



Blue Ridge Area
FOOD BANK



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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COVID-19 Response: Blue Ridge Area Food Bank Needs Volunteer Help Due to COVID-19 Impact on Food Distribution

(VERONA, Va. — March 17, 2020) — The Blue Ridge Area Food Bank is responding to increased demand for our food and adapting the process for existing food deliveries to lower the risk of exposure to clients and volunteers.

As a result, we need more helping hands in our warehouses and at our mobile food pantries than ever before.

Healthy, low-risk individuals who are available and eager to help in this challenging time can **give the gift of time** and volunteer at the Food Bank or one of our partner food pantries:

- The Food Bank's [pantry locator](http://brafb.org/find-help) (brafb.org/find help) lists local pantries throughout our service area. Potential volunteers should call before going to ask if they need help.
- The Food Bank's warehouses in Charlottesville, Verona, Lynchburg, and Winchester will have volunteer activities waiting for helpers. Our Mobile Food Pantry rural sites in the Thomas Jefferson or central Shenandoah Valley areas will also need help. Website visitors can [sign up online for current opportunities](http://brafb.org/volunteer) (brafb.org/volunteer)

For the safety of our volunteers and staff we have initiated frequent sanitation routines, which are practiced throughout each day.

While it's not practical to maintain six feet of space between volunteers for every project, we are scheduling more shifts with fewer numbers of volunteers to reduce risk. We're also building in physical space between people, where possible.

We have taken the temporary step to lower the minimum age requirement – we now allow volunteers age 16 and older to help. *Ideally*, those age 16-17 will be accompanied by an adult because staff will not have time to supervise teens who can't work independently.

Currently, all shifts are scheduled during the day. The Food Bank may add evening shifts or weekend shifts as demands change.

“If there’s any silver lining in our new normal, it’s the evidence that we live and work in communities where people care about each other and about folks in need. The Food Bank is receiving questions and inquiries from people in a position to help, who want to know what they can do for others impacted by this pandemic,” said Karen Ratzlaff, Chief Philanthropy Officer at the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank. “Volunteering is one of the best ways individuals can provide that much needed help.”

Those who can’t volunteer might consider making a financial donation to help the Food Bank respond where the need is greatest. Visit [brafb.org](https://www.brafb.org) and click on Donate (<https://www.brafb.org/give-now/>).

For more information, please contact Abena Foreman-Trice at 540-280-6588.

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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 26.4 million pounds of food annually to 103,500 people each month through a network of 205 community partners – food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, schools, churches and other non-profit groups – and 175 program sites serving children, seniors, and families. 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.