

harvest

A NEWSLETTER OF THE BLUE RIDGE AREA FOOD BANK

Hunger Doesn't Take a Summer Vacation

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Blue Ridge Area
FOOD BANK

Everyone should have enough to eat.

PARTNER
FOOD BANK OF
**FEEDING
AMERICA**

Hunger Doesn't Take a Summer Vacation



At the Food Bank, we understand that food insecurity doesn't disappear when the final school bell rings; in fact, summer can be a challenging time for families who rely on school meal programs to feed their children.

Thanks to the unwavering support of donors, we're able to provide nourishment to children year-round, ensuring they have the fuel they need to learn, play, and thrive, no matter the season.

Summer support

When school doors close for the summer, the risk of childhood hunger increases. That's because parents can't count on school breakfasts or lunches to feed their children.

The Food Bank's summer programs include:

- **School Break Boxes and Summer Kid Packs:** These thoughtfully packed boxes and bags are distributed monthly

through community partners and school districts, offering essential food items to bridge the gap and ensure children have consistent nourishment while school is out.

- **Summer Food Service Program (SFSP):** This USDA-funded program allows us to reach children in two impactful ways when school is not in session.

Through a group meal program, we partner with local sites to serve nutritious prepared meals to children in a communal setting.

Another program offers a convenient option for families in rural areas, providing a weekly box of food that they can pick up.

Fueling futures during the school year

When school is in session, the Food Bank supports several key programs for students:

- **BackPack Programs:** We recognize that weekends and holidays can be a vulnerable

time for children living with food insecurity. The program directly addresses this need, providing nutritious, easy-to-prepare food for families. It leverages the Food Bank's bulk purchasing power while allowing local partners to tailor support to the unique needs of their communities.

- **Kids Café:** This program provides a safe and supportive environment where children can access nutritious meals and snacks after school. Currently, we support eight sites in the Lynchburg, Waynesboro, and Staunton areas.
- **Good Food School Market:** We're also partnering with middle and high schools to establish and operate market-style pantries on site. They provide older students, their families, and school staff with access to a variety of nutritious food.

Your generous contributions make these vital programs possible. Thank you for partnering with us to build a brighter, more food-secure future for the children in our communities.

Impact by the numbers



17,478

The number of students served through program partners during the summer of 2024.



95,610

The number of students served during the 2024-2025 academic year through programs on page 2.

96,210

The number of meals we expect to distribute through the 2025 Summer Food Service Program.



35,566

The number of students we plan to serve during the summer of 2025. That is an increase of 103% compared to last year.



PARTNER SPOTLIGHT:

Bright Futures

“Hungry stomachs don't have ears,” said Elise Stine-Dolinar, coordinator for Bright Futures, a partnership between Frederick County Public Schools and Winchester City Schools.

With support from the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank, Bright Futures provides 1,500 students across 28 schools with essential food each week during the school year, along with clothing, school supplies, hygiene items, shoes, and sleeping bags.

During the summer, Bright Futures extends its reach, serving 5,000 students with vital food support.

Across the Blue Ridge, many other Food Bank partners are working hard to help ensure children in our communities have enough to eat throughout the year. They include Food For Thought in the Lynchburg area and Fueled in Loudoun County. The latter collaborates with 40 public schools there, serving more than 10,000 students each year.



“

“Hungry stomachs don't have ears.”

— Elise Stine-Dolinar





TURN

COMPASSION

INTO ACTION

The Power of Advocacy in Ending Hunger

The Blue Ridge Area Food Bank does more than distribute food—we're building a brighter future where everyone has enough to eat. But this work is bigger than just one organization. It takes an engaged, compassionate community to achieve this mission.

A powerful form of giving is participation in advocacy—speaking up for policies that support food security and a healthy, thriving community. As an advocate, you help the Food Bank move beyond providing meals.

When you lift your voice with others, you help shape the federal and state policies and systems that determine if families have access to the resources they need.

When you advocate for the Food Bank, you're standing with those experiencing hunger—and you're helping remove barriers to nourishing food.

Government programs like **SNAP** (the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program—formerly food stamps),

TEFAP (The Emergency Food Assistance Program), and **funding for school meals as well as senior nutrition** are critical to ending food insecurity. That's why your voice is vital.

Advocacy is for everyone

To participate in advocacy, you don't need to be a policy expert. To make a difference, you only need to care that your neighbors have enough to eat—and be willing to speak up.

Your voice matters—and is needed. When many voices deliver the same message, it's more difficult for elected officials to ignore. Sharing your perspective adds value and credibility to the call for change.

