

Harvest News

A publication of



FOOD BANK OF NORTH ALABAMA

Food Bank Achieves Excellent Score on Food Safety Audit

Did you know that our walk-in freezers and refrigerators are connected to an alarm system so we know right away if the food is not being stored at safe temperatures? Did you know that our staff does a daily inspection and follows a corresponding cleaning schedule to ensure a chain of safe food stewardship? These practices, and many more, contribute to our food safety plan.

The CDC (Center for Disease Control) estimates that each year 48 million people get sick from a foodborne illness, 128,000 are hospitalized, and 3,000 die. Food safety is vitally important to us because we feed North Alabama's most vulnerable residents, including children and seniors, and we want to ensure the food is safe for them to consume.

This year, the Food Bank of North Alabama earned a high score on its AIB audit - the gold standard for food safety in the industry. We earned one of the highest scores among Food Banks in the country.

Kudos to the Food Bank's Food Safety Team! They are setting the bar high and ensuring a safe, healthy food supply for those at risk of hunger across our region! And next time you're in the Food Bank's warehouse, look up and you'll see three flags from AIB that represent our continued excellence for food safety.

Madison County Residents Donate Over 100,000 pounds of Food in Record Year



Several local letter carriers enlisted their families' assistance to transport donated foods

On Saturday, May 12th, the generous residents of Madison County donated 101,311 pounds of food to the Food Bank of North Alabama through the Stamp Out Hunger® Food Drive. These donated items will provide more than 84,000 meals for residents struggling with hunger in our area. In 2017, the Food Bank collected 38,000 pounds of food, so this year's total was a 166% increase.

"We are so thankful to the many people in our community who stepped up during the annual Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive and became part of the solution to end hunger," said Shirley Schofield, executive director of the Food Bank of North Alabama. "We are grateful for the letter carriers and the other postal service workers for this wonderful result, which couldn't come at a more crucial time. Our supplies of canned goods were extremely depleted. This will allow us to replenish the shelves of the food pantries we work with and ensure our neighbors won't be hungry. Our community came together to make this happen, to make a difference, and we are truly thankful!"

Since 2003, generous neighbors in our community have donated over 1 million meals to the Food Bank of North Alabama during this annual food drive. It helps sustain the Food Bank and its partner food pantries, soup kitchens, children's programs, and shelters, which often run low in the summer, a time when they need it most as school meal programs are suspended.

The Food Bank and our partner feeding programs, as well as the National Association of Letter Carriers, thank our community for their generosity during the Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive.



Food Bank warehouse staff gather around a tote of cans on the collection day

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The Food Bank of North Alabama is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Shoals Child Hunger Summit Huge Success



Food Bank Director Shirley Schofield gave the opening remarks

This spring, 160 people attended the Food Bank of North Alabama's Shoals Child Hunger Summit at Woodmont Baptist in Florence. The goal of the summit was to educate the community about the realities of child hunger and inspire and equip community members and local groups to become more involved in ending child hunger. The informational sessions covered a wide range of topics, from panels on Backpack programs, featuring

speakers from Center Star United Methodist Church, to advocacy training from the Alabama Food Bank Association. Each session fulfilled at least one of the Summit's three goals, which were to connect with groups interested in battling child hunger, share best practices from all existing child programs, and celebrate the work that groups in the Shoals have done to address child hunger. Their successes are easy to celebrate, considering the two counties of the Shoals have the highest Backpack coverage of all counties in our 11-county service area, with 80 percent of schools served in Colbert County and 100 percent of schools served in Lauderdale County.

The feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Florence Mayor Steve Holt opened the Summit, citing Florence's commitment to ending child hunger. Attendees loved the stories and pictures shared by our keynote speaker Dayle Hayes, president of Nutrition for the Future. She discussed the myriad ways schools are increasing meal participation and making fresh produce fun. For summer meals, Child Hunger Corps member Laurel Moffat talked to groups interested in the program, many of whom appreciated learning from peers who have experience with the program. Those who responded to the feedback survey said they gained practical knowledge and a sense of perspective regarding how many other groups are working to end child hunger.

