



FOOD Matters

SPRING 2024

MEALS WITH MEANING

A Letter from the CEO

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For many of us, these early summer months present moments of celebration. Perhaps in your home, the younger generation is moving from one milestone to the next, or you are preparing to welcome summertime with a special trip or anniversary getaway.

Often, we are also reminded of the nurturing love that shaped us. Our individual thriving is due, at least in part, to an encouraging guide who created a space for each of us to belong, to believe, and to be better.

In this same spirit, I consider how YOU, our legacy supporters, have provided a launchpad for the Food Bank of Northeast Georgia. You have found with us a place to belong, to believe, and to be better.

Your part in our story has hopefully provided you with a sense of belonging and purpose. This belonging is no more apparent than in shared moments, whether at our annual Empty Bowl Luncheon or in our volunteer centers. My visits with our dedicated volunteers have confirmed what many studies imply: joining with a group of humans for a shared purpose is one of the most powerful ways to belong. It is wonderful to think that we find belonging by creating it for others, coming together to share our abundance thoughtfully.

Your legacy has also given us a place for belief. Together, more than 32 years ago, we had the collective opportunity to believe in a different and better future for neighbors in our region. Thanks to visionary leaders like Virginia Walker, Evelyn Neely, Richard Boone, and Nancy Denson, we have inherited something to believe in that is greater than ourselves. So, as our Hunger Heroes, you have not only found belonging with us, but you have also made a place to

believe in a future with food certainty. And it has made all the difference.

As supporters in our Food Bank community, you find in us — and also offer us — an opportunity to be “better” or continuously improve and grow. Thanks to you, we will find an opportunity to deepen our impact as we move into the Food Bank of the Future in just a few weeks. **We are achieving this milestone because you have found the Food Bank of Northeast Georgia to be a place where YOU can ignite and impact the world for the better. You have found and created belonging with us. You have believed and helped us believe. And you also make us better.**

These 3 Bs are credited to Jim Langley, who is a thought leader in philanthropy. As I read his latest update on giving, I was moved by the similarities between thriving philanthropy and a thriving home. Reflecting on those similarities, I realized that we are building a home of impact collectively. Together, we are something far greater than any of us on our own.

As you read this, my hope for you is that you’ll celebrate the love that you share with the world today and take a moment to receive our gratitude for your undeniable role in the Food Bank’s story of impact. Thank you for choosing us as a home for your belonging, your belief, and your own unique way of bettering the world.



Erin Barger
President & CEO



Member Spotlight: Boys & Girls Club of Jackson County

“The best part about the Boys & Girls Club is that it helps you, and they teach us important stuff. And I just love to come to the Boys & Girls Club,” said Zayland, an 11-year-old who rides the bus every day to the Jim Moran Club in Jefferson. Nine-year-old Daisy chimed in quickly, “My favorite thing is probably the snack. We get good snacks.”

Zayland and Daisy are just two students who are part of the Boys & Girls Club “set-up crew” through their partnership with the Food Bank of Northeast Georgia. “Ms. Tracey calls me ‘The Organizer,’” Zayland said proudly.

The set-up crew volunteers, along with the staff led by Samone Sims, Interim Club Director, remake a room at their facility into a “market-style food distribution” every 4th Thursday of the month. “A market-style [pantry] is great for families because it’s more of a shopping experience. Parents can select the food their children will want to eat – like the fruits and vegetables they like the best. We started working with the Boys & Girls Club in summer 2023 – doing a monthly pantry – and the kids are the biggest helpers,” said Tracey Massey, Member Coordinator for the Food Bank’s Childhood Nutrition Initiatives.

When the Food Bank truck arrives, there are usually 10-12 students lined up, ready to help unload the food that will be distributed to the community. They transform a room in the Club to a farmer’s market filled with fruits, vegetables, bread, frozen meat, peanut butter, cheese, canned tuna, and – yes – even some candy and treats. “I love when they have cupcakes,” said Zayland. “Once, I even got my mom

a birthday cake here.” Many families whose children are members of the Boys & Girls Club will walk through and select food to take home when they pick up their child from the Club. “My favorite things are the strawberries and blueberries,” said Daisy.

