

Food Matters

A New Way to Give to the Food Bank

The Food Bank of Northeast Georgia is partnering with FreeWill to provide a “one-stop shop” for planned giving and smart-giving options like donor-advised funds, qualified charitable distributions, and stock gifts.

Estate planning is traditionally considered complex and expensive. FreeWill is a simple online tool that anyone can use to create these important documents. All estate plans made using FreeWill are 100% legal and specifically tailored to your jurisdiction. This no-cost tool is made possible by the support of hundreds of nonprofit organizations that work on meaningful issues, like the Food Bank.

Donating non-cash assets often comes with greater tax benefits, increasing the overall value of your contribution while making a sizable impact on the Food Bank’s mission. Your gift offers a multiplying effect, increasing the Food Bank’s ability to bring both volume and variety of food to anyone in need of assistance.

At a time when help is needed most, we are grateful that you lock arms to step in and step up until we see EVERY NEIGHBOR. WITH ENOUGH FOOD. EVERY DAY.



To learn more, visit our FreeWill partner page at foodbanknega.mygiftlegacy.org.

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these stories!**

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**\$2
PROVIDES
5 MEALS!**



MESSAGE FROM ERIN OUR CEO

Building Capacity for Our Members

According to our most recent data from Feeding America, an estimated 86,000 of our neighbors in Northeast Georgia are food insecure. For us at the Food Bank, even one person facing food insecurity is not acceptable.

That is why our Food Bank team has committed to building capacity among our 228 Members — the hands and feet of our work — to connect neighbors with nourishing food. We aim to support our Members with the tools they need to reach every neighbor in their community who is seeking food assistance.

At the Food Bank of Northeast Georgia, we're committed to ensuring our neighbors have reliable access to nutritious food, and we need your support now more than ever. As you read through this edition of *Food Matters*, I ask you to think about how you could support our work as a donor, a volunteer, or even a Member. Then consider taking action. Information on all three of these opportunities is available on our website, www.foodbanknega.org.

Remember, every \$2 you donate provides 5 meals to someone facing hunger. Your compassion and generosity make a real difference in the lives of our neighbors. Thank you!

Erin Barger

Erin Barger
President & CEO

Hearing From Our Members

In 2024, the Food Bank of Northeast Georgia distributed over 15.5 million pounds of food through our partnerships with our 228 Member nonprofits. Recently, we asked our Members to share what they are most proud of regarding their food program. Here are just a few responses:

“During the 27 years we have been in business, we have never had to close because of lack of food. We are open for two hours, five days per week and are the only distributor of free food in White County with a fixed operating schedule.”

– White County Food Pantry in Cleveland, GA

“The community sees us as their family and do not feel shame in driving up to receive their needed supplies.”

– Get Real Ministries in Baldwin, GA

“Families view the pantries as a no-judgement zone and use them without hesitation. When students are not hungry they do so much better at school.”

– Banks County Family Connection in Homer, GA

“We have added more variety to the menu options over the last year. We can now provide frozen meals to our clients who live outside our hot meal delivery zone and have added two additional routes with 16 new clients being serviced.”

– Habersham Senior Center in Demorest, GA

These Hunger Heroes inspire the work of the Food Bank with their commitment to the neighbors they serve, and we are honored to support them in their capacity-building efforts.



Investing in Our Members

When our Members can connect with retail partners, everyone wins

The Food Bank of Northeast Georgia is committed to supporting our Members in ways that 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.

One way the Food Bank is working to connect our Members with food is enabling direct pickup from retail partnerships to support their food access efforts. This means a Member organization can receive donated food products directly from a retail donor (e.g., grocery or convenience store) by picking up the food at an agreed-upon time.

“This partnership allows us to connect our Members directly to food that would otherwise be wasted.”

“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, Director of Food Access & Procurement at the Food Bank of Northeast Georgia. “The local stores have been helpful and eager to participate, and our Members are seeing the benefit.”

Launching this program on January 29, 2024, the Food Bank connected 40 Member organizations with more than 90 retail donors. By June 30, 2024, Members reported over 200,000 pounds of food rescued. The Food Bank has invested in this initiative by providing coolers, freezer blankets, thermometers, scales, and food sourcing carts and bins to Members and retail donors. “Now that the program has been established, we’re trending at about 50,000 pounds



Dollar General is a retail rescue partner for a number of Food Bank Members.

of food per month being picked up by Members directly,” says Rountree.

The Food Bank of Northeast Georgia has partnerships with all of the national chain supermarkets and food retailers in our region — Publix, Kroger, Walmart, Dollar General, Target, Aldi, Trader Joe’s, Earth Fare, Fresh Market, and Big Lots — and is establishing relationships with smaller or regional retailers like Quality Foods, Food Fresh B&T, and Golden Pantry. “Growing the retail partners who are willing to participate in direct support of our Members is the biggest area for growth in Member enablement,” adds Rountree.

“We’re branching out. We’re active in all of the national retailers we have access to (in our 15 counties), so now it’s moving on to the next tier of local and regional retailers. And there are always new opportunities popping up with new stores,” says Rountree. “With new Dollar Generals being built in Barrow and Jackson, a new Aldi in Hartwell, and a new Publix in Hoschton, there is a great deal of opportunity to rescue more food. Keeping perfectly good food out of the landfill and getting it into our neighbors’ homes.”



Erica found a network of support by sharing with others. Just like her mom taught her!

Sharing Is Caring!

To Erica, it's the most important rule of all

Growing up, Erica's mom always taught her to be grateful for what she has and share what she can with others.

Erica also recalls how her mom would provide food for her family any way she could on a limited income ... even if it meant skipping a meal so her children could eat.

"Even though we didn't have much," Erica says, "whatever we did have, [mom] always shared."

This kindness has become a cornerstone in Erica's life. Now a mother, Erica wants to ensure she provides for her children, too — just as her mom would!

She never wants her children to know the pang of hunger, or to experience food insecurity. But recent financial challenges on a tight budget prompted Erica to seek out support at her local food distribution.

"There's always a way to feed my children and myself," Erica says.

Your generosity ensures Erica can do just that! When her budget is pushed to the brink, she doesn't have to worry about when or where her family will get their next meal.

Erica even extends her mom's giving spirit to her own neighbors today.

"One of the beautiful things that I love about picking up food from my local pantry is they give you an enormous amount," she says. "And I've always made bags for all my neighbors, so everybody knows me because I go and drop off food."

What would Erica and her children do without friends like you? Thank you for helping their family get by when times are tough.

Volunteers are vital to the Food Bank of Northeast Georgia's mission of connecting neighbors with nourishing food. Whether you provide administrative support, pack food boxes, or sort donations, volunteers are deeply appreciated and help us ensure every neighbor has enough food every day.

Visit foodbanknega.org/volunteers to see how you can help.