



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



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

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Network News



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Agency Relations & Programs Newsletter

WINTER 2020

Agency Spotlight

More Than Ramen: PVCC Pantry Supports College Success

When people think about the many issues college students face, hunger isn't often top of mind. But when Piedmont Virginia Community College (PVCC) recently surveyed its students, they found that the need on campus is actually quite great:

- 57 percent of students don't have enough money to buy food
- 85 percent of students are unable to afford balanced meals

The findings align with Temple University's 2018 study showing that **42 percent of students at community colleges across the United States self-identify as food insecure.** With growing tuition rates, higher living costs, and relatively stagnant wages, it's no surprise that college hunger is on the rise.

Meeting basic needs so students can succeed

Thankfully, college-based food pantries are popping up on campuses across the country. In partnership with the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank, PVCC launched the Panther Pantry in early 2019. Located within the College's Student Financial Resource Center, the pantry offers a client-choice model for students and staff members to

pick up groceries, snacks, and clothes in times of need.

The pantry's location in the Financial Resource Center is intentional: It connects students to further services that help propel their overall success. Students often come for food but can also receive transportation assistance, learn about affordable housing and health care options, sign up for social benefits through the Department of Social Services, and attend financial literacy workshops.

"We're here to troubleshoot whatever pressing issues our students are facing to ensure they have the support and stability needed to stay and excel in school," says Amanda Key, the Center's coordinator. "If a student is worried about where they'll get their next meal or can't afford to simply live, they're less likely to focus on school and their future."

Personal experience fosters a passion for helping others

Amanda's vision for the pantry and the Center is fueled by the struggles her family experienced. At age 19, Amanda fell sick, and her mother

stopped working to become her full-time caretaker, which led to financial instability at home.

"My family was so stretched that we nearly lost our house and everything we owned," Amanda recalls. "We weren't aware of any available resources in our community and felt alone in our struggles."

After regaining her health, Amanda was determined to help others "find the resources that provide a measure of stability in times of struggle." In the coming years, she hopes to move the Panther Pantry to a larger space and expand it to offer fresh produce and other perishables.

To Amanda and the welcoming students that help her run the pantry, thank you for your compassionate support and dedication to helping your community!



Welcome, Maria Bowman!

The Food Bank is thrilled to welcome **Maria Bowman, MPH**, as our new health initiatives program coordinator. She will focus on cultivating partnerships with health care institutions and organizations to design and implement “food pharmacy” programs. These innovative, client-centric programs will provide medically-tailored, nutritious foods to help reduce hunger and improve health outcomes among vulnerable populations.

For the last decade, Maria has been passionate about discovering and addressing the social determinants of health and fostering equitable access to nutritious food.

In her most recent role, she worked for District of Columbia Public Schools, where she led food-waste-reduction initiatives, created a toolkit to increase healthy food consumption, and worked to enhance the student meal experience and atmosphere of public school cafeterias across D.C.

Thank you for welcoming Maria to the Food Bank family!



Save the Date

February 3, 2020 – Request for Proposals (RFPs) will be announced. Don't miss this opportunity to inform the Food Bank how we can best deploy our donor-funded Agency Capacity Fund.

May 9, 2020 – Stamp Out Hunger (postal carriers food drive)

Earn a Gold Star: Have an A+ Monitoring Visit

Once a year, the Food Bank visits each partner agency and program to check in on processes, share best practices, and witness compassion-driven missions in action! It's also an opportunity for the Food Bank to share gratitude, deepen partnerships, and learn how to better support agencies' success.

Here are simple tips and reminders to help you ace your annual monitoring visit.

All agencies

- Store all food and product at least 6" off the floor.
- Have working thermometers in all coolers and freezers.



- Use temperature charts to track temperatures two to three times a week.
 - Keep storage areas neat and clean.
 - Before the visit, alert us if any food is stored offsite.
 - Provide documentation that all volunteers have received the annual Civil Rights training.
 - Post the “Written Beneficiary for Religious Organizations” form if you are a religious organization.
- TEFAP (USDA) agencies**
- Hang the “And Justice for All” poster in a visible location.
 - Post the Civil Rights Complaint Form and have blank copies available.
 - Have SDOI forms (if using hard copies with Link2Feed) and Quarterly Report forms available for review.
- Partner pick-up agencies**
- Have documentation ready showing that temperatures are being tracked at time of pick-up and time of arrival at the pantry.
 - Weigh all received items and record pounds in MealConnect.

We look forward to seeing you at your next monitoring visit! Please reach out to your partner services coordinator if you have any questions, suggestions, or feedback.

RECIPE BOX — GREAT RECIPE FOR A CHILLY NIGHT INDOORS

Apple and Butternut Squash Soup

Prep Time: 10 minutes | Cooking Time: ~1 hour

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 Tbsp. butter
- 2 Tbsp. olive oil
- 3 large yellow onions, chopped
- 1.5 Tbsp. fresh thyme
- 2 large butternut squash
- 4 sweet apples (such as McIntosh or Gala)
- 2 tsp. kosher salt
- 1/2 tsp. black pepper
- 2 cups apple juice or cider
- 2 cups water



PREPARATION:

1. In a large pot, warm the butter and olive oil. Add onions and thyme, and cook for 15 to 20 minutes. Stir occasionally.
2. Peel the squash, cut them in half, remove the seeds, and cut the squash into chunks. Peel, quarter, and core the apples, then cut them into chunks.
3. Add the squash, apples, salt, pepper, and water to the pot. Bring to a boil, then cover, reduce the heat to low, and cook for 30 to 40 minutes. Purée using a food processor or immersion blender. Add juice or water to achieve preferred consistency. Bon appétit!

Agency Capacity Survey Feedback

Thank you to all agencies that participated in the Food Bank's recent Agency Capacity Survey. Your feedback will help us:

- better understand trends across the network
- identify strengths and areas for growth
- provide meaningful training opportunities
- better align our resources with your organization's unique needs regarding fundraising, planning, volunteer recruitment, and leadership cultivation

We look forward to sharing a report of our findings in February.

Link2Feed Live Across the Network: Maintenance Plan Underway Soon

Thank you for working with the Food Bank to implement Link2Feed at your agency. We're grateful to report that the majority of our network is now online. Together, we'll use client-service insights to help strengthen our collective mission going forward.

To foster continued success, we plan to offer re-training sessions (in person at our branches, through webinars, and via videos) and enhance our instruction aids. We'll also provide learning opportunities to interested agencies focused on report features, client data use, and even client surveys. Keep an eye out for more information from your partner services coordinator.

Thank you again for making Link2Feed a success.