

THE VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK



Blue Ridge Area
FOOD BANK

PARTNER
FOOD BANK OF
**FEEDING
AMERICA**



DEAR VOLUNTEER,

Your contributions of time, energy, and passion make it possible for the Food Bank to achieve its mission. You help us engage our communities in the work to end hunger.

Your service allows us to direct more dollars towards purchasing food for our partners and programs, and your voice helps us educate Virginians about the continued problem of food insecurity among our neighbors in the Blue Ridge area.

We want to ensure that you have a positive and rewarding experience with us. This handbook includes details about our organization and the roles and responsibilities of our volunteers. Please read this guide and let us know if you have any questions.

Thank you for taking action to help ensure that everyone has enough to eat!

Sincerely,

Cathy Bagwell Marsh

Director of Development and Community Engagement

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VOLUNTEER POLICIES

ONSITE RULES

1. Sign-In/Sign-Out Procedure: Recording your hours is an effective way to capture the impact of your time. Each of the Food Bank's four locations is equipped with a computer, on which volunteers can sign in and out. If you're volunteering for the Food Bank offsite, a physical log-in/log-out sheet will be provided so you can record your time. Volunteers who will be self-reporting their hours will receive instructions from their supervisor. It is important for Food Bank staff to know who is in our facilities and at our distributions for safety reasons.

2. Youth Volunteers: To ensure the safety of all volunteers both onsite and offsite, we have age requirements for all volunteer opportunities. Some specific jobs have additional age restrictions, so please read the details of each role carefully when registering online.

- **Verona:** Youth ages 12-16 may volunteer in Food Recovery, as long as they are accompanied by a parent or guardian for every shift. Volunteers ages 17+ may work without an accompanying adult in Food Recovery, but only volunteers ages 18+ may volunteer in the warehouse.
- **Charlottesville, Lynchburg, Winchester, and Offsite Locations:** Youth ages 12-17 may volunteer, as long as they are accompanied by a parent or guardian for every shift.

3. Appropriate Clothing and Footwear: Closed-toe, closed-heel shoes are required at all times to protect against foot injury. Volunteers will not be able to participate in activities if wearing sandals or flip-flops. Wear long pants and shirts that cover the shoulders. Our warehouses are not heated or cooled, and temperatures may vary, so layers are recommended. Offsite distributions are subject to the weather, so please plan accordingly.

4. Cellphone Use: Cellphone use is prohibited in warehouses, storage spaces, and salvage areas, and phones should only be accessed in volunteer break areas. At offsite locations, please limit cellphone usage to help ensure distributions run smoothly. Personal use of Food Bank telephones should be limited to emergencies and unusual circumstances, and calls should be brief.

5. Food and Drinks: The break room and kitchen area in the warehouses are available for use by all volunteers (Please be sure to clean up after yourself); however, eating and/or drinking in a warehouse, storage space, and/or salvage area is not allowed.

6. Mechanical Equipment: Volunteers are prohibited from operating all warehouse equipment and/or driving Food Bank vehicles without proper training or direction from warehouse staff or branch managers.

7. Attendance: We understand that circumstances may arise that interfere with your scheduled volunteer commitment. When you will be absent from a shift, please log into your Food Bank volunteer account (www.brafb.volunteerhub.com) and cancel as far in advance as possible. If you will be late to a shift, please contact us directly. Continued absences will result in a review of your volunteer assignment, and a mutual decision will be made with you to determine the best next steps.

8. Inclement Weather: In the event of inclement weather (including snow, ice, and/or sleet), you are not required to report to your shift. We will not host offsite distributions in unsafe conditions. Whenever possible, we will notify you by email that the Food Bank is closed due to inclement weather. Check our website at www.brafb.org to see if closings have been announced.

INCLUSIVITY AND SAFETY

9. Equal Opportunity: The Food Bank engages volunteers on the basis of personal competence without regard for race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, veteran status, national origin, age, ability, or political affiliation, as well as other classifications protected by applicable state or local laws. Our equal-opportunity philosophy applies to all aspects of volunteering at the Food Bank, including recruiting and training.

