



FEDERATION OF  
VIRGINIA FOOD BANKS

Partner State  
Association of  
**FEEDING  
AMERICA**



Blue Ridge Area  
**FOOD BANK**  
Everyone should have enough to eat.

A member of  
**FEEDING  
AMERICA**

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## **Federation of Virginia Food Banks Awarded \$1 Million Grant from Sentara Healthcare and Optima Health**

*The gift is the Virginia healthcare sector's single largest investment in food access*

**(RICHMOND, Va. - Feb. 22, 2019)** — During an event at the Pocahontas Building in Richmond, Sentara Healthcare and Optima Health announced that the Federation of Virginia Food Banks is one of four nonprofit organizations to receive grants from a pool of \$5.5 million to support needs stemming from Medicaid expansion, and address social determinants affecting the health and well-being of low-income Virginians. The Federation will receive \$1 million to improve access to nutritious foods through direct-service programs and partnerships throughout the Commonwealth.

The Federation supports the seven regional food banks serving Virginia and greater Washington DC in providing food, funding, education, and advocacy. The Federation's members are the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank, Capital Area Food Bank, Feed More, Feeding America Southwest Virginia, the Foodbank of Southeast Virginia and the Eastern Shore, Fredericksburg Regional Food Bank, and the Virginia Peninsula Food Bank. Last year, Virginia's food banks distributed 121 million pounds of food to more than 1 million people through 1,700 community agencies.

Sentara and Optima's gift is the healthcare sector's single most significant investment to date in the work of the Federation and is an affirmation of the central role that nutrition plays in promoting positive health outcomes. Research has shown that food insecurity is a critical factor in multiple adverse health conditions, such as diabetes, heart disease, and hypertension.

"This grant provides the opportunity to reimagine the ways in which Virginia's food banks approach their work," said Federation Executive Director, Eddie Oliver. "We will be able to lead in bold new ways, expanding on existing healthcare partnerships and connecting more people to the resources they need to lead active, healthy lives. We could not be more grateful."

"We are so appreciative of Sentara and Optima's support for our efforts to improve food access in Virginia," added Michael McKee, CEO of the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank and Board Chair of the Federation. "With this grant, we will be able to work collaboratively

and design, implement, and evaluate initiatives to better understand how we can address food security as a key social determinant of health.”

Each of the Federation’s seven, member food banks will use a portion of the grant funds to implement local programming in conjunction with a statewide strategic plan to improve referral systems, increase the availability of nutritious foods in the emergency food network, and/or connect low-income individuals with food options that mitigate diet-related diseases.

For more information, contact Abena Foreman-Trice at 540.213.8405.

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### **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](http://www.brafb.org).

### **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.