



Blue Ridge  
AREA  
FOOD  
BANK

# Partnering With Purpose

SUMMER 2024

PRINT EDITION

A NEWSLETTER FOR FOOD BANK PARTNERS

## Advocating for More TEFAP in the Farm Bill: Why it Matters

By banding together, we have a chance to plot a new course for hunger-relief organizations, one that has the potential to benefit food pantries, guests, U.S. farmers, and food banks.

To make that a reality, we're asking you to lift your voice with ours. Help us convince lawmakers to double TEFAP funding in the next farm bill, which is up for reauthorization this fall.

### What's at stake?

As you well know, there are unprecedented numbers of guests turning to this charitable food network for help. Economic realities have put a strain on many of our neighbors.

On top of that, growth in available TEFAP supply is unpredictable and not nearly enough to meet the high demand for food assistance in our service area. As a result, food banks must purchase more food to meet the growing demand.

We spent less than \$2 million in 2018 on purchased food, yet we



*"TEFAP is crucial for RARA to keep our Neighborhood Grocery fully stocked with healthy food. This year has been the busiest in our over 50-year history. It is more important than ever that we have access to sufficient food through TEFAP as we adapt to this high demand. We encourage Congress to increase TEFAP funding in the upcoming farm bill."*

—LINDSEY PÉREZ, Executive Director, Rockbridge Area Relief Association (RARA)

spent more than \$5 million in this last fiscal year (ending in June). Which has meant that you, our partners, have had to spend more to keep up with the current demand.

### So, what's the solution?

Imagine you have a magic wand, and a well-timed spell, that would accomplish the following:

- Alleviate some of your organization's financial pressures
- Improve your ability to meet the growing demand for food assistance



### What Is TEFAP?

The Emergency Food Assistance Program, or TEFAP, is a federal nutrition program funded by the USDA. It purchases healthy foods from U.S. growers and producers for distribution through food banks and food pantries to people experiencing food insecurity.

The program is a cornerstone of the Feeding America network's food supply.

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# Advocating for More TEFAP

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- Connect more people to healthy USDA foods, like fresh fruits, vegetables, and nuts
- Improve food security and nutrition-security
- Support hard-working farmers across this country

This is what a doubling of TEFAP funding could accomplish. It could change food banking, and *all* who benefit from it, for the better. And it will give all of you, our partners, some room to breathe again.

*"We need to raise our voices and help elected officials understand that we need a doubling of TEFAP funding to continue to meet the needs within our communities. It is critical to the survival and future of food assistance services."*

—MICHAEL MCKEE,  
CEO of the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank

## How can you help?

The more of us who raise our voices, the better the chance we will be successful in convincing our lawmakers to take action to help end hunger. There are a few ways to get involved.



Scan the QR code or visit our website at [www.brafb.org/act-now/](http://www.brafb.org/act-now/) and find the resources you need to elevate your voice.

# Virginia Learning Center: Empowering You to Better Serve Your Community

The seven food banks in Virginia who make up the Federation of Virginia Food Banks are collaborating to deploy the statewide Healthy Pantry Initiative (HPI).

The Federation's Education Committee has created a virtual learning center, where food pantries can engage in training around each of the 20 Healthy Pantry Practices, or HPPs.

We asked Kara Snapp, manager of health initiatives at the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank, to explain more about the roll-out of the virtual learning center.



KARA SNAPP

**Kara, refresh our memory and tell us what the Healthy Pantry Initiative is?**

The Healthy Pantry Initiative is an initiative to help food pantries implement more health-focused and neighbor-centered practices. In doing so, partners can better support the health and nutritional needs of their guests. It is up to each pantry to decide how many they would like to focus on, but we encourage them to enhance or implement only 1 or 2 each year, with the goal of creating long-term sustainable change.

**Will the learning center highlight each of the healthy pantry practices?**

We'll have 20 online modules for the 20 practices. All the content will be offered for free, thanks to the Federation. Pantry staff, volunteers, and board members can benefit from the modules.

**What topics will the modules focus on?**

The 20 practices are divided into four main groups: food availability, community connection, health education, and neighbor centered.

Food availability, for example, might focus on how pantries could meet the cultural or religious needs of their guests, while community connection practices might focus on creating a bridge between guests and other community services.

**What do I need to do to gain access to this content?**

We are piloting the learning center with a small group of our Healthy Pantry Partners first. As more modules are created this year, we'll give access to additional Healthy Pantry Partners. These are the partners who took the HPI survey and opted into the initiative. If your pantry has not yet opted in, watch for the survey to be distributed again in January, complete it, and opt in then!

**When will the learning center be live?**

Currently, the Virginia Learning Center has six modules available. We expect all 20 learning modules, with guides, pantry spotlights, videos, and worksheets to be completed before the end of next year. Also, we're working to build out other training courses that support your organization like SNAP 101, grants 101, recruiting and retaining volunteers. We look forward to working closely with you to help meet your organization's training needs. The future is bright!