“

In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.”

— Martin Luther King Jr.

Easy ways to take action

Advocacy doesn't require expertise—just a willingness to stand up for change. Everything you need to get started—customizable letters, phone scripts, and lawmaker contact information—is available on our website. If you believe everyone deserves access to nutritious food, here are simple but powerful ways to make a difference:

- **Sign or write a letter** to your elected officials urging them to support food security policies.
- **Use social media** to share your perspective, encourage action, and inspire others to join.
- **Make a quick phone call** to reinforce the importance of legislation that helps families access food.
- **Write an op-ed or invite others** to learn more about hunger in our region.
- **Attend a local event** to raise awareness, educating and engaging your community.
- **Sign-up on our website for Advocacy Alerts** so that we can stay in touch with you on pressing issues.

Join us

No one should be forced to choose between groceries and rent, medicine, utilities, or other basic needs. When you advocate you transform compassion into action and strengthen solutions to hunger. When we speak up together, we send a clear message that hunger is **unacceptable**—and **solvable**.

Your voice can fuel change in your neighborhood, county, state, and beyond. Visit brafb.org/act-now to take action today.

Set the Table for a Year of Meals

You can provide a month of meals for just \$30 a month. That's more than 1,000 meals per year for a local person or family struggling to afford groceries.

It couldn't be easier! Set up an automatic donation and let it run! When you do, you join a committed and caring donor community called The Supper Club whose monthly donations bring comfort and stability—one meal at a time. You can adjust your giving anytime.

Choose the easiest way to give

- **Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT)** – A fee-free, secure, automatic debit from your bank
- **Credit card** – A subscription-style charge
- **Digital wallet** – Apple Pay, Google Pay, or PayPal
- **Bank bill pay** – Set up a direct monthly donation to the Food Bank

Make a lasting impact every season of the year. Visit www.brafb.org/supperclub to sign up or learn more.



How We Solve Hunger Every Day, Together

A look behind the scenes

Every day at the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank, evidence of your generosity is in motion—fueling the complex and highly collaborative work of staff, volunteers, donors, and partners across our 25-county service area.

To shed more light on the mission in action, we've listed some of our recent activities:



SUN	MON	TUE
	1 Built pallets full of produce and proteins for an expected 365 people at Mobile Food Pantry.	2 Gratefully received a food drive donation at the Winchester warehouse. 
8 Toured a potential food pantry partner in southern Shenandoah County.	9 "Your support opens doors—literally—for new partners to join the fight against hunger." —Kristi, Partner Engagement Manager	10 Designed food-safety training posters for pantry volunteers to use.
15	16 Monitored food safety practices at pantry partner.	17 Placed an order for 12 coolers and freezers to fulfill some of the 2025 Partner Impact & Innovation grants.
	23	24 Started test with food supplier to regularly get five key food items at lower cost.
	30	Trained a partner's volunteers to help guests complete SNAP applications. 



"I am so amazed by our incredible volunteers who show up in pouring rain, the cooking sun, sleet, you name it to the outdoor distributions. They share such kindness and have such dedication to helping their communities."

—Nelda, Community Nutrition Programs Coordinator

WED

4

Met with the principal and staff of a local high school to design and launch a Good Food School Market.

THU

5

Approved revisions to our Nutrition Policy to support health and cultural considerations.

FRI

6

Met with Sentara RMH clinicians to plan for a new Food Pharmacy site.



SAT

7



"We're building a network where partners learn from each other—and lift each other up."

—Katie, Partner Engagement Manager

19

Hosted first meeting of Winchester Food Providers Group (local pantry and school partners).

20

Created online form so guests can self-register in their preferred language.

21

25

Volunteers finished packing nearly 5,000 summer break boxes for kids.

26

With 16 Appomattox County organizations, identified food resource gaps; one group wants to join the Food Bank network!

27

Reviewed guest survey responses and shared report with pantry partner.

28

Created lead volunteer role to manage Neighborhood Produce Markets, freeing up staff to develop new markets.

Hosted peer food bank to show how we run USDA program for seniors.

"Proud that the Virginia Department of Agriculture considers our model one of the best and pleased to help another food bank."

—Jess, Food Sourcing & Government Programs Manager

NEXT MONTH:
Develop a new Healthy Pantry Initiative workshop for our partners.

You can see the strategic direction in action every day. When you give your food, money, time, or voice to the Food Bank, you are part of this calendar of good work, all of which adds up and transforms lives.

Thank you!



At the Food Bank, we witness heartwarming, heroic acts that take place every day.

