



FOOD Matters

WINTER 2021

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A Letter From the Founder

2020 was a year like no other, though that is hardly something that needs to be said. No one was unaffected by 2020, and it is evident that the pandemic has severely impacted food security. This past year, we saw an uptick in need that was unprecedented. It was unlike anything we have seen in our 28 years of service, and this increased need is far from over.

When we started this organization in 1992, we were distributing 350,000 pounds of food per year. We are now distributing up to three times that amount every single month. Feeding America has estimated that 50 million people may experience hunger due to COVID-19, and there is a 60% increase in the number of people seeking help from food banks.

We are seeing and welcoming new faces every day – people who never expected to need assistance. These are our neighbors. These are children out of school and families out of work. These are people you know and interact with daily. These are children in your child's dance class, your high school student's lab partner, your spouse's best friend, your office mates, and the people who sit by you in church. These are people you are surrounded by through every walk of life. These are the people who need your help. Though 2020 is over, the need and the situation the pandemic has created are far from over.

We are so grateful for a community that has stepped up to help us in this time of need, and we are honored to serve a community who serves us as much as we serve them.



Richard Boone
Food Bank Founder

Partner Agencies Distribute Food to Those Who Need It Most

The foundation of the work we do at the Food Bank of Northeast Georgia is thanks in a large part to our partner agencies. What is a partner agency? It is a smaller non-profit, church, soup kitchen, food pantry, senior center, or community center that helps us distribute food and get it directly into the hands of those who need it most.

“Being an agency is an opportunity to serve the community in another way. You’re helping the community the way they help you. For me, that’s what it’s all about,” says Sheila Collins, the Program Coordinator at the Athens Area Asa Philip Randolph Institute (APRI). “Working with the Food Bank is great,” she continues. “It gives me an opportunity to help those who wouldn’t ask but honestly need the help.”

At Clayton First United Methodist Church, they are serving around 114 people per month. Leisa Wall has been with the organization for 22 years. “We’ve learned to become a resource for families here, and we are trying to learn what the

community needs and connect them with those resources,” she says. “It’s a joint effort with the Food Bank — working in the community to allow those that are in need to be served nutritious meals.” Step of Faith Outreach in Lavonia, Georgia serves both seniors and children in the community. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, they were serving 75-80 children per day and 18-25 seniors per month.

“The pandemic has brought new challenges to the work our agencies are doing. There are way more people in need,” Leisa Wall states. Funding has been running low for Kids Cafe, a Step of Faith Outreach program that was temporarily shut down due to the pandemic. Though the program is starting back up, funding is still a problem. “Our income has taken a hit,” Patsy Watkins says. The school system believes that kids’ grades are falling because they aren’t getting enough food. Though funding is low, Step of Faith Outreach is working hard to make sure they can safely open their doors. Despite the programs’ temporary closure, the organization recently had a mobile pantry where they distributed more than 9,000 pounds of food to 344 families.

Sheila Collins, who also works with the Food Bank through her church, Waggoners Grove Baptist in Madison County, has experienced similar effects. Prior to the pandemic, they were feeding 70-80 kids per week; now they are having to adjust and change the way they do their work. “There is no in-person sitting and eating, just making food as they drive by. It’s a huge change, and it’s taxing,” she says.

The pandemic has been felt on all levels. We have seen the need rise, and our agencies are feeling it as well. In a typical year, we distribute more than 5 million pounds of food that we send through our partner agencies. The need is growing — it is like nothing we have ever seen before. We would not be able to properly distribute without the help of the partner agencies who help make what we do possible.



Childhood Nutrition Through the Pandemic

The pandemic has changed the way every part of the Food Bank functions, and childhood nutrition has been significantly impacted. Children are in and out of in-person schooling and doing virtual learning across the country, which presents a new challenge we had never experienced before. Our Childhood Nutrition department functions largely based on children being in school. For instance, the Food2Kids program delivers take-home weekend food bags to schools. With no Fridays in school, we had to adapt and overcome. When the pandemic first hit, our Childhood Nutrition Coordinator reached out to every school counselor in all 11 counties to see how they wanted to continue passing out bags; each county had a different strategy. Some schools handed out Food2Kids bags in addition to existing lunch bags, while others had distributions at nearby locations. Several schools placed bags on bus routes to deliver them directly to families, and some counselors even loaded up their cars. Though the numbers and plans were constantly changing, there were no gaps in our distribution. With the partnership of the school systems and the individual counselors, we were able to adapt to the constant change.



