

Harvest News

A publication of



FOOD BANK OF NORTH ALABAMA

No one wants to see a child go hungry.

There are many ways the community can help make sure all children get enough to eat. In an effort to increase our ability to feed children in need in our community, The Food Bank of North Alabama added a specialist in child hunger to its staff last August.

In her first few months at the Food Bank, Child Hunger Corps Member Laurel Moffat has been assessing child-specific programs to find any gaps. The results of her assessment are coming in, and so far, it's clear that we still have a long way to go.

In North Alabama, 60,000 children are food insecure, meaning their families struggle to provide all the meals they need to grow and learn. Not knowing where their next meal will come from, coupled with the unhealthy food they often eat instead, puts children at risk for mental and physical diseases.

As a community, we're successfully growing our programs to address this meal gap. Backpack programs have the most effective coverage, with about 60 percent of all schools in North Alabama providing much-needed meal kits to kids over the weekend. In just two years, community members and Food Bank partners have worked with schools to grow the program from 40 to over 180 schools.

However, outside of school, our hungry kids have very few options. Over the summer, just 14,000 children have access to free lunch. That's only 20 percent of the kids who are eligible during the school year. After school, coverage is even worse. Just five of our 11 counties have after-school food programs—feeding about 11,500 kids, or 15 percent of those eligible. Some families go to soup kitchens and food pantries run by our charitable partners instead. Almost one-third of the food they distribute goes to kids, reaching about 20,000 of our 60,000 hungry kids.

We're behind the rest of Alabama, and far behind the national averages, but based on the success of the backpack program expansion, it's clear North Alabama residents have the will and the resources to meet this challenge.

You can learn more about child hunger in North Alabama and how you can be a part of the solution at our upcoming Child Hunger Summit on Thursday, March 2, 2017. The one-day event is free and is open to anyone interested in ending child hunger in North Alabama. To learn more about the event and register, go to hungersummit2017.org.



CHILD HUNGER SUMMIT 2017

When:

THURSDAY, MARCH 2, 2017

Cost:

FREE

Learn more and register:

HUNGERSUMMIT2017.ORG



Laurel Moffat joined the Food Bank in August as a ConAgra Child Hunger Corps member. Originally from Syracuse, New York, Laurel studied nutrition at Cornell University. She has been nose-deep in child hunger data since her arrival in Alabama.

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Food Bank of North Alabama Selects Executive Director

Citing her vision and leadership abilities, the Food Bank's Board of Directors unanimously selected Food Bank's own Shirley Schofield to replace Kathryn Strickland as the new Executive Director.

"Selecting a person to lead any organization is a significant responsibility and yet Shirley's selection as Executive Director was an easy decision for the board. She is, hands down, the best possible person to lead the Food Bank today and into the future," Board President David Newberry announced.

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Board President David Newberry

Shirley Schofield began working at the Food Bank of North Alabama in 2014 as liaison to retailers regularly donating food to the Food Bank, eventually becoming the Food Donor Director. In this role, she increased the number of stores donating from 56 to 79.

Grocery store donations now amount to over four million pounds of food a year, an increase of 24%, a credit to Shirley's spirited efforts.

Her deep knowledge of food safety, operational rigor and overall leadership was responsible for the Food Bank earning the nation's highest food safety score last year among all food banks.

Shirley is passionate about the Food Bank's mission in addressing hunger in our region. "I am deeply honored to serve as the Executive Director of the Food Bank of North Alabama and lead the Food Bank's committed staff in its vital work to help those in need," she said. "We are lucky to be part of such a caring and giving community that supports our efforts to fight hunger."

Despite her many experiences across the country, Shirley's roots are right here in Alabama, and she is a graduate of Auburn University. "I have a personal and vested stake in alleviating hunger in our great state," Shirley said.

Fellowship Presbyterian Feeds Neighbors

The Food Bank of North Alabama proudly supports the wonderful programs of our 240 regional partners. One such partner is Fellowship Presbyterian Church's food program.

The church's first food program launched in 2010 after investigating better ways they could be of assistance to their community. "Our research had found that many families who received financial assistance at the beginning of the month had used all of their food by the third week of the month," said former ministry director Joyce Pettis Temple. "There were children in many of these families. A food distribution effort began in order to help bridge the gap until the first of the month."

At Fellowship's first food distribution, the church fed 17 young families with small children. The program has steadily grown ever since. Throughout 2016, the church consistently provided food to 94 people each month and often exceeded that number.

