

# harvest

A NEWSLETTER OF THE BLUE RIDGE AREA FOOD BANK

## Getting Healthy Food into Neighbors' Hands

pages 2-4



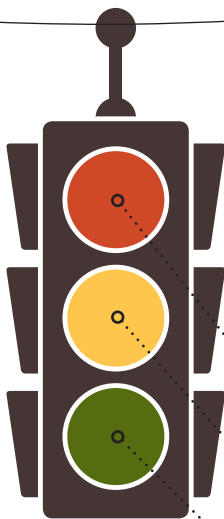
Blue Ridge Area  
**FOOD BANK**

A member of  
**FEEDING  
AMERICA**



# Nourishing Neighbors

## *Through Innovation*



### **Not all corn flakes are created equal.**

It's not always easy to know which foods are the most nutritious—even when choosing the most wholesome brand of corn flakes.

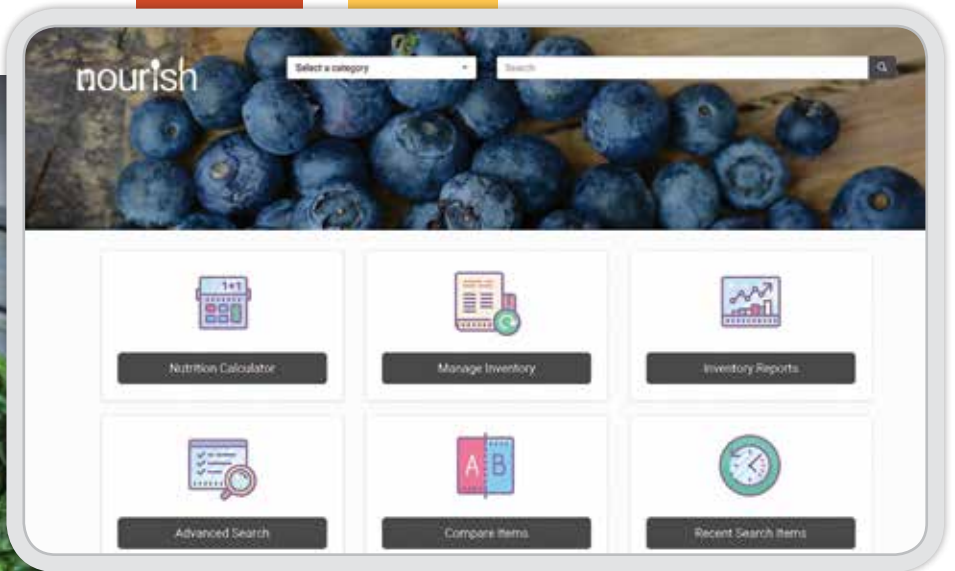
One of the Food Bank's latest innovations, the *Nourish* web-based application, is making it possible to acquire and maintain the healthiest mix of food possible for distribution.

*Nourish*, under development and in partnership with James Madison University (JMU), draws nutritional information from the USDA Food Composition Database. It then uses the Nutrient Rich Foods Index (NRFI), a validated process that evaluates food based on its total nutrient quality, to calculate a color-coded score for each item:

- **red** for foods that should be limited or avoided;
- **yellow** for foods that should be consumed in limited quantities; and
- **green** for foods to be encouraged

The software makes it possible to make food sourcing decisions in a moment. Right now, the software is being tested to evaluate the nutrient quality of foods purchased by the Food Bank, and foods donated by and available from the USDA.





**Nourish** is a fact-based, scientific approach to help make decisions about what food to select.

*“This application was designed by a food bank for food banks—we had a hand in customizing it to meet our needs”*

“This application does not rely on my personal biases or limited nutritional knowledge,” explains Greg Knight, food sourcing manager. “Nourish is a fact-based, scientific approach to making decisions about what food to select.”

The Food Bank serves more than 100,000 clients per month, including many with chronic conditions such as diabetes and hypertension. Nourish will support our mission of helping neighbors in need live well.

“Food can be therapeutic and healing, or it can perpetuate chronic diseases if it’s not nutritious,” says Michelle Hesse, director of agency relations and programs. “There’s a deep connection between hunger and health. It’s not enough to just feed people—we also want to nourish their wellbeing.”

