



Blue Ridge Area
FOOD BANK



News Release
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Join the Cause: Youth Support Blue Ridge Area Food Bank with Annual School Food Drive

Schools and Businesses: *Sign up by February 28 to participate in the March 6-22 event.*

VERONA, Va. (February 15, 2024) – This year, public and private schools and organizations operating in Albemarle, Buckingham, Charlottesville, Culpeper, Greene, Fluvanna, Madison, and Orange counties are encouraged to participate in the annual School Food Drive. The deadline to register is February 28, with the event running from March 6-22. All the food collected during the drive goes to the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank and its food pantry partners in the greater Charlottesville area.

Local students, educators, and other interested parties are invited to sign up for the 2024 School Food Drive. This year's student leaders are Emily Warren and Lily Stendig from Albemarle High School, and Sofia Smith from Tandem Friends School. During the drive, food will be collected at designated areas within the participating schools and donated to the Food Bank once it concludes. Getting involved is easy! Contact Livia Marrs, volunteer and food drive manager, for more information and to receive a toolkit making your participation easy and fun.

"This food drive is about young people coming together to help the community. We're often told that you can make a difference when you go off to college or later in life. The School Food Drive shows what an impact you can have as a young person in the community, *now*. That's really special and important," said Warren. "Last year was so successful! We connected with over 30 schools and organizations and collected over 10,000 pounds of food. This year, I am looking forward to connecting with even more schools and organizations and collecting even more food for those who need it in the community."

Since the School Food Drive began in 2011 as the brainchild of a local student, dozens of public and private schools have participated in the annual drive. Some will compete to collect the most pounds of food. In addition to schools, businesses and organizations are invited to offer support and participate this year.

"Seeing these young people strive to help set a place at the table for everyone, together with the community rallying around them, is truly inspirational," said Michael McKee, CEO of the Food Bank, "This year, the School Food Drive is as important as ever. The demand for food assistance is increasing while donations are down. The collected food will help restock our shelves so that more people who need it can receive nutritious meals."

All the food collected from this annual event helps provide meals for over 22,000 people and families experiencing hunger who are served each month by the 84 partners—soup kitchens, shelters, and nonprofits—and programs throughout the city of Charlottesville and Albemarle, Buckingham, Culpeper, Fluvanna, Greene, Madison, and Orange counties.

Since the annual School Food Drive began, schools and organizations have collected 95,378 pounds of food, helping provide 79,482 meals for neighbors and demonstrating how young people are making a difference in their communities.

If your school, organization, or business would like to take part in the School Food Drive or find out more, please get in touch with Livia Marrs at lmarrs@brafb.org before Wednesday, February 28.

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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 127,500 people per month across 25 counties and eight cities through distribution centers in Charlottesville, Lynchburg, Winchester, and Verona. We're serving record numbers of Virginians through our network of more than 400 community partners, which includes food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, schools, libraries, healthcare clinics, community centers, and more. 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 partner food bank of Feeding America®, a national association with a network of more than 200 food banks, 21 statewide food bank associations, and over 60,000 partner agencies, food pantries and meal programs. Last year, this charitable food assistance network helped provide 5.2 billion meals to tens of millions of people facing food insecurity. For more information, visit www.brafb.org.