Long-time volunteer Dorothy Johnson works throughout the month gathering food for distribution day. She procures much of her food, including fruits and



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Alabama Farmers Feed Alabama Students

Who needs Cutie oranges from California when there are Satsuma oranges right here in Alabama? Both are about the same size, from the Mandarin family, seedless, and sweet, but only the Satsumas are Alabama-grown! They are also helping to end hunger in our state.

During school year 2015-16, only 4,000 of those cases were grown in Alabama, with the rest coming from California and as far away as Japan. The Alabama Department of Education asked the Farm Food Collaborative and the state Department of Agriculture to get more Alabama farmers involved, coordinate logistics and quadruple the number of Alabama Satsumas going to our schools.

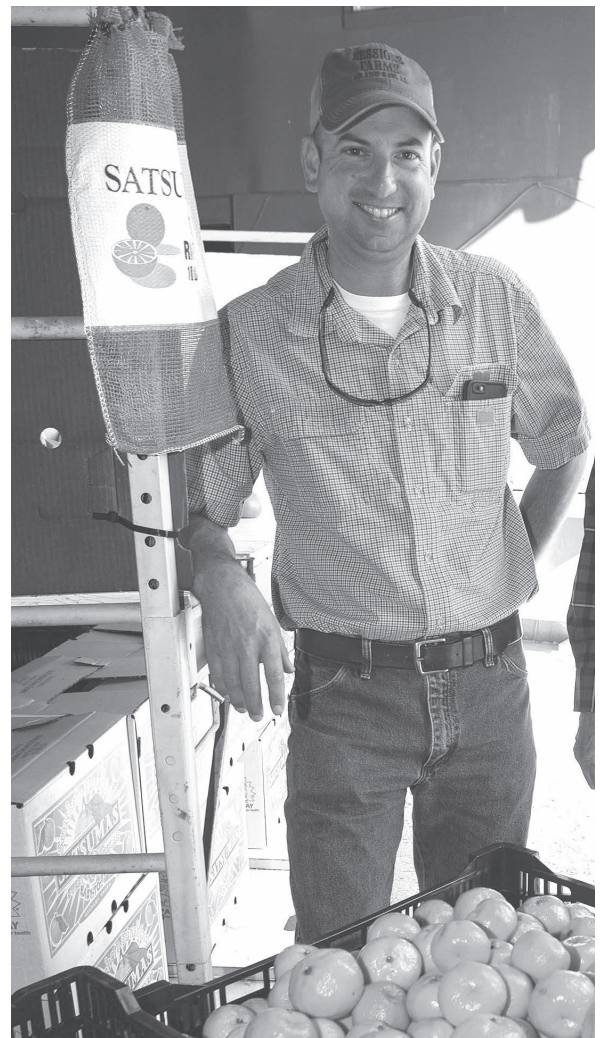
Working together, a few new farmers became Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certified and were able to sell their fruit to schools. During the current school year, 16,000 cases of Alabama-grown Satsumas have been delivered, which is a 400% increase! Our goal for school year 2017-18 is for Alabama farmers to provide 24,000 cases.

Through our work with state and local Farm to School programs, the Farm Food Collaborative helps to end hunger, supports local farmers and strengthens the local economy in these ways:

- Alabama farmers and their workers make living wages and pay taxes, which leads to less need in the community and more state revenue.
- Alabama kids who may not otherwise have access to fresh fruit and vegetables get to eat food grown in their very own Alabama dirt.

Schools with the most students receiving free and reduced lunches get the most fresh fruit and vegetables through the statewide Farm to School program, so this food is going directly to those who need it most.

We hope Alabama Satsumas make their way into the commercial wholesale market as well. If you see them in your grocery store next fall and winter, be sure to grab some – they are good for your taste buds, good for your body, and good for Alabama.



FFC farmer from Grand Bay Jeremy Sessions has been working with the statewide Farm to School program for several years and is thrilled to see it grow!

vegetables, from the Food Bank of North Alabama, the Society of St. Andrew, the community gardens of Commissioner Bob Harrison, and from generous donors. When asked why she does what she does, Johnson said, "I care because I am interested in the welfare of children and those who are in need. I want to help others in their time of distress."

Current food program director Jacquelyn Bennett added, "If we say we love the Lord, then our words and actions must match. Our faith and love of God must be demonstrated by how we treat the hungry stranger and least of these (Matthew 25:35). By feeding the hungry, God's love abides!"

Fellowship Presbyterian
Volunteers



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

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