Nourish was born in 2017 when then-JMU Professor Hesse approached her colleagues after a brainstorming session with Food Bank leaders who were looking for innovative ways to improve the nutritional quality of our food. Students and faculty in JMU’s Department of Health Sciences, Computer Information Systems (CIS) program and the School of Media Arts and Design (SMAD) participated in early development. In December 2017, the top two student teams pitched their ideas to a panel of judges in a competition modeled after ABC’s hit TV show “Shark Tank.” Nourish emerged as the winner.

The Food Bank has hired a tech company to make sure Nourish will work with its existing inventory management system, helping us maintain a balanced supply of food. “We will be able to set goals and monitor our progress on a real-time basis,” says Knight.

“This application was designed by a food bank for food banks—we really had a hand in customizing it to meet our needs,” Hesse says. “The information about food nutritional quality was already available. This program allows us to use that data in a way that’s operational for our organization.”

In time, after a testing phase and with support from Feeding America, the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank hopes to offer the software to food banks across the nation.



# A Fresh Approach

“Encouraging healthy eating is top of mind for everyone at the Food Bank,” says Greg Knight, food sourcing manager. “One way we do that is with produce.”



Greg Knight

The Food Bank distributes as much fresh fruit and vegetables as possible. Our goal this year is that 28 percent of the food we distribute—that’s 7.2 million pounds of food—will be produce.

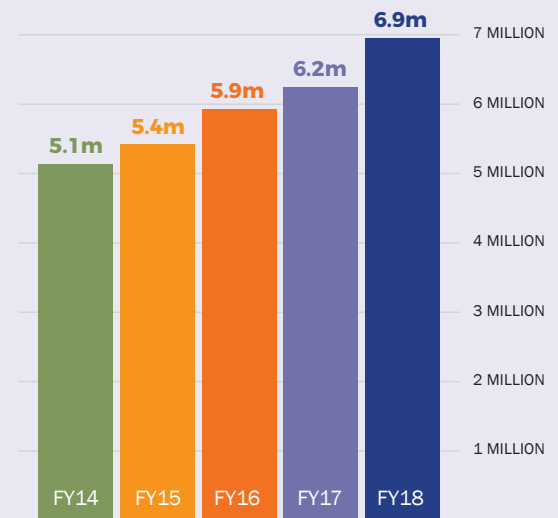
That’s a remarkable feat when you consider that we never *buy* the produce we distribute. The Food Bank does, however, pay for the costs associated with picking and packing much of the fresh food, and the fuel and freight required to get produce to our headquarters in Verona.

The donor-supported *Farm Fresh Fund* and unrestricted annual gifts make it possible to cover the half-million-dollar budget we anticipate this year for produce costs, alone.

Knight acquires fresh produce through a mix of strategies, including:

- **Feeding America’s connections to national and international produce distributors**—We can obtain imported produce, such as clementines or pineapples, through the Mid-Atlantic Regional Produce Cooperative when the market is flooded or loads are rejected by retail outlets
- **Relationships with growers, both local and statewide, who make crop donations**—For example, a cabbage grower in Southwest Virginia sets aside a certain percentage of the crop for Virginia food banks, including the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank. Virginia’s Food Crop Donation Tax Credit encourages farmers to donate food by offering a credit worth 30% of the fair-market value of the donated food up to \$5,000 per grower.
- **Partnerships with the Shenandoah Valley Produce Auction and other growers**—Knight makes arrangements before the growing season starts to purchase truckload quantities of certain crops when possible. This allows growers to move more product and reduce waste.
- **Sharing with other food banks**—Relationships allow the Food Bank to get produce that’s not widely grown in our service area. For example, sweet potato crops are not plentiful in our area, but Feeding the Carolinas, (the North Carolina Food Bank Association) connects us with NC farmers who do grow these superfoods.
- **Retail donation program**—Grocery store partners help the Food Bank save nutritious foods such as fruits and vegetables from waste streams and provide those foods to neighbors who need it.

## FOOD BANK PRODUCE DISTRIBUTION 2013-2018



## Choosing the Right Mix of Foods

The Food Bank’s nutrition policy, adopted in 2017, guides our decisions.

### DESIRABLE FOODS:

- Fresh fruits and vegetables
- Fruits canned in water or 100 percent juice, rather than syrup
- Canned vegetables that are low-sodium or no sodium added
- Whole grains and whole-grain rich foods
- Lean proteins such as low-sodium canned or dry beans
- Zero-calorie drinks

### FOODS TO AVOID:

- Sweets
- Salty snack foods
- Frozen desserts such as ice cream
- Sugary drinks

“We appreciate every donation to the Food Bank, but this policy allows us to have thoughtful conversations with our donors about what we need most,” says Michelle Hesse, director of agency relations and programs. “And it’s a reminder for everyone in our organization that our role is to provide the most nutritious food to our neighbors in need.”