Hunger Heroes are inspired to take action to end food insecurity. A Hunger Hero exhibits bravery and empathy, and generously sets an example for others to follow. Food Bank volunteers, partners, advocates, donors, staff, and guests are our heroes.

We appreciate every one of you and your support of the Food Bank to make local communities stronger and healthier.

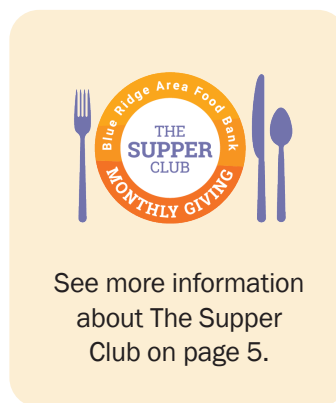
Here, we highlight just a few examples of Hunger Heroes who stepped up to make a difference in recent months.



Eliminating disparities in access to nutritious food is one of the Food Bank's strategic goals. Enter the *Fresh Food Express*: a nimble, responsive way to deliver fresh produce to pantry partners for distribution when and where it's needed. A big *thank you* to community partners **Devils Backbone Brewing Company** and **The Perry Foundation**, who joined forces to purchase a van to deliver fresh produce to smaller food partner pantries in the eastern and western regions.



Barbara McGonagill and several of her Lake Frederick neighbors combined their passions to create the **Friends of the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank**. All are now members of *The Supper Club* (monthly donors), and they work together to coordinate local food and fund drives throughout the year.



Kroger Mid-Atlantic understands the importance of access to nutritious food. We are grateful for Kroger's financial support to purchase and distribute fresh produce to guests throughout our service area, including guests with medical needs who received food this year at Remote Area Medical (RAM) clinics.



THANK YOU, Generous Corporate, Foundation, and Event Partners



*REFLECTS SIGNIFICANT GIFTS RECEIVED DECEMBER 1, 2024 TO MAY 31, 2025

WELCOMING NEW LEADERSHIP: Meet Our New Board Members

As we begin a new fiscal year, the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank is proud to welcome five exceptional leaders to our Board of Directors:

- **Jason Craig, EdD**
Director of Community Health,
Valley Health System
- **Simon Davidson, Esq**
Senior Counsel, Dominion Energy
- **Brian Edwards**
Retired, Waynesboro Police Department
- **Sherri Moore**
Associate Professor, University of Virginia
McIntire School of Commerce
- **Rev. Won Un**
Pastor, Central United Methodist Church

Each member brings a unique perspective and deep commitment to service. Together, they join a dedicated board that is committed to guiding the Food Bank, helping us build a future where everyone in the Blue Ridge region has enough nutritious food. Board members are instrumental in realizing this vision.

Board members help set the strategic direction, ensure good governance and accountability, engage in fundraising and advocacy, and support the CEO in advancing the mission.

We are grateful for our Board's leadership and excited for the journey ahead.

To learn more about the Food Bank's leadership team, visit brafb.org/leaders.



Get Involved

We hope the stories you've read in this issue of *Harvest* inspire you to take action.

For details on these and other partnerships and events, visit our website at www.brafb.org or call 540-248-3663.

Volunteer

Donate Food

BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP

Invite a Speaker

Advocate

MAKE A GIFT

SHARE OUR STORY

Organize an Event

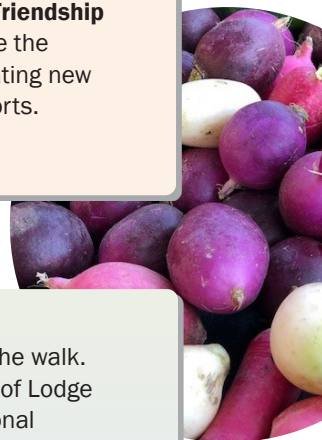
Host an Online Fundraiser

Coordinate a Food Drive



There are many ways local companies can make an impact. **Moore's Electrical & Mechanical** and **Friendship Industries** flexed their giving muscles to improve the function of our warehouse in Lynchburg by donating new lighting and equipment to improve recycling efforts.

The **Charlottesville Elks** talk the talk and walk the walk. By sharing the Food Bank's story, the members of Lodge #389 rallied their members and then their national organization to match their gift, contributing enough money to provide more than 60,000 meals this year.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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REV. WON UN

Pastor
Central United Methodist Church

KARI JORGENSEN DIENER

Ex-Officio

LES SINCLAIR

MANAGING EDITOR
Communications & PR Manager

A New Captain: A Known Destination

This summer, I assumed leadership of the Food Bank's Board of Directors. One of my first tasks was to bring to a successful close a national search for a new Chief Executive Officer of the Food Bank, replacing Michael McKee who is retiring after 12 years at the helm.

