

Harvest News

A publication of



FOOD BANK OF NORTH ALABAMA

New Food Bank Partner Kierra's Hope Makes Huge Impact in Trinity, Alabama

Kierra's Hope was founded, "to do small things with great love in our community."

"We believed if we could help provide some basic needs (clothing and food), that it could alleviate some of the pressure that parents felt in trying to care for the basic needs of their children, particularly those who fell below the poverty level," said Courtney McCormick, assistant director. "In alleviating the pressure on the parents, we hoped to curb some of the abuse cases that we were seeing far too frequently in our county."

Kierra's Hope became a Food Bank partner agency over the summer. Although the food pantry has been in operation since 2009, they believe joining the Food Bank will help them expand their reach and help more people.

Kierra's Hope recently moved to a new facility in Trinity, and they serve 50-60 families on two Saturday mornings each month. Because they are located right on the county line, families come from both Morgan and Lawrence counties. The program hopes to expand over the next year. **"We hope to grow our program, not only in the number of families that we serve, but we also desire to grow relationally with those that we are already serving,"** Courtney said.

The Food Bank is proud to partner with Kierra's Hope and other vital food programs in our 11-county region.

Publix Gives Food Bank \$80,000 Gift to Support Child and Senior Hunger Programs



Thanks to Publix Supermarket Charities, the Food Bank is enhancing and expanding several programs that serve children and the elderly. The programs, funded through an \$80,000 grant, will have a long-lasting impact.



One of the primary goals of the grant is to help expand the Farm Food Collaborative's Farm to Early Childcare Education program, which connects the produce grown by Alabama farmers with local daycares and childcare centers. Farm to ECE supports local farmers and exposes young children to fruits and vegetables at an early age and encourages them to develop a taste for healthy food that will last a lifetime.

The grant also supports several of the Food Bank's mobile food pantry initiatives, including Senior Mobile pantries in the winter and spring months and then Kid's Harvest produce deliveries at summer meal sites. Both of these types of deliveries enable the Food Bank to bring nutritious food directly to vulnerable communities.

The final initiative the grant supports is the Food Bank's backpack packing program. The backpack program distributes pre-packed meal kits to schools each week that are sent home on Friday afternoons with children that might not have enough to eat over the weekend. The grant funding will allow the Food Bank to begin packing backpack kits on-site in 2019, which will allow the Food Bank to provide healthier options and reduce costs ensuring more people are served.

"We are so thankful to Publix Charities for its commitment to giving back to the community and allowing the Food Bank to better serve our neighbors in healthy, nutritious ways," said Food Bank Executive Director Shirley Schofield.

The Food Bank appreciates the ongoing support of Publix Charities and their customers. This gift is integral to supporting our mission of feeding the hungry today and creating solutions to end hunger tomorrow.

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Food Bank Survey Finds Seniors Worry About Running Out of Food

The Food Bank is always looking for ways to better serve our most vulnerable residents. A recent collaboration with Enterprise funded 18 mobile pantries at low-income senior housing facilities across our service area. We focused on distributing fresh produce, low-sodium and no-sugar added foods to ensure the senior residents had healthy, nutritious items in their pantries. The grant also included funds for a research project to learn more about the seniors we serve and how we can best meet their needs.

We surveyed more than 300 seniors receiving food assistance from the Food Bank. We asked them about their access to food, their dietary preferences, and also some of the medical issues they face. Then, Dr. Ritalinda D'Andrea Lee, analyzed the results.

Through the study we learned:

- **About 2/3 of the seniors surveyed worried about running out of food.**

- **Many of the seniors struggled with diet-related diseases: 37% have been diagnosed with diabetes, 48% have high cholesterol, and 74% have hypertension. All of these diseases are connected to what people eat, and can be managed with a healthier, targeted diet.**
- **Fruits, vegetables, and cheese were the items the seniors most wanted to eat.**

The Food Bank learned through this study that we need to continue our focus on providing healthier food through our initiatives such as the Good Food Project, mobile pantries, and produce distribution programs. Each of these can help our seniors, and people of all ages, better manage their medical issues and live fuller, healthier lives.



