**THE BLUE RIDGE AREA FOOD BANK PROMOTES FOOD FINDER TOOL AMID WINTER WEATHER, RISING FOOD PRICES** *The free tool is available in 12 different languages.*

**VERONA, Va. (Jan. 19, 2022) –**  Following another weekend of winter weather, many individuals and families across the region are experiencing hunger because they could not afford to both heat their home and buy food. For those facing this tragic dilemma, the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank has an online tool for people to find food assistance in their community.

Improved and re-launched in the spring of 2021, the user-friendly and mobile-accessible Food Finder tool can be navigated in 12 different languages and displays a broad range of partner and program sites (including mobile food pantries and more). Search results can be filtered by service type, days of operation, distance and even the availability of evening hours.

Compounding the hardships stemming from winter weather, food prices also continue to rise. Food-at-home prices (e.g., groceries) were up 6.5% in December 2021 from December 2020, according to the latest Consumer Price Index. Meat, fish, poultry, and eggs rose 12.5% over the same period.

At least one in 12 people in the Blue Ridge area experiences hunger, with children and the elderly suffering the worst consequences.

“We are in the midst of the coldest part of the year, and with more winter weather on the way, many people are faced with the impossible question of, ‘Do we heat our house today or buy food?’” said Michael McKee, CEO of The Blue Ridge Area Food Bank. “We understand the gravity of these situations, and we are committed to offering resources to those facing these difficult decisions. We’ve already seen the positive impact of Food Finder, and we hope more across our service area can find help through the tool should they need it.”

For those interested in utilizing Food Finder, go to: <https://foodfinder.brafb.org/> for more information.

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**About the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank**Founded in 1981 and headquartered in Verona, Virginia, the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank is the largest organization alleviating hunger in western and central Virginia. The Food Bank serves an average of nearly 119,000 individuals each month across 25 counties and eight cities through distribution centers in Charlottesville, Lynchburg, Winchester, and Verona. Together with our network of 207 community partners and 187 program sites, we’re serving record numbers of Virginians during a prolonged pandemic and its associated economic impacts. We pledge to continue innovating and adapting to secure, store, and distribute more food to more individuals, families, children, and seniors experiencing hunger. The Food Bank is a member of Feeding America, a national food bank association that supports 200 food banks across the United States providing 6 billion meals to 42 million people through 60,000 partner pantries. For more information, visit [www.brafb.org](http://www.brafb.org).

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