ron Rammelkamp, a celebrated photographer, turned a tragic life event into an opportunity to help people who hurt.

“My wife had health issues our entire marriage, so I know all too well how easy it is to get in a hole, and unfortunately, I’ve seen that hole get pretty deep,” Rammelkamp said. “I’ve also seen older folks stretching their medications to offset food bills.

“If through my efforts, a handful of people can rest a little easier for a week or two, I’m more than happy to lend a hand!”

**Specialized Volunteer Opportunities** often offer flexibility that traditional shifts in our warehouses don’t. These opportunities ask caring people to draw upon their professional and general life skills to help neighbors who don’t have enough to eat.

“When people serve others, they live in their finest hour and become their most complete and authentic self.”

If you’re looking to get involved in a more traditional, regularly scheduled shift in one of our four distribution centers or at a Mobile Food Pantry, visit our online calendar at [brafb.org/volunteer](http://brafb.org/volunteer) and click on “Volunteer Now.”



**Above.** Ron Rammelkamp has generously shared his skill with the Food Bank to capture images of the face of hunger in the Blue Ridge (shown here: Reo).

## Specialized Volunteer Opportunities

We can currently use help with all sorts of administrative and creative tasks.

- Lead Volunteer
- Administrative or Clerical Volunteers
- Photographer
- Videographer and Video Editor
- Substitute Receptionist
- Writer
- Community Outreach Ambassador
- Retail Customer Service
- Data Entry
- Translator

To learn what current needs exist and where they are located, visit our website at [brafb.org/volunteer](http://brafb.org/volunteer) and click on “Specialized Volunteer Opportunities.” For more information, contact Jennifer Clark Robertson at 540.213.8402 or [volunteer@brafb.org](mailto:volunteer@brafb.org).



## MEET LINDA BAKER, NEW CFO

We are pleased to announce the arrival of Linda Baker, the Food Bank’s new Chief Financial Officer. Linda replaces longtime CFO John Koehler, who retired.

Linda brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the Food Bank’s management team. She is a certified public accountant and has years of experience as a CFO and Chief Business Officer for private schools in Georgia, and most recently at Stuart Hall in Staunton.



## *Feed Myself? Or Feed My Pet?*

If you're an animal lover, you might understand how difficult this choice could be for many of the neighbors we help. It's a very real and difficult reality that some clients face. Pets provide meaningful companionship, unconditional love and acceptance, and even stress relief in difficult situations.

"Mentally, I can't live without an animal in my life."

Dawn Griggs has seen difficult days. She currently makes do with disability payments after two back surgeries for injuries stemming from a car accident. To make her own ends meet, she receives food from the Rockbridge Area Relief Association (RARA) in Lexington, one of the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank's partner agencies.

Griggs and her boyfriend LB Honaker also help their neighbors

take care of their pets, and they rehabilitate neglected animals. And they volunteer at a pet food pantry distribution, which occurs during RARA's regular food distribution hours on the fourth Saturday of the month. The pet food pantry is sponsored by the nonprofit Rockbridge Animal Alliance (RAA).

"Some people have service dogs, some have hunting dogs, others simply need the ongoing companionship of their pets," said Sarah Sprinkle, RAA coordinator. "We help those with financial challenges care for and keep their pets to reduce trauma for both humans and their dogs and cats."

"Pets help alleviate stress in already stressful situations. We are in the business of keeping bonds from being broken," Sprinkle added.

**Food Bank clients with pets will soon receive free pet food thanks to PetSmart's Buy A Bag, Give A Meal program.**

Recently, PetSmart teamed up with Feeding America to reach financially struggling pet owners before they have to make the tough choice to relinquish their pets. PetSmart charities has a goal to find lifelong homes for every pet through adoption and rescue programs, and support for spay and neuter efforts. Currently, almost half of the nation's food banks distribute pet food through this arrangement, and soon the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank will join them.

We're poised to receive the first shipment of dry dog and cat food in early 2018, with plans to distribute the pet food through interested partner agencies on the front lines.



# HUNGER ★ HEROES ★

*We are deeply grateful to the following Hunger Heroes who have helped us to 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.*



**Bank of America  
Charitable Foundation**  
**162,600 meals**

Many donors made their gift to the Food Bank through Bank of America's *Give a Meal* campaign, which matched every dollar 2 to 1. On top of that, the Charlottesville Bank of America staff awarded a generous grant to the Mobile Food Pantry.



**Stamp Out Hunger**  
**259,578 meals in 2017**

We love our postal carriers! Stamp Out Hunger is the largest single-day food drive of the year. More than 1.6 million pounds of food have been collected locally in the past seven years — an accomplishment that would be impossible to achieve without the involvement of the hard-working letter carriers, food donors and volunteers.



