Tyler on WINA CRN Transcript 072622 (transcribed by A.I. 85% accurate)

00:00:00 RADIO HOST

There we go. It is 436 Tuesday afternoon, and we had some good news in this community. The Blue Ridge Area Food Bank recently issued more than $1.4 million in grants to partner agencies. I am joined by Tyler Herman, he's director of partner engagement for the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank.

Tyler, thanks for joining me.

00:00:23 Tyler Herman

Thank you, Courteney.

We really appreciate just the time and space to be able to kind of showcase some of the great work that our partners are doing and how the food bank is investing in their work and mission and success so.

Thank you for the time today.

00:00:34 RADIO HOST

Is such an important mission and food insecurity and making sure people have access to healthy food is it's a major operation.

I mean, the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank is doing this incredible work and this particular.

Announcement it has to do with the agency capacity fund.

00:00:51 Tyler Herman

Yes, so if you think of the amount of food you know we're distributing north of $26 million of food. It's close to about 1000 tractor trailer loads of food for the big rigs you see on the highway, and in that we're partnering with over 200 partner food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters, serving individuals experiencing homelessness, and you think of all the needs that they have in terms of building their capacity and capability to source that food house that food safely and then get that out to guests and neighbors in their community. So, it's this this huge operation that spans 12,000 square miles across western and central Virginia, and the real importance of this agency capacity fund and this $1.4 million is. It's really us working alongside those partners to listen to hear about the needs in their community, to learn about the vision of their mission and where they want to go in the years ahead. And with this funding, thanks to the Community and donors, that are supporting the food bank investing in the cold storage capacity, the equipment, the technology that really helped them kind of realize that vision and mission to impact their community.

So, it's a really just beautiful marriage of funding and impact with these partners.

00:02:00 RADIO HOST

That that is, that's really incredible, and more than 200 food pantry partners and 180 program partners throughout the area that the food the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank serves.

00:02:14 Tyler Herman

Yes, yeah, so are our bread and butter, food pantries, soup kitchens, sort of serves the general population and then the food bank partners with senior-serving and child-serving partners and organizations, as well, to reach those particular populations with tailored programs for their unique needs.

00:02:31 RADIO HOST

And are there specific examples like particular food pantries where you could describe sort of how this impacted them?

00:02:40 Tyler Herman

Yeah, absolutely.

So, one of the partners that's near and dear to my heart is Feeding Green.

It's up in Stanardsville, Greene County and they just have had profound growth and enhancement of their mission over the last. Six years that the Food Bank has been operating this this program. We've been able to invest in cold storage, so think large walk-in freezers and coolers to house, produce, and perishable things and meet racking to help them organize their pantry better.

You think logistical stuff like carts and dollies to help just make it logistically easy for volunteers to operate. And over that time this organization has grown from distributing about £300,000 per year to north of about 1.4 million.

So, this just has become really a foothold in their community.

This foundational food pantry over time, in partnership with the Food Bank and over time with these investments to really kind of take their mission to the next level, for the benefit of those in need in their community.

00:03:35 RADIO HOST

Wow, that is incredible. We're talking with Tyler Herman. He's director of partner engagement for the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank, discussing $1.4 million in grants at the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank, is giving to their partner network.

I want to talk just a little bit, just generally about the Blue Ridge Area, Food bank and coming through the pandemic has that.

How has that impacted operations and partnerships, has that made things more difficult or the need greater?

00:04:02 Tyler Herman

Initially, when the pandemic hit, you know we had to pivot to making the distribution safer with our partners, so it went from a lot of indoor distributions of people having the ability to choose the foods, to parking lot distributions where, essentially, small churches and organizations had to completely overhaul how they did things, to be able to have drive through distributions for folks.

So, we saw this this real balloon in need as the pandemic hit. Benefits kicked in and, and now that we're seeing kind of this second wave of things, with inflation increasing...

Anecdotally, from our partners, we're starting to hear that that need is starting to tick up again, so we're anticipating later this fall with inflation, with sort of what's happening in the housing market and rent increases that, we're going to see need to an increase in continue to increase in the months ahead.

00:04:53 RADIO HOST

That is incredible, and I I'm always struck just by some of the statistics, when I see them, just the number of people.

So, the food bank, and I'm reading from the announcement -- 118,300 people per month.

The food bank serves.

00:05:09 Tyler Herman

Yes, it's a profound number of people.

If you were to have those individuals stand shoulder to shoulder, it would be about 48 miles.

So, stretching from Charlottesville over to Staunton, across the mountain on I-64. So, it's just a very large amount of people that are turning to food pantries and food banks in this moment. This economic fallout, this health crisis, to kind of keep stable within communities, to have the food they need to live in active and healthy lifestyle, right now.

00:05:35 RADIO HOST

And I know there are food drives, but let's talk just a little bit about how the Community can support the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank and thereby the people that use.

00:05:43 Tyler Herman

Good point.

Yeah, so I want to promote both needs for the food bank, but also highlight needs for food pantries.

You know, we've all been working really hard the last two and a half years to make sure that food is available in communities and to make that engine happen, there's obviously funding, there's food donations, there's volunteer support, of having hands on the ground in communities to distribute the food, but also to pack and sort donations that are coming in so if individuals in the community are really looking to get engaged with the mission, they can visit our website brafb.org and there's a get involved page where it shows all the volunteer opportunities.

And I would also encourage people to look to their immediate community for food pantries, for shelters, for programs that are operating to connect locally, and see how you can engage a lot of partners need funding right now.

Needs have increased. Food donation needs are increasing, and I think a lot of volunteers have been just at the grind for so long that additional hands on the ground and support to alleviate some of those pressure points for partners is an ideal way that folks in the community can get involved right now.

00:06:46 RADIO HOST

All right, well, it is such an important service and it's more than a service.

I mean, you're keeping people fed and we appreciate the work.

The Blue Ridge Area Food Bank does Tyler Herman, director of partner engagement for the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank.

Thank you so much for your time and thanks for all the work you will do.

00:07:04 Tyler Herman

Yeah, thank you.