

harvest

A NEWSLETTER OF THE BLUE RIDGE AREA FOOD BANK

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Blue Ridge Area
FOOD BANK

Everyone should have enough to eat.

PARTNER
FOOD BANK OF
**FEEDING
AMERICA**



Taking Care of Each Other

The informal network of generosity that extends the Food Bank's reach

More people are seeking food assistance than ever in our 44-year history of serving the Blue Ridge. Even before the recent surge in demand, if you lined up all the visitors to the Food Bank or food pantries in an average month, the line would stretch for 41 miles.

While it may seem easy to distinguish between individuals who give or get help, the truth of our work rests somewhere in between—in a close-knit network of neighbors who extend themselves to support their community.

Neighbors helping neighbors

The Food Bank is deeply grateful to community members who look beyond their own needs and take action to help others, and who help make the Blue Ridge area a better place for everyone.

We've witnessed many acts illustrating the *informal* network of support beyond the formal safety net. Here are the stories of a few of the generous souls whose efforts extend the Food Bank's reach.

"Hope is more the consequence of action than its cause."

— Roberto Unger



JOHN

John and “Old Faithful” are a lifeline

The Mobile Food Pantry (MFP) delivers food to people experiencing food insecurity in rural areas. But when locals can't get themselves to a nearby distribution, it's often guests who step up to deliver food to their neighbors.

John has been coming to the MFP in Timberville (Rockingham County) for more than a decade. He told us recently that he first discovered the distribution when he lost his job and “really needed the help.”

Shortly after, he realized that many of his neighbors were facing similar challenges but didn't have reliable transportation to make the trip.

“I started picking up food for a handful of other people, including seniors, and delivering to their homes,” he shared. “It kind of snowballed from there.”

Today, John and his 1978 Chevrolet Cheyenne, “Old Faithful,” make a formidable pair, picking up food from the MFP each month.

He delivers to 27 households across Rockingham County.

Chris and Carissa: A recipe for hope

Chris has dedicated her life to community service. A full-time resource coordinator, she also cares for her adult son with autism and runs a support group for families affected by addiction.

Every week, Chris visits River City Bread Basket in Waynesboro, a Food Bank partner, to pick up the necessities that her limited income doesn't cover. She brings Carissa, her neighbor, with her.

Carissa can't afford childcare, so she and her partner stagger their work schedules so that someone is always home to care for their three-year-old son. That also means that when her partner uses their car to get to work, Carissa doesn't have transportation to get to the pantry. She struggled to provide food for their son—until she met Chris, who picks her up every Friday morning and gives her a ride to the pantry.

“I don't have much money,” Chris explained, “but I do have time, and it brings me joy to be of service.”

Tonya and Virginia close the gap

Tonya and Virginia are longtime guests and volunteers at the MFP in Nelson County. Tonya is the volunteer MFP coordinator. Virginia, who has been volunteering at the pantry for more than a decade, is her assistant.

Tonya and Virginia help their neighbors even after their volunteer shifts end. Both deliver food to people who can't make it to the distribution. Virginia often starts her day early and ends late as she delivers food to seven Nelson County households.

“We look out for each other,” Tonya told us. “We are one family in Nelson. That's our motto.”

About the Food Bank's MFP, Virginia explained, “If it wasn't for y'all, we wouldn't be able to do this and give back to people.”



CARISSA & CHRIS



TONYA & VIRGINIA

You Are Feeding Hope in Challenging Times



In recent months, our region has faced tough challenges. The government shutdown affected federal workers, contractors, and businesses that support them, and disrupted vital nutrition programs that serve as lifelines for tens of millions of Americans. Food prices keep rising, and the cost of living grows.

Uncertainty has become part of daily life for too many of our neighbors.

And yet, in the middle of hardship, something remarkable happens. Every time.

You step up.

Because of you, hope is still alive in kitchens and homes across our region.

Every day, your generosity makes a difference. When you make a gift, volunteer at a pantry, speak up for hunger relief, or donate a few cans of food, you are helping to fill plates and hearts.