Transitions like this are moments of both reflection and renewal. And this one feels especially fraught due to unexpected headwinds that we are navigating.

But I'm not worried.

The Board remains firmly committed to upholding the consistency, quality, and values that define our work. Our dedicated staff and leadership team continue to serve with focus and strength, ensuring that families and individuals living with hunger receive the food and hope they deserve—every day.

And I'm glad to announce that we've found a talented new captain who has the energy, experience, and enthusiasm to chart these waters.

Think of this time as a change of the person sitting in the captain's chair, but not a change in the course of the ship. Our North Star is the mission, our strategic plan is the map that guides us, and our crew is experienced and steadfast.

I'm confident the journey will continue with determination, compassion, and the benefit of your partnership.

Thank you for your trust and ongoing support. You are an essential part of our Food Bank family, and together, we are charting a strong path forward.

With gratitude,



Kim Blosser
Chair, Board of Directors



A New CEO Takes the Helm at the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank



We're pleased to announce that **Kari Jorgensen Diener** will serve as the fifth Chief Executive Officer of the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank. She is a senior non-profit executive with 25 years of experience working with mission- and community-centered organizations, most recently the Refugee Self-Reliance Initiative, and Mercy Corps, prior to that.

Read more about Kari at www.brafb.org/newCEO



Blue Ridge Area
FOOD BANK
Everyone should have enough to eat.



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FOOD BANK

Headquarters:
P.O. Box 937 | Verona, VA 24482



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



SCAN HERE

◀ To change your mailing information or preferences, send an email to donorservices@brafb.org.

OUR LOCATIONS

We serve your community through one of four distribution centers:

**Western Region
Distribution Center
& Headquarters**
P.O. Box 937
96 Laurel Hill Road
Verona, VA 24482-0937
P: 540.248.3663

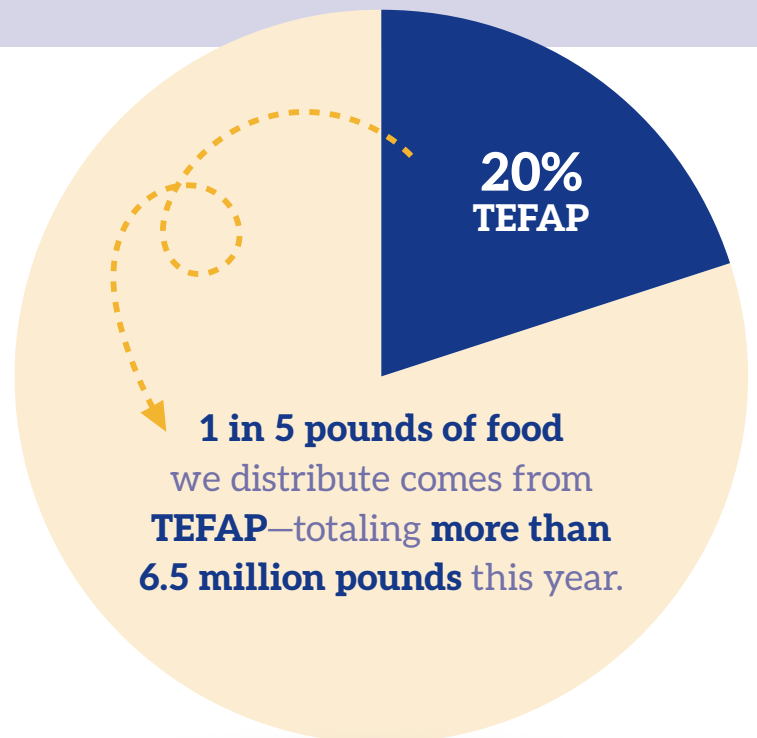
**Eastern Region
Distribution Center**
1207 Harris Street
Charlottesville, VA 22903-5319
P: 434.296.3663

**Southern Region
Distribution Center**
501 12th Street, Suite B
Lynchburg, VA 24504-2527
P: 434.845.4099

**Northern Region
Distribution Center**
1802 Roberts Street
Winchester, VA 22601-6312
P: 540.665.0770

It's Time to Speak Up for Food Security

The USDA's Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) supplies millions of pounds of fresh produce, dairy, meat, and pantry staples to the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank, helping families put food on the table and supporting American farmers. Protecting TEFAP in the next farm bill is crucial to hunger-relief efforts.



Make your voice count—advocate today at www.brafb.org/act-now.