# Harness People-Power: *Become a Hunger Hero*

If your New Year’s resolution is to find a way to contribute toward building the kind of healthy, thriving community you want to live in, here are some suggestions.

To turn your good ideas into action and meals for neighbors in need, these ideas harness the power of your personal network and increase your potential impact.

## 1. Start a Facebook Fundraiser

Facebook Fundraisers are an easy way to celebrate birthdays or special milestones. Let your friends and families know that hunger relief is a cause you support and invite them to join you. Facebook makes it easy to set-up and manage.

## 2. Launch an Online Fund Drive

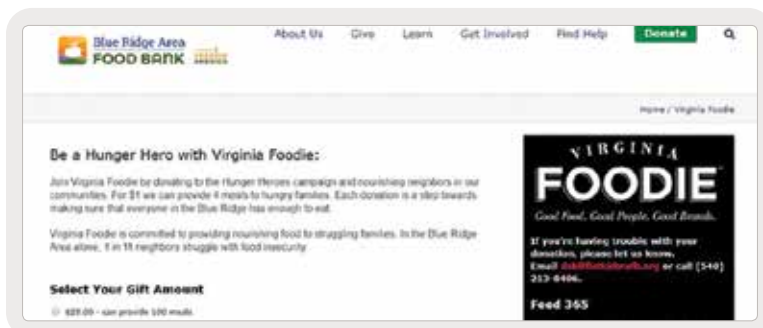
You can make a big impact by organizing a fund drive. Every \$1 donated can provide 4 meals for those in need in our community. By collecting charitable donations for the Food Bank, you’re also helping us direct resources where they are needed most.

Online fund drives are a great way for companies and organizations to engage their employees, members, or customers. We can use your logo and co-brand the effort with a customized donation page.

## 3. Organize a Food Drive

Food drives are a great, fun way to raise awareness about hunger and mobilize the community to provide nourishment in your community.

▼ Example of a co-branded online fund drive:



*“My Facebook Fundraiser lets others see what I am passionate about. I encourage my friends and family to think about something they might not have considered—like how a meal can be so life-changing to a family, a child, an aging person, a veteran, their quiet neighbor. And it might spark reflection on their incredible blessings.*

*A social media fundraiser may also bring awareness about those in need. It is just a great place to allow the Food Bank to shine!”*

—Donna Garber of Quicksburg, Virginia

*She and her husband Quintin are long-time supporters who ask themselves, “Why not do all we can to help in such an affluent nation?”*

▼ Example of a Facebook fundraiser:



>> For more suggestions, tools, and tips to maximize your effort, visit [brafb.org/hungerhero](http://brafb.org/hungerhero)



# HELP WANTED!



## Feed Seniors

The number of food-insecure seniors has grown by 200 percent since 2001 and is expected to grow another 40 percent by 2050. So, the Food Bank operates two programs to reach our older neighbors—many of whom are homebound and unable to get to food pantries—ensuring that they receive nutritious food every month.

“When seniors are forced to make difficult choices about whether to buy food or pay for their medications that month, the Food Bank can provide relief,” says Jennifer Clark Robertson, volunteer and food drive manager.

**Each month we pack approximately 2,500 boxes—which requires a constant flow of dedicated volunteers who collectively contribute a total of 70 to 85 hours each month.**

### Packing Senior Food Boxes:

- **The Work**—Pack food into boxes; stock the packing area; insert nutrition information; label, seal, and stack boxes on pallets; and break down empty boxes. It’s physical work requiring good mobility.
- **When**—The third week of each month on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday (subject to change based on inclement weather or other factors). We operate two, three-hour shifts per day.
- **How Many**—We can accommodate up to 20 volunteers on one shift
- **Where**—At our headquarters, 96 Laurel Hill Road, Verona

### Looking for a team-building activity?

**Scheduling regular experiences to pack Senior Food Boxes is a great way to unite employees behind a good cause.** Volunteering together as a team can strengthen employee engagement as folks work together to fight hunger.

**To learn more,** visit [brafb.org/volunteer](http://brafb.org/volunteer), or contact Jennifer Clark Robertson at [volunteer@brafb.org](mailto:volunteer@brafb.org).