Distributing Healthy Food to Prepare Nutritious Meals

Part of our mission at the Food Bank of Northeast Georgia is to make sure we are not only providing healthy food to the community, but also educating our community on how to use these foods. To make sure those we serve have all of the information they need to properly prepare the foods they are receiving, we often hand out recipes to assist in empowering them to cook nutritious meals. Here is a tried and true recipe we have found to have great success:

Hunger Bowl 2020

The Food Bank of Northeast Georgia held our 9th annual Hunger Bowl in November. Though it looked a little different than years past, we still felt the community rally around us for a wonderful cause. **This year, a total of 370,039 pounds were collected, many of which using our newly launched virtual food drive system. We want to say a special thank you to our community for being so willing to adapt and our winners for helping us raise over 308,000 meals.**

Businesses Throughout Northeast Georgia

Overall Winner (pounds):
Athens Christian School

Overall Winner (pounds per person):
SBG

Small Business:
Classic City Orthodontics

Medium Business:
Nakanishi

Large Business:
Carrier Transicold

UGA Winners

Overall Winner (pounds)
University Housing

Overall Winner (pounds per person):
Georgia Aaron

Small Group:
State Botanical Garden of Georgia

Medium Group:
UGA Administrative Building Team

Large Group:
UGA Center for Continuing Education

Rabun Business and Community Winners

Overall Winner (pounds):
Rabun Elementary

Overall Winner (pounds per person):
Rabun County Library

Garlic Herb Butter Roast Chicken

Ingredients:

- Garlic
- Butter
- Olive oil
- A touch of lemon
- A hint of dry white wine (optional, but adds so much flavor to the meat while keeping it so juicy)
- Rosemary
- Parsley

Directions:

Not only does this recipe give you a roast chicken with flavor... it delivers crispy skin, juicy meat, and a nice dinner to go with just about any side.

The following steps make this baked whole chicken stand out from the rest!

Position oven rack so top of chicken is just above middle of oven. Preheat oven to 475°F. Lightly coat large roasting pan (about 16"x12"x3") with cooking spray. Make certain pan is large enough to provide space around chicken.

Rinse chicken well inside and out; pat dry.

Stir together all seasoning ingredients in small bowl.

Place chicken, breast side up, on a rack in pan. Coat chicken with oil, then rub with seasoning mix. Tuck wings. Pour water into bottom of roasting pan.

Roast chicken for 30 minutes.

Reduce temperature to 375°F. Continue to roast, basting occasionally and adding water as needed, for 1 1/2 to 2 1/2 hours or until pop-up timer pops up and thermometer registers 180°F. The juices should run clear with no hint of pink in meat.

Remove chicken from oven and let stand for about 10 minutes.

Empty Bowl 2021

The Food Bank of Northeast Georgia is proud and excited to announce our first ever virtual Empty Bowl event! This is a long-anticipated event, and we are incredibly excited to continue with it safely and while following COVID-19 regulations. This event will take place on March 5th. While it will look a little different than it has in the past, it will still be a lot of fun, with good food and hand-painted bowls – all for a good cause. For more details, please visit our website at www.foodbanknega.org



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Volunteering in the Age of COVID

2020 taught us nothing if not how to be adaptable. The Food Bank of Northeast Georgia has always relied heavily on volunteers; they are the backbone of our operation.

In an average year, we have enough volunteers to do the work of over 20 full-time employees. With a staff of only 28, this makes up a large majority of the work force. During the pandemic, the safety of our employees and those we serve has been at the forefront of our minds. Because of this, we felt the best decision was to halt volunteers.

We are thankful for the Georgia National Guard for stepping up and coming into the Food Bank to work in place of our usual volunteers, but a gap has still been left. If you would like to volunteer, there are still options! We have numerous virtual volunteering options and encourage anyone who is able and interested to seek out these opportunities.



For more information on how to virtually volunteer, please contact volunteers@foodbanknega.org or Tracey Massey at tmassey@foodbanknega.org

It is easier than ever to get involved!

To donate funds, please visit the Food Bank's website at Foodbanknega.org; to donate food, please visit our Athens or Clayton locations; to set up a virtual food drive, email tmassey@foodbanknega.org, and to donate time, email volunteers@foodbanknega.org. Help us make this a great year for all of our friends, families, and neighbors.

Vision

Creating a community where no neighbor experiences hunger.

Mission Statement

Empowering our community to target the root causes of hunger by providing healthy food, nutrition education, and innovative distribution methods.

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