

Food Matters

Volunteers Making a Difference

We asked two volunteers about their work with the Food Bank

Volunteers are vital to the Food Bank of Northeast Georgia and our ability to distribute a record-setting 16.8 million pounds of food in 2025. Our volunteers make a direct impact sorting food, packing boxes, and even teaching cooking classes.

Joanne Baumgartner has been volunteering at the Mountain Branch since 2016. Joanne is part of the Food Bank's "Kitchenettes" who serve in the Teaching Kitchen by hosting cooking classes and supporting special events, even developing recipes for the Food Bank based on items like dried beans or fresh produce.

Pierce Roberts has been volunteering at our Athens Branch since 2024. Pierce started volunteering as a student, often bringing his friends to volunteer alongside him. Now a professional working in Athens, Pierce often volunteers on Friday afternoons after he finishes his workday.

We asked Joanne and Pierce to reflect on their experience serving at the Food Bank.



Pierce and Joanne are passionate about working to create a better community and provide food to neighbors in need.

Why and how did you get involved as a volunteer with the Food Bank?

Joanne: I've been volunteering at the Food Bank's Teaching Kitchen (in Clayton) since 2016. A friend of mine suggested I get involved because I love cooking and have 40 years of experience in education. They thought it was the perfect match for me — and it was!

Pierce: When I studied at the University of Georgia, I heard about how Athens-Clarke County faced a food insecurity problem.

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Food As Fuel

MESSAGE FROM ERIN
OUR CEO

In college I learned a hard lesson: Through high school, my first car must have been trained by Miss Manners because it provided ample notice that the fuel tank was seriously considering running low. I saw the light and viewed it as a polite gesture, but this light did not mean business.

Later, I opted for a slightly larger vehicle for safety, but Miss Manners was not available the day this vehicle left the factory. The first time its fuel light gave me notice, I was on the side of the road a few miles later.

The distance between knowing fuel was needed and being stranded was next to nothing. I didn't make this mistake again. And it was only through the help of others that I returned to the road refueled.

Here, we give a lot of thought to what it means to have a full tank, and at the Food Bank of Northeast Georgia, our Fuel is Food. And for too many of our neighbors, the distance between the fuel they must have and their opportunity to get it is still too great.

For many, our need for the fuel of food is a polite suggestion. We have every confidence that there is no need to worry. Plenty of opportunity will exist for us. But for nearly 100,000 of our Northeast Georgia neighbors, the fuel light is cause for panic, and that fear is real. A year ago, we learned that more than a third of our neighbors run on empty for an entire day or more. They go without food because there is simply not enough.

But what if an organization existed that could turn empty into enough? Could we create a world where "empty" only exists as the opportunity to take notice and share? To fill another's cup and plate? Because there is enough to go around.

What an honor it is to serve at the Food Bank of Northeast Georgia, where "What if?" transforms into "Let's go!"

As the President and CEO of this beautiful organization, thank you for fueling us with your support, your ideas, your partnership, and your willpower that we WILL get closer to Every Neighbor. With Enough Food. Every Day.

With gratitude,

Erin Barger, President & CEO



A Smarter Way To Fuel the Food Bank's Mission

Every day, the Food Bank of Northeast Georgia works to ensure neighbors across our region have access to the nourishing food they need to thrive. And today, you can help — without spending a dollar from your bank account.

By donating appreciated stock, giving from your IRA (if you're at least 70 1/2 years old), or recommending a donor-advised fund grant, you can make a tax-smart gift that powers our work and changes lives. Just \$1,000 in non-cash assets can provide 2,500 meals for neighbors experiencing food insecurity.

And what better time than tax season?

Make your smart gift today and fuel the Food Bank's impact.

Scan this QR code today ▶
or visit us online at
foodbanknega.mygiftlegacy.org



For more detailed information or to discuss the best planned giving options for your situation, we recommend consulting with your tax or estate advisor.

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Volunteers Making a Difference

Since Athens had given me such a wonderful education, I thought I could pay my gratitude forward by serving the people of the city. Having previously worked with the Atlanta Community Food Bank, a quick search introduced me to the Food Bank of Northeast Georgia.

“I love contributing directly to our community.”

What do you do at the Food Bank? Or what is your favorite volunteer activity at the Food Bank?

Joanne: I've had the pleasure of working with a fantastic group of volunteers, affectionately called “the Kitchenettes” over the years. We teach classes, help chefs out, and participate in special events and community projects. It's not just rewarding to work with kids and adults in the kitchen, but it also fosters great community bonds.

Pierce: I love to pack meal boxes at the Food Bank! Creating packages of food encourages me to think about the specific family I am helping. I also enjoy how the process brings

together a team, each relying on one another to create more than the sum of their parts.

How often do you volunteer?

Joanne: All of the Kitchenettes usually serve every Wednesday, but it varies depending on the season and what is going on. During our summer cooking camps for kids, it might be 3-4 days a week.

Pierce: At least once a month.

What is the most rewarding aspect of your volunteer work at the Food Bank?

Joanne: I love contributing directly to our community. I hope that the work I do is helping our neighbors make healthier choices and stretch their dollars for the best value.

Pierce: I find it inspiring how strangers can walk through the Food Bank doors and come together to serve a mutual cause. Meeting other people willing to put their time toward helping the community brings me hope. The resulting progress of an afternoon of work lets me leave the Food Bank knowing I've made a positive impact on my city.

It's easy to sign up for Volunteer Opportunities. Visit us online at: foodbanknega.org/volunteer.

2025 Volunteer Snapshot

April is Volunteer Appreciation Month!

In 2025, our volunteers showed up and showed out! Here's a quick look at what we accomplished together.



8,000+ Volunteer Hours
(Equivalent of 3.8 Full-time Staff)



126,551 Pounds of Food
(Average Sorted in a Month)



379,787 Meals
(Packed into Boxes in 2025)





FOOD BANK OF NORTHEAST GEORGIA

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Family Volunteer Opportunities

The best way to teach service and generosity is to model it for the next generation! The Food Bank hosts a couple of “Family Day” volunteer opportunities each year, and we’d love for you to be a part of it.

This kid-friendly time of service is geared toward providing a chance for children to serve

alongside their parents at the Food Bank in Athens. (Children must be at least 8 years old.)

If you’d like to be added to our “Family Day Interest” email group, let us know by emailing development@foodbanknega.org and write “Add me to Family Day emails!”

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/volunteer to see how you can help.