## Nutrition Programs for Seniors

**The Food Bank offers two programs focused on helping seniors in need:**

**For information** about either program, contact your local food pantry or call the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank at 540.248.3663

- 1 **Senior Food Boxes** distributes food acquired through the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), the USDA’s only program that specifically targets low-income seniors. Seniors age 60 and over with incomes at or below 130 percent of the federal poverty guidelines can participate.
- 2 **The Reach Program** provides food for homebound and low-income seniors, as well as people under 60 years old with special needs. Each month, this program serves individuals whose income means they don’t qualify for Senior Food Boxes.



# Partnerships

## Nourish Body & Mind

With **Food & Education**

**Pictured: Family, Food and Fun and Get Fresh participants.**

### Good things happen when people join forces.

The Food Bank has recently teamed up with several community partners, piloting different ways to promote good health through nutrition.

The **Get Fresh** program is a joint effort with **Augusta Health, Waynesboro Public Schools, the Virginia Cooperative Extension, Project GROWS, Murphy Deming School of Health Sciences** and the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank to prevent diabetes among vulnerable groups.

By reaching and teaching children health-sustaining lessons at a young age, *Get Fresh* community partners hope to instill healthy habits that last through adulthood.

**Family, Foods and Fun**, an after-school program held in Waynesboro on Tuesdays during October, brought together **William Perry Elementary School** students and their

families to prepare and share nutritious meals, enjoy activities and group discussions about nutrition, and receive healthful foods from the Food Bank to take home.

Thirty-five minutes north of Waynesboro, the **Harrisonburg Free Clinic** and the Food Bank joined forces to distribute fresh produce and promote weight management.

Participants interested in maintaining healthful lifestyles through weight management discussed food selection tactics when grocery shopping.

The Food Bank is thankful to work with these and many other community partners to expand our reach and provide children and families with resources that support optimal health and enable nutritious choices!

# HUNGER HEROES

We are deeply grateful to the following Hunger Heroes who 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.



## Woodforest Charitable Foundation

56,800 meals

This generous partner's donation to the Family BackPack program and community food distributions helped us nourish children and families struggling with hunger.



## Dupont Community Credit Union (DCCU)

5,655 meals + volunteer hours

Thanks to Shred Days — their document-shredding plus food-drive event held at all branch locations — and their dedicated volunteer service, this faithful partner has helped provide food to families in need throughout the Shenandoah Valley.



## 22nd Annual Christmas at Augusta Stone

39,496 meals  
A musical tradition that nourishes the soul and helps provide food to local individuals and families struggling with hunger. A big thank you to the volunteers, talented performers, and generous audience for helping us ease some of the burden on families in their community this past holiday season.



## 18th Annual Twelfth Night

37,364 meals  
This choral extravaganza is always the perfect cure for the post-holiday blues. We are grateful to the choirs from the Staunton Church of the Brethren and Olivet Presbyterian Church for sharing their gifts and to all who attended for sharing their generosity.



## Martin's Food Stores

100,720 meals  
With their continued support for providing food to families in need, this grocer keeps reminding the community that we are all in this together. Thank you, Martins!



## Virginia Hunger Symposium

34,000 meals  
Blue Ridge Community College administrators, faculty, and students combine their knowledge and talents to create a series of events that help spread awareness about hunger in local communities. They also collected food and raised funds for neighbors struggling with hunger.



## Holiday Food Drive

137,073 meals  
We are extremely grateful to Kroger and our media partners NBC29 and Lite Rock Z95.1 for their sponsorship of the Holiday Food Drive. And thank you to the Kroger shoppers who filled our food barrels at stores in Waynesboro, Staunton, Charlottesville, Harrisonburg, Lexington, and the Lynchburg area.



## C-Ville Weekly and Charlottesville area restaurants

\$38,000  
In January and July 2018, diners enjoyed the city's best restaurants and helped provide meals to people in need during Restaurant Week. C-VILLE Weekly and many participating restaurants supported a fund that helps our local partner pantries obtain equipment to distribute more fresh produce, dairy, and meat to individuals and families in need.



## Red Nose Day Fund

40,000 meals  
It's about much more than wearing a goofy red nose. A national campaign created by Comic Relief Inc. to help children living with poverty, their donation will support our Family BackPack program.