10. Accommodations (for Individuals with Disabilities): The Food Bank works with volunteers with varying abilities and life circumstances; however, we must be able to ensure the safety of volunteers and staff at all times. We welcome a conversation on a case-by-case basis about accommodations and/or needs for our volunteers. Please contact the Volunteer & Food Drive Manager for more information.

11. Anti-Violence: The Food Bank takes all forms of physical, sexual, and emotional violence and harassment extremely seriously. Volunteers and paid staff have the right to work in a welcoming, inclusive, and safe environment. A copy of the Food Bank's Security and Safety Policy is available upon request. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the Food Bank's Security and Safety Policy, complaint procedure, and/or investigation procedure, please contact the Chief Talent Officer.

12. Tobacco Use, Alcohol, Drugs, and Firearms: Tobacco use is prohibited in all warehouse and offsite locations. The possession, use, and/or sale of alcohol or illegal drugs on Food Bank premises or at Food Bank distributions is strictly prohibited. The Food Bank will end its relationship with any volunteer who serves while under the influence of alcohol and/or illegal drugs—or anyone who uses any such substance during volunteer hours. The possession of any type of firearm on the Food Bank's premises or at an offsite location is also prohibited, and any volunteer who violates this restriction will have their relationship with the Food Bank terminated immediately.

13. Political Neutrality & Respect: The Blue Ridge Area Food Bank is non-partisan. During your volunteer service, keep in mind that we consider this organization a "big tent" that welcomes guests, staff, volunteers and donors with many backgrounds and beliefs. We don't endorse politicians or political parties. We believe that everyone should have access to enough food, no matter your political belief, race, country of origin, or any other characteristic or identity.

WHAT TO DO IF...

14. Loss Prevention: Respect for and the protection of the Food Bank's property—as well as employees' and volunteers' personal items—are of the utmost concern. Please secure your items appropriately or leave them in your car. If property goes missing or is damaged, report this to your supervisor immediately.

15. Grievance Procedure: We encourage you to review, evaluate, and provide feedback about your volunteer experience. If you have ideas, suggestions, or complaints, please contact the Volunteer & Food Drive Manager. If she is unavailable and/or you feel that your comments should be voiced to someone else, please contact the Chief Talent Officer.

CONFIDENTIALITY

16. Volunteer Confidentiality: All volunteer information is confidential. With the exception of records and information we are legally required to provide to government agencies, no information about you will be released unless there is a signed authorization form from you on file and the request is in writing.

17. Guest and Donor Confidentiality: The Food Bank protects confidential information stored in our database. In this regard, the Food Bank will not sell or trade a donor's personal information to/with any outside entity without first receiving the donor's written consent. Except for records and information we are legally required to provide to government agencies, no information about guests will be released unless there are signed authorization forms from them on file and the requests are in writing. Volunteers must adhere to this policy. In addition, volunteers working directly with the guest and/or donor database(s) will be required to sign an additional confidentiality agreement.



HEALTH AND SAFETY

Safety is a volunteer's business, and your wellbeing is important to us.

We work to ensure a safe work environment by complying with federal, state, and local safety regulations. In turn, you are expected to follow safety rules and exercise caution in all of your volunteer activities. Please refer to the Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) program on your volunteer account for specific safety instructions.

- Watch and listen for forklifts, pallet jacks, and other equipment used in the warehouse and at offsite distributions.
- Climbing on equipment and running are strictly prohibited.
- Observe warning signs and safety posters; these help ensure everyone's protection.
- Report any unsafe conditions to your supervisor immediately.
- Any accident which results in injury—regardless of how insignificant it may seem—must be reported promptly to a supervisor. Volunteers injured on Food Bank property are covered by our volunteer-accident insurance. Volunteers injured offsite are not covered by the Food Bank but are instead covered by the owner of the site.
- Due to food-safety regulations set by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Federal Drug Administration, and AIB International, service dogs are not allowed in our warehouses.