Your support means that food continues to flow through our network of partner pantries, community centers, and meal



sites. When the food supply from the government slows, your giving keeps our shelves stocked. When the system slows down, your hands and hearts keep it moving.

Here's what that looks like in real life:

- A retired couple delivers donated produce from their garden, knowing it will brighten someone's dinner table.
- A group of coworkers spends their afternoon packing boxes of food, laughing and lifting together.
- A longtime donor writes a note with their check: "We believe in what you're doing. Keep going."

These moments add up to something powerful—**a community that refuses to let hunger win.**

We know you feel the same pressures: higher costs at the grocery store, uncertainty about what's next, and concern for friends and neighbors who are struggling.

That's what makes your support even more meaningful. You give because you care. You give because you believe that everyone deserves access to nourishing food, no matter what's happening in the world.

The truth is, we couldn't do this work without you. Every hour volunteered, every dollar donated, every voice raised in support—each one strengthens the safety net that catches families in crisis.

Thank you for standing with us. In uncertain times, you are our steady light. You are proof that compassion is stronger than chaos, and generosity is greater than fear.

Together, we will keep showing up. Together, we will keep feeding hope. And together, we will make sure that no one in our community goes hungry.

Thank you—for everything you give, and everything you make possible.



Your IRA Can Nourish Your Neighbors

If you're 70½ or older, you can give directly from your IRA to the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank and help ensure no one goes hungry.

- Satisfy your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD).
- Lower your taxable income.
- Provide more than 30 meals for every \$10 you give.



“Giving through my IRA was simple—and it feels great knowing I'm helping feed my community.”

— Jim Mungovan, Food Bank donor

Learn more: brafb.org/ira



Prepping for a food demonstration at Loudoun Hunger Relief.

What's the Value of a Food Bank Network Membership?

Each year, between 80 percent and 90 percent of the food distributed by the Food Bank goes out through network partners. We couldn't distribute 32 million pounds of food each year without them.

Blue Ridge Area Food Bank network members, which include local food pantries, shelters, soup kitchens, and other organizations dedicated to ending hunger, pay an annual membership fee of \$50. This modest investment provides significant benefits.

"Partnering with the Food Bank means so much more than a transactional agreement to access food," said Jacob Matz, director of partner engagement at the Food Bank.

"Our partners receive training and support to implement best practices and maximize impact, and they become members of a collaborative network of community-based organizations dedicated to meeting the unique needs of communities across our service area."

That network includes more than 200 pantry partners who work with the Food Bank and with local support to make sure no one in our region goes hungry.

Membership in the network means access to a wide variety of food resources, including USDA commodities, donated goods from grocery stores, and fresh produce. It also brings training, support, and the chance to be part of a community committed to doing good—together.



Preparing for the day at Good Samaritan, in Orange.



Ready to serve at Park View Community Mission in Lynchburg.

For our partners, this isn't just a transaction. It's a transformation.

A \$50 fee opens the door to:

- Access to free and diverse food resources, including USDA food, grocery donations, and Food Bank inventory.
- Free delivery of food.
- A 25% discount on food purchased by the Food Bank at wholesale prices, plus occasional free pass-through items.
- Rapid response to emergencies and surges in guest utilization.
- Capacity-building grants. Partners can apply for funding to improve infrastructure, cold storage, vehicles, language tools, and more.
- Healthy Pantry Initiative, connecting partners to a statewide movement promoting 20 health-focused practices.
- Training and support. This includes town hall meetings, sharing of best practices, and educational resources to help partners improve their work.
- A seat at the table in shaping how hunger is addressed locally.
- Visibility. From the Food Finder tool to regional coalitions and resource websites, partners are seen, supported, and celebrated.