## Columbia Gas and NiSource

Charitable Foundation 40,000 meals  
Columbia Gas of Virginia and their charitable foundation, NiSource, are behind the social media campaign, Share to Care, that helped raise awareness and feed hungry neighbors in need in the Lynchburg area.



## Scouting for Food

70,525 meals  
These Boy Scouts mean business when it comes to collecting food for hungry neighbors in their communities! The youngsters picked up bags of food from the doorsteps of generous neighbors throughout communities in Winchester, the Shenandoah Valley, and Charlottesville.



## Unilever

23,584 meals  
Thanks to Unilever's support, more children, seniors, and families were nourished throughout our service area.



## Green Bean Challenge

77,017 meals  
This year, Green Bean riders left last year's donation total in the dust. This charity ride started out as a food drive to collect canned green beans for people in need. But when organizers, the Kwasnick family, learned that the Food Bank can provide 4 meals for every \$1 raised, they changed it to a fund drive. A big thank you to the Kwasnicks, participants, and generous donors.



## Perdue Farms

\$25,000 for Virginia produce + 70,000 pounds of protein  
The Franklin P. & Arthur W. Perdue Foundation—the giving arm of Perdue Farms—led the way with matching funds for the 2019 Farm Fresh Fund and donated 70,000 pounds of much-needed protein for families in need this holiday season. Perdue associates went the extra mile and volunteered in our Verona warehouse, too.





**Senate Federal Credit Union 100,000 meals**

The US Senate Federal Credit Union understands the importance of giving back. Their generous gift helped individuals and families struggling through the winter months.



**Enterprise Rent-a-Car 62,000 meals**

The Enterprise Foundation's Fill Your Tank initiative fuels hope for hungry neighbors, and provided a match to year-end donors, doubling their impact.



**UVA Batten School & Adiuvars Relief Fund 60,000 meals**

Students from the UVA Batten School of Leadership & Public Policy turned a class lesson into a real-world benefit. Through the Adiuvars Relief Fund, they awarded a grant to put food on the table for people struggling with hunger.



**Farm Credit of the Virginias 158,000 produce pounds**

A loyal partner dedicated to providing fresh produce to struggling Virginians while supporting farmers, Farm Credit provided a 2019 matching gift for the Farm Fresh Fund, connecting families and individuals with the wholesome foods they need.



**Kyanite Mining 60,000 meals**

This company's donation will help Buckingham County families who depend on the nourishing foods provided at the Mobile Food Pantry in Dillwyn, Virginia.



**Better Living Foundation 40,000 meals**

The Nunley family of Charlottesville believes in the importance of building community, and—like us—believes everyone should have enough to eat.



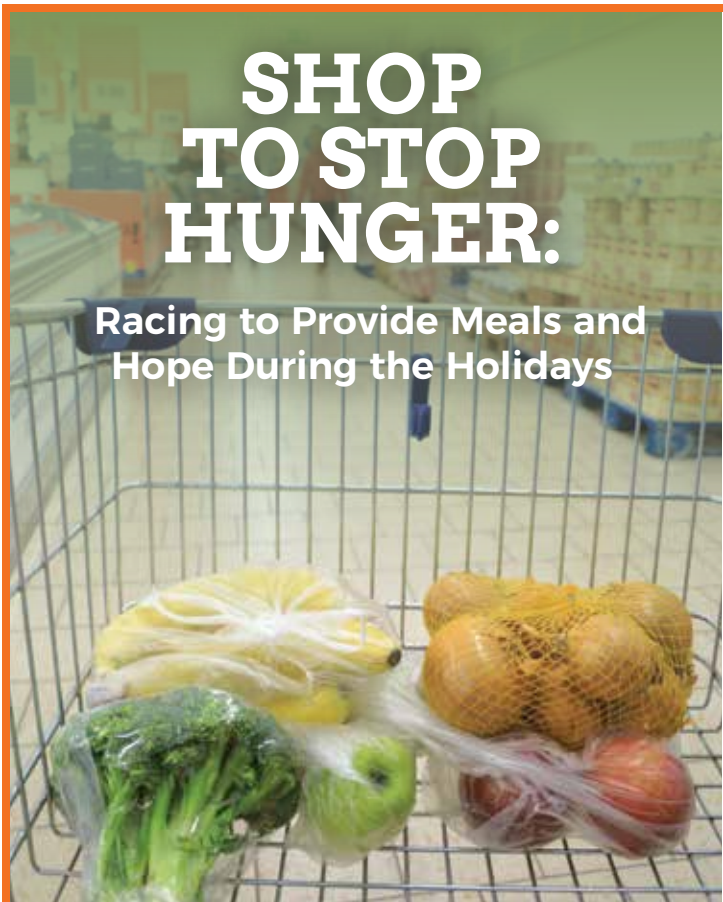
**Dominion Energy 40,000 meals**

Rural neighbors who access food from the Mobile Food Pantry will benefit from the continued support of this corporate partner.