**Wegmans**  
**78,333 meals**

These new grocery neighbors in Charlottesville have entered town with a bang and a big heart! This summer they collected funds during the *Check Out Hunger* campaign, enough to provide 65,000 meals; and the *Fill a Bus* campaign collected 16,000 pounds of food for kids in need.



**Genworth Foundation**  
**40,000 meals**

Generous support of the Reach Program provides nutrition for low-income seniors and homebound adults in the Lynchburg area.



**Nationwide Insurance  
Foundation**  
**100,000 meals**

Their 2017 grant, the sixth year of such generous support, helped the Food Bank provide nourishment to tens of thousands of hungry individuals and families.



**Dominion Energy  
Charitable Foundation**  
**80,000 meals**

They're helping us feed rural neighbors served by the Mobile Food Pantry.



**Food Lion Feeds**  
**204,854 meals**

Food Lion donated meals through many generous store-based efforts including the *One Meal at a Time* campaign. Two of our partners — Solid Rock Food Pantry in Madison Heights, and Page One in Page County — will benefit from the 2017 Great Pantry Makeover efforts of local Food Lion associates.



**Nissan North America**  
**40,000 meals**

University of Virginia men's basketball coach Tony Bennett chose the Food Bank as his charity partner for the 2017 Infiniti Coaches Charity Challenge, sponsored by Nissan. Thanks to everyone who cast their vote for Coach Bennett!





### Whole Foods Market, Charlottesville and Ashburn 45,035 meals

We're grateful to the store staff and generous customers who supported the *Feed4More* campaign.



SAY GOODNIGHT  
TO HUNGER  
BOOK A STAY. FEED A FAMILY.  
OMNI HOTELS & RESORTS

### Omni Hotels 78,840 meals

Sleep well! The *Say Goodnight to Hunger* campaign provided thousands of meals for food-insecure neighbors in Charlottesville and Hot Springs.



### Ball Advanced Aluminum Technologies and Ball Foundation 53,700 meals

Our Verona neighbors — employees of Ball Advanced Aluminum Technologies — ran an impressive food drive, and the Foundation matched their contribution with dollars.



### Devils Backbone Brewing Company 10,000 meals and ways to cook them

Mobile Food Pantry clients have access to healthy food and tips on how to prepare it, thanks to a donation and sponsorship of recipe cards distributed each month.



### DuPont Community Credit Union 14,333 meals

Shred Day events at all locations make a real difference for our neighbors in need. Not only is the food a big help, but the ongoing partnership reminds the community that we are all in this together.



### Walmart Foundation 509,000 meals and a trailer to carry them in

*Fight Hunger, Spark Change* is the annual campaign led by Walmart — what a difference it makes! In addition, this year we received a generous gift to complete the purchase of a new refrigerated trailer to move healthy food throughout the 25 counties we serve.



### DEPCOM Power \$15,000 grant

They are powering community with generous support for the Reach Program and for the distribution of fresh produce in the greater Winchester area.



### Legal Food Frenzy 55,622 meals

This friendly competition among law firms and legal organizations across Virginia raised food and funds for individuals and families in need.



## Valley Businesses Keep On Giving Back

What a year! The Valley Businesses Give Back (VBGB) annual food and fund drive is led by three regional Chambers of Commerce and local businesses in the Shenandoah Valley, and raises money and collects food to help stock the shelves of the Food Bank during the summer months. This year, 35 businesses donated enough to help us provide 21,872 meals to Shenandoah Valley neighbors — twice as much as our projected goal.

**Congratulations to the 2017 Grand Champion — Blue Ridge Insurance Services, Inc. — and to the 2017 Chamber Champion — Greater Augusta Regional Chamber of Commerce.**

*Thank you all for your dedication to helping others.*

# CHEW ON THIS

*These 20 bags represent all food assistance in this country.*

*They include federally-funded programs designed to help people in poverty combined with charitable programs like food banks and food pantries.*

Many assume that charities working alone provide for most of the needs of people who face excessive hardships, including hunger. After all, charities must be far more efficient and effective than the government. Right?

It is true that the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank is efficient, but so are the federal programs.

And we can't meet the need alone.

**Out of the 20 bags of groceries illustrated, only 1 comes from the charitable food assistance network, including this food bank.**

In fact, Feeding America's network of member food banks, including ours, provided 4 billion meals across the country in 2016. Federal food assistance programs provide 10 times that amount of nourishment.

Surprised? This is why the Food Bank advocates for a strong Farm Bill which funds both food banks and nutrition programs for kids, seniors, and people in poverty.

Visit [brafb.org/advocate](http://brafb.org/advocate) to learn more about our public policy priority and how you can help.



## SIGN UP FOR OUR E-NEWSLETTERS

We're ready to launch several email newsletters, each with a specific function. We encourage you to visit our website at [brafb.org](http://brafb.org) and indicate which you'd like to receive. All are welcome!

