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FEDERATION OF
VIRGINIA FOOD BANKS

Partner State
Association of
**FEEDING
AMERICA**



Blue Ridge Area

FOOD BANK

A member of
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Federation of Virginia Food Banks to Launch *Milk for Good*

Pilot program will be first statewide campaign to provide milk for food insecure families

VERONA, Va. (Dec. 5, 2019) — Wednesday at the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank, Virginia Secretary of Agriculture, Bettina Ring, and Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS), Dr. Jewel Bronaugh, announced the launch of the *Milk for Good* campaign, the first statewide dairy purchase program to benefit food insecure families. *Milk for Good* is an initiative of the Federation



Bettina Ring, Virginia Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry

of Virginia Food Banks in partnership with The Dairy Alliance, the American Dairy Association North East, and the Virginia Dairymen's Association. Beginning in January 2019, each of the seven Federation members will receive 200 half-gallons per week over a 24-week pilot period.

According to Feeding America's Map the Meal Gap report, nearly 894,000 Virginians (including 249,000 children) experience food insecurity, which means they struggle to afford enough food at any point throughout the year.

Milk is often an unaffordable commodity for food insecure households. The 2014 Hunger Study, the most comprehensive survey of food pantry clients conducted in Virginia, found that 43% of respondents (more than 57,000 people) said they would like access to more dairy products in their local pantries.

"Dairy products, and fluid milk in particular, are among the most in-demand items at our 2,000 partner agencies," said Federation Executive Director, Eddie Oliver. "This program will put fresh, locally processed milk in the hands of families who need it most

and will advance our efforts to increase the availability of nutritious products on our pantry shelves.”

“We’re serving 106,000 individuals every month through our partner agencies across 25 counties. Children make up about a third of those individuals,” said Michael McKee, CEO of the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank and Chairman of the Board of the Federation of Virginia Food Banks. “Dairy is such a good source of nutrition, especially for children who need healthful nutrients to develop and thrive.”



Federation Executive Director, Eddie Oliver, Molly Szymanski, Chief Operating Officer for The Dairy Alliance and a member of the Dairymen’s Association

Cold storage capacity has long been one of the greatest barriers to providing milk to families in need. The Dairy Alliance granted \$49,000 in new refrigeration units to eighteen pantries throughout the Commonwealth, and the



Molly Szymanski, Chief Operating Officer for the Dairy Alliance

American Dairy Association North East, which supports the dairy industry in four northern Virginia counties, granted \$8,250 for new coolers at three Alexandria pantries.

“Once for ounce milk provides eight grams of protein per eight-ounce serving,” said Molly Szymanski, Chief Operating Officer for The Dairy Alliance. “If you look at other protein sources, you’d be hard pressed to find one that provides as much high-quality protein as you would find in milk. It’s just

wonderful that we’re moving forward with the Milk for Good program that’s going to make a reality of more fresh milk for our families in Virginia.”

“I’m thrilled to be here to launch the Milk for Good campaign, the first statewide, dairy purchase program to benefit food-insecure families. Milk for Good is a true partnership for good,” said Virginia Secretary of Agriculture & Forestry Bettina Ring. “The milk will be distributed through partner agencies in localities throughout Virginia. Their efforts to secure more locally processed milk will not only strengthen access to quality nutrition for food-insecure families, but our agricultural economy will benefit as well.”

To support the *Milk for Good* program, visit <http://vafoodbanks.org/milkforgood>

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About the Federation of Virginia Food Banks

The Federation of Virginia Food Banks is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit state association of food banks affiliated with Feeding America and is the largest hunger-relief network in the state. The Federation supports the seven regional food banks serving Virginia and greater Washington DC in providing food, funding, education, advocacy and awareness services and programs. Last year, Federation members distributed more than 120 million pounds of food through 2,000 community agencies.

About the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank

Founded in 1981, the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank is the largest organization alleviating hunger in western and central Virginia. Headquartered in Verona, VA, the Food Bank serves 25 counties and eight cities through distribution centers in Charlottesville, Lynchburg, Winchester and Verona. The Blue Ridge Area Food Bank distributes nearly 25.3 million pounds of food annually to 106,000 people each month through a network of 200 community partners – food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, schools, churches and other non-profit groups. The Food Bank is a member of Feeding America, a national food bank association that supports 200 food banks across the United States. For more information, visit www.brafb.org.