“I am just impressed at the variety of foods here,” said Barbara White, a Jefferson resident who came by to volunteer for the pantry. “This is my first time coming, and I can’t get over how many kinds of vegetables and fruits there are. This is so important, especially for seniors like me.”

Members like the Jackson County Boys & Girls Clubs have the opportunity to partner with the Food Bank for a number of distribution models. “We like to help our Members come up with a system that best serves their needs and the needs of the community,” said Massey. **From mobile distributions to market pantries to standing food pantries to meal programs, there is something for every type of organization looking to serve alongside the Food Bank to connect our neighbors with nourishing food.**

When asked about her role as the Club Director, Sims said, “Our partnership with the Food Bank has been a blessing. I love being able to give back to my community and love to see our kids and families. Watching our kids grow up is the best part of my job!”

For more information about becoming a Member of the Food Bank of Northeast Georgia, visit us online at: www.FoodBankNEGA.org.



Upcoming Events at the Food Bank of Northeast Georgia

- ✓ June 2024: We’re moving to the new Food Bank facility in Athens!
- ✓ June 19: Food Bank Closed – Juneteenth
- ✓ July 4: Food Bank Closed – 4th of July
- ✓ September 2024: Hunger Action Month & Food Bank Grand Opening
- ✓ September 2: Food Bank Closed – Labor Day



Dave and Evelyn Knauft

Volunteers & Donors, Food Bank of Northeast Georgia

How long have you been involved at the Food Bank of Northeast Georgia? And why did you first get involved?

We first became involved because researching food production and improving plant genetics was Dave's profession. He taught many college students how to grow food. At UGA, he delivered canned goods donated by students and faculty to the Food Bank, and — in his classes — the students who grew fresh organic foods donated them to the Food Bank. In addition to these activities, we felt it was important to donate money to the Food Bank. In 2022, Kelly Klein gave us a tour of the existing facility; in 2023, she showed us the nearly completed new Food Bank. What a difference the additional space will make! Kelly mentioned that we could sign up to help sort food or assist with boxing and bagging events. As retirees, we have time to volunteer during the day and wanted to do more than just give money.

What is something you enjoy about your service with the Food Bank?

Helping box food for even one hour means that neighbors in the area will have nutritious food so that they can eat well and thrive. Volunteer time is well used, as all the food, boxes, menus, or other items are ready to go when you show up. Other volunteers might be UGA students, high schoolers, retirees, or someone taking a break from online work at home. You may go home tired, but knowing you made a difference for many people.

How would you encourage a friend or someone in our community to get involved with the Food Bank?

It's easy to sign up online to select volunteer times. It's fun to work with other volunteers on the "assembly line," whether you are boxing food or sorting donations from grocery stores. Check out the website or ask for a tour, and you will be inspired to help!

What does a future without food insecurity mean to you?

There are many reasons why an individual or family may not be able to purchase all the nutritious food they need. Their need may be chronic or temporary, but what a blessing to have a well-organized, compassionately run organization that is there to help. In addition to distributing food, the Food Bank reduces food waste when items are donated by local grocery stores. Everything from fresh produce to bakery items to canned goods and more! If everyone has enough food every day, the world is a better place. People cannot raise healthy children or do well at school or work if they are hungry.



Emily Escoe

Partner, Fortson, Bentley & Griffin, P.A.

Board Member, Food Bank of Northeast Georgia



How did FBG first get involved with the Food Bank of Northeast Georgia?

Edwin Fortson, John "Buck" Griffin, and Upshaw Bentley, Jr., the firm's founding partners, built Fortson, Bentley and Griffin on the philosophy

of providing both superior legal representation to its clients and meaningful public service to Athens and the surrounding communities.