**UPS \$20,000 to Expand Cold Storage**

With their first grant to this Food Bank, the UPS Foundation is helping us expand storage in the Lynchburg warehouse for distribution of cold and perishable foods. UPS employees have also volunteered their time in Lynchburg. Welcome to the team!



The rattle of a speeding grocery cart has become synonymous with sleigh bells ringing during the holiday season. *Shop to Stop Hunger* began in Charlottesville in 2013 as a fast-paced, grocery sweep-type competition between local celebrities to raise funds and collect food for people in need.

This past December, in addition to Charlottesville, two more competitions took place at Kroger stores in Harrisonburg and Lynchburg. *Shop to Stop Hunger* is more than a fun event. It helps raise awareness about hunger in local communities, and helps the Food Bank provide meals to families struggling to get through the winter months.

This year, all three *Shop to Stop Hunger* events together raised the equivalent of 131,000 meals, a record breaker! We send a special thank you to co-sponsors **Kroger** and **Home Instead Senior Care**, and the big-hearted contestants from all three locations. We are also grateful to the many donors who contributed food and funds—thank you!



## Life Income For You, A Legacy of Hunger Relief For Your Neighbors

A **charitable gift annuity** can provide you and/or your beneficiary with a fixed income stream for life, while eventually benefiting the people served by the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank.

Learn more at [brafb.org/plannedgift](http://brafb.org/plannedgift) or contact Karen Ratzlaff at 540.213.8404 or [kratzlaff@brafb.org](mailto:kratzlaff@brafb.org).

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**GENEROUS HELPINGS**  
(VOLUNTEERS)



**PARTNERING WITH PURPOSE**  
(AGENCY PARTNERS)



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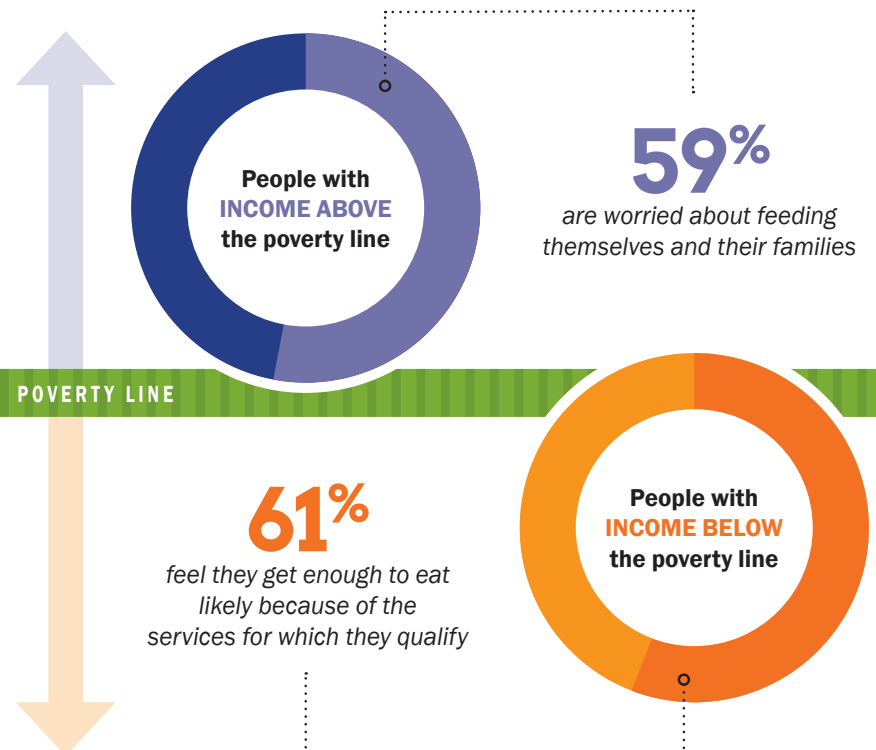
## American Income and Poverty—It's Complicated

Although U.S. median income is slowly rising, millions of Americans remain food insecure, balancing their finances to afford the rising cost of housing, healthcare, transportation, and food.