**Be informed and raise your voice!**

**Visit [brafb.org](http://brafb.org)**

### COME TO THE TABLE

News and announcements for anyone interested in the Food Bank and our efforts to solve hunger.

### GENEROUS HELPINGS

News and information for Food Bank volunteers.

### ADVOCACY ALERTS

Join the community of friends raising their voices on behalf of food-insecure neighbors.

### PARTNERING WITH PURPOSE

News and information for the food pantries, soup kitchens, and shelters partnering in our network

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## This Is Who We Are

I was listening to NPR recently when I heard the host open an interview with the statement “these are angry times.” Yes, I thought, they are. Passions seem to be running high everywhere we turn – in the news, social media, our city streets and town halls.

In August, I watched in disbelief the violent clashes in my hometown of Charlottesville. Tragic events tend to force introspection, not just for those who live near the epicenter of the event, but in this case, much of the nation.

How could that happen? Who are we, *really*?

A lot of us are asking those questions, and I think that kind of reflection is healthy. But I also think that actions speak louder than words, and that if we look around, we’ll see who we really are.

At our core, we are people who care about each other. People who show up not only in disasters like the recent hurricanes that wreaked so much havoc and heartache, but people who show up every day to help neighbors they’ll never meet. People like you.

When you give to fill a backpack for a child who comes home from school to empty kitchen cupboards, you remind us who we are.

When you make it possible for us to fill a box full of good food for a hungry grandparent, you remind us who we are.

When you help us put fresh produce on our Mobile Pantry and drive it to a rural county where hundreds of people wait hours for our arrival, you remind us who we are.

Compassionate. Generous. Resilient.

Because that’s who you are. Thank you not only for your material support but for demonstrating the power of empathy... the good that can come from pausing to view life through another’s eyes.

Gratefully,



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

Michael McKee, CEO



NON-PROFIT ORG  
POSTAGE & FEES  
**PAID**  
BLUE RIDGE AREA  
FOOD BANK

PO Box 937  
Verona, VA 24482



**OUR MISSION** is to provide nourishing food to our neighbors in need through vibrant community partnerships and passionate public support.

### BRANCH LOCATIONS

**Shenandoah Valley Area Branch & Headquarters**  
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F: 540.248.6410

**Thomas Jefferson Area Branch**  
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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](http://brafb.org), or call 540.248.3663

## October



### DCCU Shred Days

Bring your personal documents and have them securely shredded by DuPont Community Credit Union – all while helping hungry neighbors. Bring non-perishable food items to DCCU locations throughout the Valley in October. Check our website for dates for each location.

## October 2-6

### 11th Annual Virginia Hunger Symposium

The Blue Ridge Community College family invites you to participate in a series of activities that shed light on regional hunger and ideas for addressing it across central and western Virginia. Don't miss the Empty Bowl Dinner, open to the public and benefiting the Food Bank, on October 5. Tickets are \$15 and available at the door.



## October 28

### Rockin at Walnut Knoll, Staunton

Join us at 8 pm for live music by The Mojo Parker Band with Brian Mesko. Suggested donation of \$10



to benefit BRAFB. For more information, please visit [www.brafb.org/event/rockin-at-walnut-knoll/](http://www.brafb.org/event/rockin-at-walnut-knoll/).

## October 28

Charlottesville, Staunton, Harrisonburg and surrounding counties



## November 11

Winchester and surrounding counties

Area Boy Scouts will be sweeping neighborhoods for food donations during their largest annual food drive. Leave your bag of canned food at your doorstep at the date noted above for your location.

## November 28

**GivingTuesday at [brafb.org/give-now](http://brafb.org/give-now)**

#GivingTuesday is a global day of giving. Everyone, anywhere, can participate!

MAKE YOUR  
**#GIVINGTUESDAY™**

**A Giving FoodDay**

\$1 PROVIDES 4 MEALS

**NOVEMBER 28, 2017**

## November 18 – December 15



### Holiday Food Drive

NBC29, Z95.1, and Kroger ask that you join them in nourishing neighbors in need during the winter holidays. Drop non-perishable food donations in marked Food Bank barrels at Kroger stores in Staunton, Waynesboro, Harrisonburg, Charlottesville, and Lexington.

## December 4

### Christmas at Augusta Stone

Join us for the 21st annual benefit Christmas concert at Augusta Stone Church in Fort Defiance. Enjoy acoustic and folk holiday music from talented performers. Free will offering.



## January 7

### Twelfth Night Concert

Savor the sounds of the holiday season one last time with beautiful choir music. Choirs from the Staunton Church of the Brethren and Olivet Presbyterian Church will perform in their 17th post-holiday concert.