Food Bank Welcomes New Special Programs Coordinator

The Food Bank is proud to welcome our new Special Programs coordinator, Mary Lynn Botts. Mary Lynn joins the Food Bank after previously running a statewide produce gleaning program through the Society of St. Andrew. She is passionate about ending hunger, working with farmers, and helping volunteers become involved in serving their communities. So far, her favorite part of working at the Food Bank is distributing food at our mobile pantries and planning our upcoming Hunger Summit. Mary Lynn will oversee our summer meals and senior

programs and mobile pantries. Please introduce yourself to Mary Lynn the next time you visit the Food Bank. We are excited to have her on our team!



Mary Lynn joins the Food Bank after previously running a statewide produce gleaning program through the Society of St. Andrew.

The Food Bank's free Spring 2019 Hunger Summit is March 14 at First Baptist Church in Huntsville. Pre-register at AlabamaHungerSummit.org to save your spot.

Save the Date



Farm to School on the Rise

The National Farm to School Network describes Farm to School as a win for kids, a win for farmers, and a win for communities. As the Network's Core Partner for Alabama, the Farm Food Collaborative (FFC) couldn't agree more. Students learn how their food is grown and who grows it, and see farming as a viable career option. Farmers gain access to a wholesale market that values the hard work that goes into growing wholesome, nutritious food. Communities create and retain jobs leading to economic resilience and therefore food security. And it's working. Child Nutrition Program Directors tell us that North Alabama students are starting to ask for MORE fruits and veggies on their lunch line!

We have many Farm to School champions in our area, but we want to give a special shout out to the lunchroom managers at Cullman City Schools who have done an incredible job of increasing the variety of veggies to students, offering taste tests of fruit such as Fuyu persimmons and less common apple varieties, and talking with students about the importance of trying new foods. In November, the district received an award for Best Practices in Farm to School from the Alabama State Department of Education, and they credited their partnership with the FFC. FFC Co-Managers Natalie Bishnoi and Carey Martin were honored to attend the board meeting celebrating their achievements.

Thanks to wonderful supporters like you, the word is getting out about the FFC and our role in Farm to School. For the first time in this program's history, local school districts are contacting us to learn how they can participate in Farm to School. In early December, Natalie and Carey met with representatives from Athens City and Limestone County Schools, and both districts were eager to get a delivery of Scott's Orchard apples and cider before school let out for the holidays. Other school districts have expressed interest in the spring harvest season, and we're excited to get them started with a student favorite – fresh Alabama strawberries.



ACS LCS – Meeting with Limestone County and Athens City Schools- Will Scott, Fay Shannon, Teresa Rogers, Natalie Bishnoi, Carey Martin, and Tandy Norris

In the fall semester 2018, we supplied the following to k-12 public school students in North Alabama: 1,755 bushels of apples, 376 boxes of peaches, 37 bushels of satsumas, 31 cases of lettuce, and a few boxes each of watermelons, grape tomatoes, slicer tomatoes, cucumbers, yellow squash, bell peppers, and broccoli. We're working with Madison City, Madison County, Cullman City, Cullman County, Oneonta City, Athens City, and Limestone County Schools, but we know there are many more students to reach. If you know someone at a district not on the list, please reach out and let us know. Our ultimate goal is to ensure that every student in North Alabama has regular access to fresh locally grown fruits and vegetables, and you are the key to our success!



ACD2 – Close up of apple tasters during our 2nd annual Apple Crunch Day event



Discovery Middle – Discovery Middle lunchroom staff receiving local apple delivery



CCS – Cullman City Schools Farm to School champions Donna Avery, Tina Bates, Amy Emmert, Sabrina Yarbrough, Michelle Nix, and Terri Abbott

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Special thanks to the over 100 schools, organizations, businesses and neighbors who held food drives and donated food for the needy during the holiday season.



Would you like to help the Food Bank by volunteering in our warehouse?
 Signing up is easy! • Call 256-382-0296 • Email Sarah Bensinger at communityrelations@fbfna.org