Food as a financial benefit

Most food is free for partners, including produce, donated items from manufacturers and the community, paper and hygiene products, culturally inclusive foods like spices and masa, and USDA food for approved organizations. If a partner wants to buy food from the Food Bank's purchased supply, they pay 75 cents for every dollar the Food Bank spends. For example, one pantry received 276,000 pounds of food valued at \$452,000 but paid \$36,000. Another received \$33,000 worth of food for \$3,000. These savings help partners stretch their resources, maintain a consistent menu, and serve more neighbors living with food insecurity.

"A food bank membership gives partners access to not only food resources, but also information and support," said Adrienne Young, Executive Director of the River City Bread Basket food pantry in Waynesboro.

"The guidance provided by seasoned Food Bank staff and the connections with other providers create a valuable foundation for growth and positive impact when serving others," she said.

At the heart of our mission is a powerful network of partners. The Food Bank is committed to equipping each member with the resources, training, and support they need—because when every partner is strong, our entire community is stronger.



Nutritious produce is one of the most requested items at River City Bread Basket in Waynesboro.



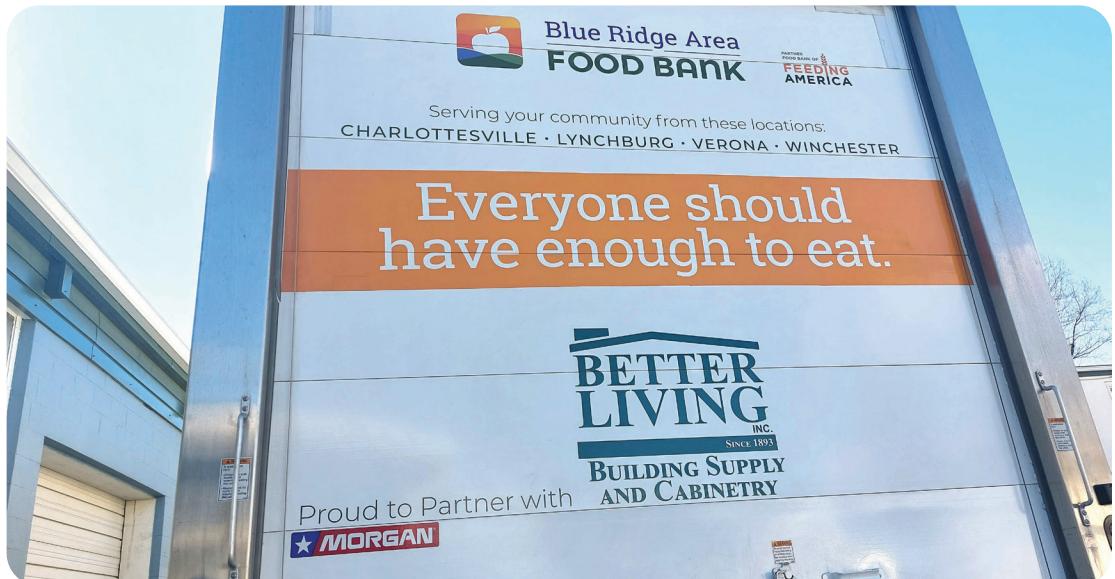
At the Food Bank, we witness heartwarming, heroic acts that take place every day.

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.

We are dedicated to delivering nutritious food to our neighbors and partners when and where they need it most. Long-time corporate partner **Better Living** helps us do that by sponsoring one of the many vehicles to *deliver hope* in the greater Charlottesville area.



Once a Hunger Hero, always a Hunger Hero. In memory of longtime champion **Ben Delp**, his family, James Madison University, and the Harrisonburg/Rockingham communities united to remember him by continuing the annual food and fund drive he organized. A tireless advocate for the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank, Ben's dedication helped provide more than **89,000** meals over the past decade for neighbors living with hunger.



CENTRA

We are grateful to **Centra Health** for funding Partner Impact & Innovation Grants to support partners operating in the greater Lynchburg region. Their commitment enhances the capacity of food pantries to store and distribute healthy food (including fresh produce), grow their services, ensure better guest experiences, and upgrade technology.

