



Blue Ridge Area
FOOD BANK



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Valley Area Community Partnerships Expand Reach to Seniors During COVID-19 Response

(VERONA, Va.—April 17, 2020)—The Blue Ridge Area Food Bank and the Valley Program for Aging Services (VPAS) have partnered for more than a decade. That long-standing relationship enabled staff from each organization to come together quickly to problem-solve how food could be transported safely to isolated seniors in need, in the aftermath of Virginia Governor’s stay-at-home order.

Meals on Wheels operates from VPAS facilities, serving eligible seniors throughout the central Shenandoah Valley. With new precautions in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19, the delivery program now carries their hot and frozen prepared meals *along with* shelf-stable food supplies from the Food Bank.



“They pick up 100 food boxes filled with non-perishable items from us monthly, and distribute the food every two weeks,” says Robin Swecker, partner services coordinator for the Food Bank. “The alternative delivery method gets more food to seniors in fewer visits—reducing contact and enabling VPAS to do more for the seniors they serve.”

When Governor Northam’s stay-at-home order took effect March 30, VPAS needed another way to ensure the people they reach continue to receive enough to eat.

“This stay-at-home order creates a ripple effect in families,” says Jeri Schaff, executive director for VPAS. “We provide transportation, in-person, and in-home community services, which help family caregivers. Now, caregivers must grapple with their own safety, children home from school, and new financial pressures.

“These factors make it harder to care for elderly parents or family members,” Jeri adds.

This enhanced partnership comes at a critical time. According to Jeri, the extra food from the Food Bank is just what vulnerable seniors in the area need.

“Robin and her Food Bank colleagues are very aware of the needs of our seniors, who are very frail,” Schaff says. “The Food Bank gives us food that is easy to prepare, and easy to chew. The food is also familiar and comforting,” Schaff says.

“The boxes are packed carefully, taking reduced sodium into consideration for example,” Robin adds.

This new arrangement also helps both organizations reach more people.

“Our Reach program operates from the Maury River Senior Center, which serves the cities of Lexington and Buena Vista, and Rockbridge County. Our expanded partnership broadens our reach to serve seniors in Augusta and Rockingham Counties, and the cities of Harrisonburg, Waynesboro, and Staunton,” Robin adds.

For more information or to cover this story, 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.