The health and safety of all volunteers and staff is vital to our work. The Food Bank and you share responsibility for establishing and maintaining a safe and healthy work environment. For your protection and the protection of the people around you, we cannot emphasize enough the importance of your self-monitoring.

- Stay home if you are sick and let us know you won't be working, if possible.
- Wash your hands often and use hand sanitizer provided at all locations.
- Wear gloves and other personal protective equipment when necessary and available.
- If you or another volunteer is injured while volunteering at the Food Bank, immediately report the incident to your Food Bank supervisor. All injuries must be reported to Food Bank staff.

HOW TO WASH YOUR HANDS



Wet your hands with clean running water and apply soap.



Rub your hands together and scrub them well.



Scrub the backs of your hands and under your nails.



Sing "Happy Birthday" song from beginning to end twice.



Rinse your hands well under running water.

Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry.

FIRE EVACUATION PROCEDURE

(Onsite Locations)



- When the fire alarm sounds, you will be escorted to the nearest exit by a Food Bank staff member. (Exits will be pointed out during volunteer orientation.)
- Evacuate the building in an orderly manner. Staff will guide you to the designated safety area.
- Respond to the roll call and sign the check-in sheet.
- Remain at the assigned area until the all-clear is given.



SAFE WEIGHT LIFTING

- Bend your knees, not your waist. Let your leg muscles do the lifting.
- "Hug the load," holding the object you're lifting as close to your body as possible.
- Avoid twisting. Make sure your feet, knees, and torso are pointed in the same direction.
- Get help with heavy, awkward, or long items.



COMMUNICATIONS

Our primary form of communication is through your volunteer account. If there are changes to your contact information, log into your Food Bank volunteer account and update your profile. Please open and read our emails regularly to stay informed of new policies, changes in procedures, recognition, and special events. Any changes to shifts or new needs will also be communicated by email.

Interested in receiving more information from the Food Bank? Subscribe to our e-newsletters at www.brafb.org/subscription-home.

We strive to create the best outcome for both volunteers and the Food Bank. For this reason, we encourage volunteers to participate in the Annual Volunteer Feedback Survey in May.

HAVE FEEDBACK? Please share comments, ideas, or concerns throughout the year with the Volunteer & Food Drive Managers.



VOLUNTEER WEBSITE

We frequently add new volunteer opportunities to our online schedule for all four regions of our service area. The calendar is organized around our branch locations: located in Verona (Western Region), Charlottesville (Eastern Region), Lynchburg (Southern Region), and Winchester (Northern Region). Check back often and visit the Volunteer Website at www.brafb.volunteerhub.com to see where we may need help.



ABOUT THE 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. We serve 25 counties and eight cities through distribution centers in Charlottesville, Lynchburg, Winchester, and Verona.



The Food Bank provides nutritious food to well over 100,000 people on average each month through a far-reaching network of more than 400 community partners—food pantries, shelters, soup kitchens, and program sites like schools, community centers, and health care clinics.

We are members of Feeding America, a national organization supporting more than 200 food banks across the country, and the largest domestic hunger relief agency in the U.S. We are also members of the Federation of Virginia Food Banks, an association of the seven food banks in Virginia.

Our **VISION** is that everyone should have enough to eat.

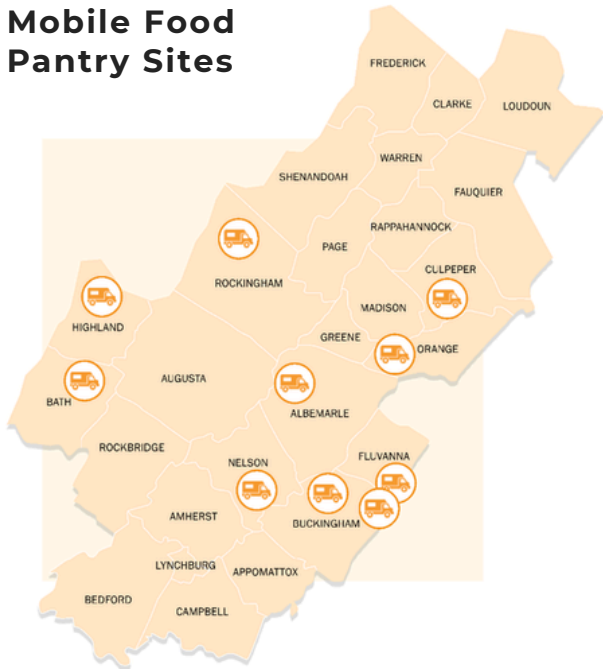
Our **CORE BELIEFS** are that hunger is unacceptable, that everyone deserves access to enough food, that food sustains life and nourishes health, and that we are called to serve neighbors in need without judgement