THANK YOU, Generous Corporate, Foundation, and Event Partners



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CHARLES L. KEITH & CLARA S. MILLER FOUNDATION

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*REFLECTS SIGNIFICANT GIFTS RECEIVED JUNE 1 TO NOVEMBER 30, 2025

15 YEARS ON THE ROAD: *Food Access Without Barriers*

This year marks the 15th anniversary of the Mobile Food Pantry (MFP) program—a milestone in our mission to bring food directly to those who need it most.

Designed to reach residents in rural corners of our service area, the mobile program quickly proved essential. In these communities, barriers to food access are steep. There are few, if any, grocery stores or food pantries. Limited hours and distance make them hard to reach for neighbors without dependable transportation. Mobile Food Pantries help overcome these obstacles by delivering nutritious food right into the heart of rural communities.

In 2010, the first mobile distribution rolled into Scottsville (Albemarle County), and in 2020, a location in Culpeper joined a network of 10 other mobile distribution sites. The MFP now distributes 11 times a month at 10 rural locations.

Over the past 15 years, the Mobile Food Pantry has become more than a delivery truck with a recognizable logo. Thanks to Food Bank staff, dedicated local volunteers, and the resilience of our guests, the Mobile Food Pantry is a symbol of compassion and community spirit.

It's how we meet people where they are, *literally*.



Last year, the Mobile Food Pantry delivered:

1,086,744 pounds of food
(including **627,694** pounds of produce)

Total individuals served: **50,419**

Total households served: **24,641**





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.

Donate Food

VOLUNTEER

Invite a Speaker

Advocate

Host an Online Fundraiser

MAKE A GIFT

SHARE OUR STORY

Coordinate a Food Drive

BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP

ORGANIZE AN EVENT

Even when times are uncertain, Food Bank **volunteers** step up to pack thousands of boxes with nourishing food for our guests. Visit brafb.org/volunteer to learn how you can help your neighbors.



Cenvar Roofing stepped up this year and made a big impact. The company helped tell our story by producing a compelling documentary video. They also made a generous gift.

Contact us if you want to create a similar impact that ripples near and far. Visit brafb.org/get-involved.



WATCH THE VIDEO HERE
bit.ly/4iSbuB6

Business partnerships are a meaningful way to connect companies and their customers to our shared values, ensuring that everyone has enough to eat. **The Market at Grelen** exemplified this during their Enchanted Extravaganza, donating 100% of the proceeds from their 2025 Holiday House Tour to help feed the community.

THE
MARKET
at Grelen

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Mission-Focused & Guest-Centered

It was an honor to begin my service as CEO in August 2025. I am already inspired by the deep compassion and commitment across our network.

During a recent visit to the Mobile Food Pantry in Dillwyn, I noticed volunteers greeting neighbors by name and checking in on families. As you read earlier in this issue, some even helped deliver food to those who couldn't attend themselves. It was a powerful reminder that our work is rooted in human connection.

Every day, I learn more about our guests, partners, and the values that guide us. We center our work around our neighbors and our communities. Every decision begins with our "why": serving the guests who count on us. We stay focused and effective because of your support and our shared vision.

Food is more than nourishment. It's a foundation for self-reliance and stability. When neighbors have enough to eat, they have space to breathe, make decisions, and move forward. That's how lives change.

We're distributing more food than ever before, thanks to your generosity. And at every delivery, there's a volunteer offering kindness and care. Our grassroots network allows us to scale and nimbly respond to emerging needs, while staying deeply rooted in community.

With gratitude for your investment in this mission,



Kari

Kari Diener
Chief Executive Officer

"Every decision begins with our 'why': serving the guests who count on us. We stay focused and effective because of your support and our shared vision."



Blue Ridge Area FOOD BANK

Everyone should have enough to eat.



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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

CHEW ON THIS



**A Better Life
Begins With a Full Plate**

The Copenhagen Consensus (post-2015) asked 60 economists what solution would help the world the most.

Nutrition ranked first.

We agree that nutritious food comes first. When everyone has enough to eat, children learn and grow, parents stay productive and healthy, and entire communities are stronger.