As a part of that public service, Mr. Bentley assisted in the founding of the Food Bank of Northeast Georgia in 1992. On a handshake, Mr. Bentley promised that FBG would (so long as the Food Bank allowed) always provide a representative from the firm to serve on the Food Bank's Board of Directors and provide legal services to the Food Bank.

What has been the most meaningful way for your business to support the Food Bank?

Providing pro bono legal services to the Food Bank. Erin Barger and the leadership team do not shy away from challenging projects if, at the end of the day, those projects further the Food Bank's mission of connecting neighbors with nourishing food.

The legal work is thought-provoking and fun, and our firm is proud to serve a role in furthering the Food Bank's mission. We are grateful to have helped provide the legal backing for the Food Bank's new facility at 890 Newton Bridge Road in Athens, which will expand the Food Bank's food distribution capacity.

What is something you would like for other members of the business community in Northeast Georgia to know about supporting the Food Bank?

The Food Bank's mission drives every decision it makes. I'm continually impressed by the leadership's focus on maximizing donor gifts to bring balanced meals to those in need. FBG's story is the story of its clients and the community. We are proud that the Food Bank is a part of our story.

Whether through providing in-kind services, donating products, or giving funds, I hope you will consider making the Food Bank a part of your business' story, too.

Investing in Our Members

Agency Enablement with Dollar General

In partnership with Feeding America and with funding from Dollar General, the Food Bank of Northeast Georgia has been establishing relationships with our region's Dollar General stores to "build agency capacity with current agencies to effectively conduct direct retail pickup." This simply means, the Food Bank is working to connect our Member organizations with a Dollar General store near them for direct pickup to support their food assistance efforts. In some cases, these stores and nonprofit members are right next door to one another. This enables more food to end up in the hands of neighbors who need it most and reduces food waste for the retailer.

"The Food Bank is engaged in food rescue from our retail partners, but we only have so many drivers and trucks. This partnership allows us to connect our Members directly to food that would otherwise be wasted," says Chris Rountree, Procurement Coordinator at the Food Bank of Northeast Georgia. "The local stores have been helpful and eager to participate, and our Members are seeing the benefit."



"We're glad to donate the food. It makes you feel good to know that you're helping people that live right here in the community," said one Dollar General employee.

Agency Enablement in Partnership with DECAL

The Food Bank is committed to supporting our Members to help them grow and impact their community's need for food assistance. Expressing our values of dignity and belonging, we want to provide our neighbors with as much variety as possible when it comes to food choices. Through a Community Transformation Grant from the State of Georgia's Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL), the Food Bank has been able to build infrastructure and invest in our relationships with early childhood learning centers and schools by providing refrigerators and freezers to some members who have "in-school" pantries. Many schools in the region have established a standing pantry that is stocked with products in partnership with the Food Bank of Northeast Georgia.



"For some Members, this is the next step in expanding what they are already providing families by being able to store and serve fresh produce, dairy, and meat. For others, this is the beginning of their work with the Food Bank to support their neighbors," said Hannah Southall, Director of Programs and Innovation at the Food Bank.

In February 2024, Food Bank staff delivered refrigerators and freezers to schools in Clarke, Banks, Hart, Franklin, Towns & White Counties. Through this initiative, these pantries will be able to provide fresh and frozen food to families in addition to the shelf-stable products that they are already distributing.



Save the Date

**25th Anniversary Empty Bowl
Fundraiser & Luncheon**
Thursday, February 20, 2025
The Classic Center

Thank You

A Special Thanks to these
Hunger Heroes:



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Vision

Every Neighbor.
With Enough Food.
Everyday.

Mission Statement

The Food Bank of Northeast Georgia
connects neighbors with nourishing food.

PO Box 48857
Athens, GA 30604
Phone: 706-354-8191
www.foodbanknega.org

Athens Branch

861 Newton
Bridge Rd.
Athens, GA 30607
706-354-8191

Clayton Branch

46 Plaza Way
Clayton, GA 30525
706-782-0780