Our **MISSION** is to provide nourishing food to our neighbors in need through vibrant community partnerships and passionate public support.

HOW WE WORK

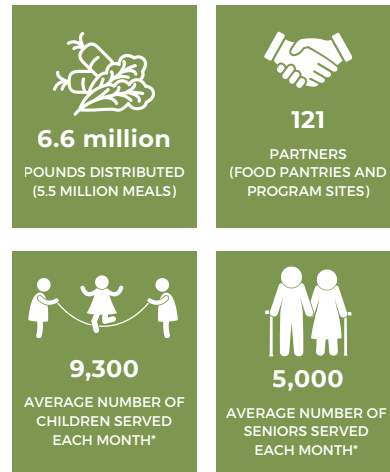


Mobile Food Pantry Sites



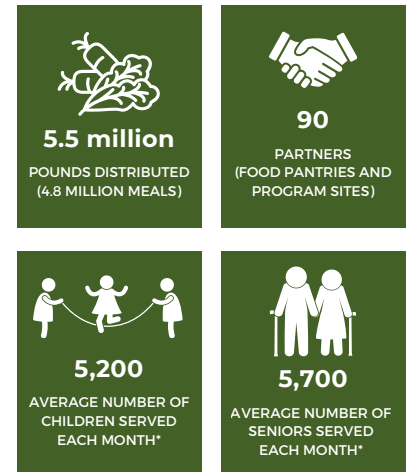
Western Region

Service Area (Verona)



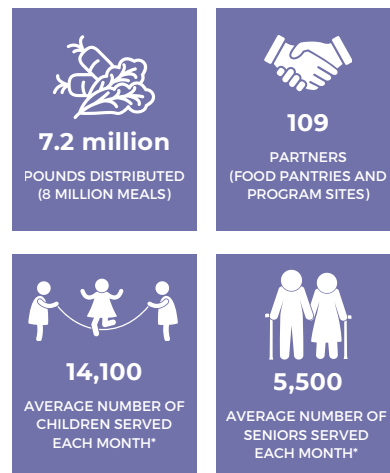
Eastern Region

Service Area (Charlottesville)



Northern Region

Service Area (Winchester)



Southern Region

Service Area (Lynchburg)



Our Programs

Community Food Distribution

- Partner Food Pantries, Soup Kitchens, and Shelters
- Mobile Food Pantry
- Neighborhood Produce Market
- Emergency Food Box

Senior Nutrition Programs

- Reach
- Senior Food Box (CSFP)

Child Nutrition Programs

- Kids Café
- Family BackPacks
- Summer Kid Packs
- Summer Food Service
- Good Food School Market

Health and Education Programs and Services

- Super Pantry
- Walk the Line
- Food Pharmacy
- SWAP (Supporting Wellness at Pantries)

*Through pantries and programs

THE IMPACT YOU MAKE

Your contributions in FY24 helped make the following achievements possible:



2.3 million pounds

pounds of food rescued by volunteers for all four locations



25,000

rural households received food staples and produce at Mobile Food Pantry distributions.



18,435 households

received nutritious produce at food distributions in urban neighborhoods and schools



9,440 boxes

shelf-stable food were packed for children and their families during school breaks



30,500 boxes

staple pantry items were packed for seniors with low incomes.