The poverty level—a mere \$25,100 for a family of four—illustrates how people with incomes just above the poverty line may still face hardship.

In fact, 10 million Americans have incomes too high to be eligible for any federal nutrition assistance like SNAP, WIC, or free lunch at school. And yet, they are worried about feeding themselves and their families.

Food banks and food pantries may be their only option for getting enough to eat throughout the year.



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# Does it Matter What Food We Provide?

## How can someone be food-insecure and obese at the same time?

It's a question I hear a lot. And I usually answer by explaining that people in poverty rely on inexpensive food that might satisfy the appetite but not the body's hunger for honest-to-goodness nutrients. Some people may eat too much of what they can afford and even binge eat when food is a little more plentiful. And let's be honest: Even those of us who can afford better food don't always make better choices.

Enter heart disease, diabetes, hypertension and even obesity.

The problem of hunger in America isn't so much of a shortage of calories, as it is a shortage of nutrients.

At the Food Bank, we have been working hard for many years to make sure people not only have enough food, but enough nutritious food – more fresh produce, more lean protein as well as low-sodium, low-fat and low-sugar items.

We're serious about nutrition, which is why we have a nutrition policy in place, why a dietician leads our programs, why we focus so much on fresh fruits and vegetables and why we are even developing software that will help us reliably acquire more nutritious food.

In short, we're committed to meeting the needs of our neighbors today while finding ways to make an even bigger difference tomorrow. And that, of course, is possible only with your generous support.

Thank you!



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

Michael McKee  
Chief Executive Officer





**Blue Ridge Area**  
**FOOD BANK**

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**FEEDING AMERICA**

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**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

We serve your community through one of our distribution centers, located in:

**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](http://brafb.org), or call 540.248.3663

## March 2019

### Neighbors-4-Neighbors School Food Drive

Calling young hunger heroes! For this annual drive, students at public and private schools in the greater Charlottesville area join forces to help their neighbors struggling with hunger. If you want your school to be part of the effort, send an email to [jlclarkrobertson@brafb.org](mailto:jlclarkrobertson@brafb.org).



### March 23-30 — Construction Lynchburg

During their 7th annual competition, Lynchburg will showcase its citizens' creativity as they assemble unique sculptures made from canned food and raise awareness about hunger during this annual competition and food drive.

## April 2019

### Homebrew for Hunger

Raise your pint to this event returning to Charlottesville! Homebrew for Hunger showcases the area's best in craft beer, while proceeds will help families in need. Check our events list at [brafb.org](http://brafb.org) for more details.



### April 15-26 — 13th 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](http://brafb.org) to learn how you can support us during the Frenzy.

## April 17

### Great Community Give

Harrisonburg and Rockingham County residents will join together for a great day of online giving to support area nonprofits, including the Food Bank.



### April 26-27 — Misty Mountain Music Festival

The 8th annual festival was postponed from September due to hurricane weather—but it's back! Join us at the foot of the Blue Ridge Mountains and enjoy Virginia's top musicians, plus local food, clothing, and art vendors. Proceeds help the Food Bank nourish neighbors in need.



## May 11

### Stamp Out Hunger

Leave non-perishable food donations at your doorstep on Saturday, May 11 to help stamp out hunger in the Blue Ridge area. This is the Food Bank's largest annual food drive. Local, dedicated postal carriers make it happen, along with volunteers and food donors. The 2018 drive brought in 257,903 meals.



## June 3-21

### Valley Businesses Give Back

This annual food-and-fund drive is a friendly competition between businesses and organizations in the Shenandoah Valley to help stock the shelves of the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank during the summer months. In 2018, 35 businesses donated enough food and funds to help us provide 34,083 meals to neighbors in the Shenandoah Valley! If you want your company to participate, email [jlclarkrobertson@brafb.org](mailto:jlclarkrobertson@brafb.org).



## July 13-20

### Charlottesville Restaurant Week

Foodies and non-foodies alike can take this great opportunity to sample new and favorite restaurants offering delicious and savory dishes at attractive prices. \$1 from every meal helps provide food to families in need.



## September 2019

### Hunger Action Month

One in every 12 people in the Blue Ridge continues to suffer from hunger, but together we can make a real difference. Join us in this national movement to raise awareness about food insecurity during Hunger Action Month. Check our website in August.