"I have never been to an event where I learned so much in so little time," said Reginnia Roat, a summer meal site coordinator, after attending our 2018 Shoals Child Hunger Summit. Her feedback echoed that of many in attendance. The event was a great place to learn and connect with others addressing child hunger in the Shoals.

We hope that by bringing these school nutrition directors, social workers, food pantry directors, and volunteers together, we bolstered the movement in the Shoals to address child hunger.

Thank you to Red Nose Day for supporting this event, and thank you to the Alabama Dairy Alliance for sponsoring the keynote.



Food Bank staff, speakers, and conference guests gather after the Summit. From left: Laura Fincher, Laura Marbury, Shirley Schofield, Dayle Hayes, and Laurel Moffat

Welcome, Natalie

Farm Food Collaborative Co-Manager

The Food Bank is proud to welcome Natalie Bishnoi as our new Farm Food Collaborative co-manager. Natalie attended the University of Alabama in Huntsville with a focus on international trade and foreign languages. Prior to joining the Food Bank, Natalie worked in sales and marketing for the Rocket City Mom Explore Huntsville app. Natalie is a rare Huntsville native, and although she has lived in other places, will always consider Huntsville her home.

Natalie will be working with Alabama farmers, helping them obtain food safety certification and connecting them with

local grocery stores, restaurants and schools. This way we help keep food dollars local and help more Alabamians access healthy, fresh produce. She is excited to join the Food Bank staff because she is passionate about supporting farmers and people in our community.

When she isn't working in the office, delivering produce, or on a farm visit, Natalie enjoys spending time with her three children and their pet cat and hedgehog.



The Food Bank's Support of Group Home Programs Fills Vital Community Role

- 305 8th Street in Huntsville houses adults with special needs.
- The Pilot Light House of Cullman is a group home for children in the foster care system.
- Outreach Ministries of Alabama in Valhermoso Springs is a Christian-based recovery program for men.
- The Salvation Army of the Shoals in Florence is an emergency shelter for people struggling with homelessness.

The Food Bank supports each of these very different residential programs by providing a variety of foods for their residents. Residential programs offer a crucial service for the community. Often, they house individuals that cannot live with their families, either because their family is unable to adequately care for them (foster homes and in some cases or individuals with special needs) or due to addiction or mental health issues. Programs like these help ensure no one falls through the cracks. Without these programs, more people in our community would struggle with hunger and homelessness. The Food Bank serves 43 of these programs across our 11-county region.



Outreach Ministries of Alabama (OMA), a recovery program for men, is one residential program supported by the Food Bank. Each Wednesday, the residents and staff of OMA volunteer in the Food Bank warehouse.

Many of the programs send a van or bus to the Food Bank each week to pick up a mix of frozen meat, fresh produce, bakery items, dairy, and dry goods.

Great Expectations Ministries, located in Woodville in Jackson County, is an addiction recovery and halfway house for 23 adults. Often these individuals need an environment away from the factors that trigger their addictive behavior. These programs allow them to learn new patterns of behavior that enable them to again contribute to society. Great Expectations requires that residents get jobs in the area. When the residents are at work, they attend programs at the Great Expectations facility. This combination of workplace stability and a supportive group home environment helps program participants get back on their

feet. Great Expectations is one of several dozen similar programs that the Food Bank supports.

By supporting the Food Bank, donors help with both hunger crises AND with programs that help people get back on their feet.

3rd annual Legal Food Frenzy Collects Food for over 21,000 meals

Eight local law firms participated in the 2018 Legal Food Frenzy, a statewide competition that challenges legal firms to collect both funds and food items in a fierce competition against other firms. The North Alabama firms collectively donated 2,310 pounds of food and \$5,105, which equals 21,200 meals for neighbors in need. Thanks to Carr Allison, the city of Huntsville legal department,

New Beginnings Family Law, Wilmer & Lee, P.A., Progress Rail Legal Division, NXTSTEP Family Law, P.C., Huntsville-Madison County Bar Association, and US Bankruptcy Court, Northern Division of Northern District of Alabama. We appreciate your competitive spirit and commitment to ending hunger!



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