For more information about the Healthy Pantry Initiative, scan the QR Code or visit the website:

[sites.google.com/vafoodbanks.org/healthy-pantryresourcesite/healthy-pantry-initiative](https://sites.google.com/vafoodbanks.org/healthy-pantryresourcesite/healthy-pantry-initiative)



# This Food Bank Is Taking SNAP Outreach to the Next Level



The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the largest anti-hunger program in this country, giving approximately 41 million people buying power to stretch their grocery budget. It is a powerful tool that increases food security, promotes better health through improved diets, and reduces the strain on emergency food assistance programs.

Yet, many who are experiencing food insecurity and who might be eligible for this federal benefit have not signed up. The Food Bank is trying to change that. Spearheaded by Public Benefits Outreach Program Manager Monica Kelley, an effort is underway to connect eligible recipients to SNAP to support household financial stability.

“With help from partners and volunteers, I know I can make a real difference in the lives of many who face hunger through this important work,” Monica said.

The Food Bank is focusing on three pillars to make that happen: **outreach and education, referral support, and application assistance.**

“We host SNAP clinics and inform our partners and guests how to apply and what benefits might be received,” she said. “We also offer one-on-one assistance with the SNAP application process.”

Monica is already seeing results. Since she joined the Food Bank in the spring of 2023, she and a group of volunteers and a few food pantries have helped about 1,000 people with their SNAP applications or determined eligibility for the benefit by offering pre-screening assistance.

And she’s just getting started.

The Food Bank recently hired two AmeriCorps VISTAs who will actively work on educational outreach, program planning, and SNAP enrollment assistance. “With this extra support, we can increase our efforts and provide SNAP enrollment help to our entire service area. It all means the Food Bank is taking our SNAP outreach efforts to the next level,” Monica concluded.



## Get in touch with Monica

In her role for the Food Bank, Monica helps to ensure that everyone has enough to eat by helping guests learn about and access SNAP benefits. Her background is in social work, and that has prepared her well for the work she is doing at the Food Bank.

“I stand by the values that I have always upheld being a social worker. That means I treat people with respect and dignity, and I am a true believer that the people we serve are the experts of their own experiences.”

Monica loves working with people one-on-one to find ways to connect those who are eligible to the benefits they deserve.



To learn more about SNAP, and how the Food Bank can assist your organization in connecting your guests with this critical resource, scan the QR code or visit the website: [www.brafb.org/snap-benefits-outreach/guests/](http://www.brafb.org/snap-benefits-outreach/guests/)

If you'd like to request a meeting with Monica, use this tool: <https://scheduler.zoom.us/monica-kelley>

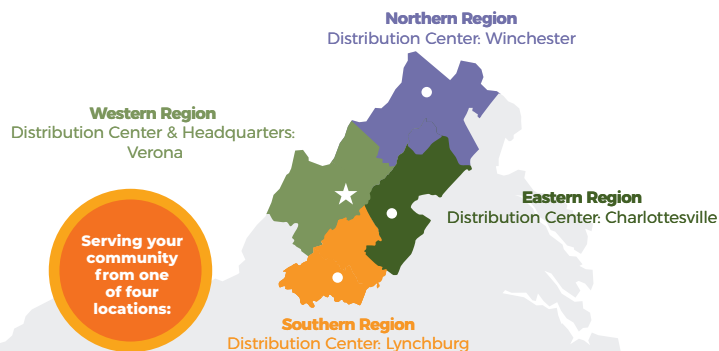


# Blue Ridge Area FOOD BANK

Everyone should have enough to eat.

PARTNER  
FOOD BANK OF  
**FEEDING  
AMERICA**

HEADQUARTERS | P.O. BOX 937 | VERONA, VA 24482



**Our VISION:** Nourishing food and better health—for everyone, every day.

**Our CORE BELIEFS:** Hunger is unacceptable, everyone deserves access to enough food, food sustains life and nourishes health, and we are called to serve without judgment.

## Our MISSION:

To improve food security through equitable access to good nutrition and the resources that support health and well-being.

## Snackables

The Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) launched its Summer EBT program on July 1. Known as SUN Bucks in Virginia, this federal food benefit program offers a one-time benefit of \$120 per eligible child on an existing EBT card or a new Virginia SUN Bucks EBT card starting in late August. Guests who might be eligible for the benefit can apply here: [www.VirginiaSUNBucks.com](http://www.VirginiaSUNBucks.com)

Keep up to date with what's going on at the Food Bank and sign up for one of our e-newsletters. **Scan the QR code or visit the website:** [www.brafb.org/subscription-home/](http://www.brafb.org/subscription-home/)



Have thoughts and ideas on how we could better support your mission? Please reach out to Tyler Herman, director of partner engagement, at [therman@brafb.org](mailto:therman@brafb.org)

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