POWERED BY VOLUNTEERS

July 2023-June 2024



1,195

New volunteers (unduplicated)



1,415

Active volunteers (unduplicated)



24,783

Total hours contributed by all volunteers



\$892,983*

Value of all volunteer hours



13

Full-time positions (staff equivalency)

**Note: To calculate the value of volunteer time logged, we use the standard value for the Commonwealth of Virginia, as provided by independentsector.org.*



GO ABOVE AND BEYOND

Volunteers are valued and cherished members of the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank. As a member of our family, we invite you to **advocate**, **educate**, and **give**.

1

Tell your family, friends, and neighbors about the Food Bank's mission and impact. Share facts about hunger in our service area. Visit www.brafb.org/learn.

2

Do you have special skills or professional experience that could benefit the Food Bank?

Visit brafb.org/volunteer and click on "Use Your Special Skills" to see where we could use your help.

3

Host a food or fund drive. Visit www.brafb.org/be-a-hunger-hero/ for more information about how to get started.

4

Make a gift or become a monthly donor. It's easy, impactful, and saves us money). Every \$1 you contribute helps provide 3 meals.

5

Follow us on social media and visit our website (www.brafb.org) for news and events. Share your volunteer experience on your social media channels.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF A FOOD BANK?

A food bank serves a vital role in acquiring and distributing large amounts of food from local, regional, and national sources and providing it to people experiencing hunger. Many smaller nonprofits do not have the capacity to store, handle, and/or transport large amounts of food. Due to much greater capacity, a food bank can secure and store large quantities of food donations that then can be distributed to agencies directly serving people living with hunger. In other words, we can acquire and distribute food when and where it's needed.

Q. WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE FOOD BANK AND A FOOD PANTRY?

A good analogy is the wholesale and retail marketplace. Food banks are charitable wholesalers, acquiring and distributing massive amounts of food. Food pantries (and soup kitchens and shelters) are the retailers we call our "partner agencies." They're on the frontlines of hunger relief, distributing food directly to neighbors. We work in close collaboration, and neither food banks nor food pantries could work effectively without the other.

Q. HOW DO YOU DETERMINE SOMEONE'S ELIGIBILITY FOR FOOD ASSISTANCE?

As a food bank, we do not determine eligibility for food assistance. Instead, we distribute food to our partner agencies, and each has its own criteria regarding documentation of income and family size. While occasionally an individual might take advantage of our resources (no free system is immune to misuse), most of our partners would tell you that the time investment required to chase down a rare few would not be a worthwhile use of their resources. The majority of people who seek help truly need it. We're called to serve our neighbors without judgment.



Q. HOW MUCH OF MY FINANCIAL DONATION BUYS FOOD?

\$1 helps us provide 4 meals. How? It's the power of leverage! Because of our partnerships, we receive large food donations and we never pay retail prices for food. Financial donations help us purchase and acquire more food, as well as pay for freight costs and packaging fees to get the food into our warehouse. Volunteers also contribute tens of thousands of service hours, which keep expenses low and efficiency high. 95 cents of every dollar we spend goes toward food and operations, and 5% goes toward administration and fundraising.

Q. WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR VOLUNTEERS TO SIGN IN AND OUT FOR EACH SHIFT?

Sharing the number of volunteer hours clocked is one way we as a nonprofit can demonstrate the impact we make in the community. Sometimes, this figure is a requirement for grant proposals. But even more importantly, we need to know who is in our facilities and at our distributions for safety reasons. In particular, if an emergency evacuation is necessary, it is vital that we are able to account for *all* individuals present, including staff, volunteers, and visitors.



HOLIDAY CLOSINGS

New Year's Day
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
President's Day
Memorial Day
Juneteenth
Independence Day
Labor Day
Thanksgiving Day
Day after Thanksgiving
Winter Holiday Break (week following Dec. 25)



DRY GOODS

Thelma is our longest-serving volunteer. She has been working with the Food Bank for almost 30 years and has given more than 3,000 hours of service. Thank you, Thelma!

“

This is how change happens. One gesture. One person. One moment at a time.

- Libba Bray



Blue Ridge Area
FOOD BANK

A member of
FEEDING AMERICA