

July 2025

# Food Matters

## You Inspire Adriana to Keep Pushing Forward

*Your support keeps families like  
Adriana's nourished*

**F**or Adriana — a mother, wife, and daughter — family has always been the center of her universe. The strong bond she shares with her family keeps her optimistic through life's unexpected challenges.

"Family is everything to us," Adriana says. "They're all so important."

But when her husband suffered an injury that left him unable to work, it was up to Adriana to provide for their family. She supported their household for years ... until her own health began to decline.

Now on disability, Adriana can prioritize her health and search for another job. But with both providers out of work, they realized it was time to visit their local food pantry for support.

"[Fresh produce] is the kind of thing that can be quite pricey at the grocery store," Adriana says. That's why she loves having access to fruits and vegetables at her local pantry. "It allows me to save that money so I can spend it on unprocessed food at the store, like chicken."



For Adriana, family comes first! But when medical issues forced her out of work, she needed extra support to provide for her family.

The pantry's fresh produce has transformed how she keeps her family nourished during this difficult time. "If you don't have your health, you have nothing. As the 'project manager' of our family, it is imperative for me to try to stay healthy," she says.

Yet, even when faced with the challenges of food insecurity, Adriana holds close a lesson that her grandma taught her: "You fall down, you get back up, and you push forward."

**With the support of her family and the generosity of donors — like you — Adriana can continue to do just that!**

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these stories!***

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# Food as Freedom

“Why is that flag only halfway up, Mama? Is it broken?”

Earlier this year, a respected world leader passed from this life, and the way he lived made us all a little more free. All across our country, flags were flown at half-staff to honor the value and impact of this life and to unify us in remembrance.

Even at a young age, our son’s question indicates that he was impressed. In the absence of this great human, our flag reflected our collective loss.

Many great lives have been honored just this way. Yet, as the President & CEO of the Food Bank of Northeast Georgia, a wonderful ecosystem of abundance, the touching tribute through our nation’s symbol of freedom, struck a different chord with me. Because we are not yet free from food insecurity.

At the Food Bank, we have received new data revealing that the “meal gap” across Northeast Georgia is expanding. Nearly 92,000 people in Northeast Georgia face food insecurity, an 8% increase in need for something as basic as food. In 2024, we had a record-breaking year of distributing 31% more food compared to 2023 — or approximately 13 million meals. Remarkably, even with that milestone in distribution, the finish line seems to have moved, not closer, but further away.

Some may consider this a moment for despair.

But thinking back to the flag at half-staff: Is the purpose of this gesture despair? No. It is an invitation to remember and to unify. In a way, it symbolizes that when one of us grieves, we all share in that grief. And in another tradition of our country, like the spirit of a medal-worthy soldier on the battlefield, we leave no one behind.

As your key partner and leader in this work, the Food Bank invites you to remember and to unify under the idea that our true moment of elevation as a nation is when we connect Every Neighbor. With Enough Food. Every Day. Will you stand with us to declare that among the inalienable rights is that food is essential and, therefore, not negotiable?

At our root, we know loving our neighbor is a truth that is somehow greater than us but invites us all in, as any gracious host does.

We thank you, and we honor your philanthropy, our love for humankind. Let’s stay this course together until freedom from food insecurity is fully realized for every neighbor.



*Terri M. Berger*  
President & CEO







# BRINGING FOOD WITHIN REACH

How the Food Bank of Northeast Georgia is Moving Forward



Increasing SNAP participation among eligible neighbors.



Sourcing more food through purchase & partnership.



Expanding capacity for our Members to increase impact.



Prioritizing our neighbors' experience with dignity & compassion.

Food insecurity is defined as the lack of access to enough food for an active, healthy life.

## RATES OF FOOD INSECURITY

### AMONG TOTAL POPULATION

USA	14.2%	48.4 million	
Georgia	15%	1.6 million	1 in 7 people
Northeast Georgia	15.3%	91,600	1 in 7 people

In Northeast Georgia, total food insecurity **increased by 29%** from 2020 to 2023.

### AMONG CHILDREN

USA	18.2%	13.3 million	
Georgia	19.6%	496,110	1 in 5 children
Northeast Georgia	17.1%	20,950	1 in 6 children

In Northeast Georgia, food insecurity among children **increased by 40%** from 2020 to 2023.

## INCOME AND SPENDING

### FOOD BUDGET SHORTFALL

	AVERAGE COST PER MEAL	AVERAGE WHAT IS NEEDED
USA	\$3.58	\$20.83/week
Region	\$3.64	\$22.74/week

In Northeast Georgia, **50%** of people facing food insecurity may not qualify for SNAP benefits due to income thresholds (130% FPL, which is \$40,560 for a family of 4).

The total household food budget shortfall is **\$64.4 million** — a 68% increase from 2020-2023.

The meal gap is **17.4 million meals** annually — an increase of 52% from 2020-2023.

*Data from Feeding America Map the Meal Gap, 2023*

# Giving Trends: Donor-Advised Funds

The Food Bank of Northeast Georgia philanthropy team wants to make your experience of supporting our work straightforward and simple.

Over the last couple of years, the Food Bank has seen a growing number of contributions from donor-advised funds (or DAFs). A DAF is a charitable investment account that a donor opens to support nonprofits, and they have benefits for both the recipients and the donors. Here at the Food Bank, there has been an increase in grants from larger national financial organizations like Fidelity Charitable and Vanguard Charitable, and smaller community foundations in the region, like the Athens Area Community Foundation.

Fundholders are able to direct their gifts to organizations they care about in their communities and receive additional tax benefits. DAF holders can establish recurring gifts, can preschedule annual gifts, and even name the Food Bank as a successor on their account.

"Fundholders at the Athens Area Community Foundation focus on growing giving for the community we all love and strive to make a high impact with their charitable contributions. The Food Bank of Northeast Georgia is a great example of an organization that makes funders feel great about their giving with their dedicated service to our community," says Destin Newfont, Donor Services Manager at the Athens Area Community Foundation.

**On September 19, the Food Bank is hosting a gathering for our DAF donors or those interested in learning more. Email [development@foodbanknega.org](mailto:development@foodbanknega.org) for details.**

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## 2025 Neighbor Survey

For the first time in our 33-year history, the Food Bank of Northeast Georgia conducted a survey of neighbors who receive support from the Food Bank through our Member pantries, meal programs, and food distributions. In partnership with Athens Wellbeing Project, the survey was representative of every county in which the Food Bank serves and had responses from over 1,300 households representing 8,195 individuals between January and April 2025.

We will be sharing the full report on September 9, and you are invited to learn more below. Here are some preliminary findings from our survey:

**75%**

of respondents  
report  
working while  
experiencing  
food insecurity

**68%**

of respondents  
report skipping  
meals or  
reducing their  
meal size  
because there  
wasn't enough  
money for food

**84%**

of respondents  
reported that  
when the  
groceries they  
purchased ran  
out, they did  
not have the  
money to buy  
more food



**FOOD BANK**  
OF NORTHEAST GEORGIA

## Nourishing Neighbors

2025 Neighbor Survey Results: A Community Breakfast

You're invited to come share a meal that matters. Join us to listen to what our neighbors say about their experiences, and explore how we can respond with collaborative and compassionate action.

**September 9, 2025**

**8:30-10:00 AM**

890 Newton Bridge Road, Athens



**Purchase  
your ticket**

**JACKSON**  
ELECTRIC MEMBERSHIP CORPORATION

