



AGENCY NEWSLETTER

March 3, 2025



Partnership For Today

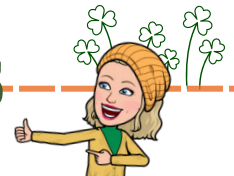


In our mission to combat hunger in North Alabama, we take great pride in collaborating with over 200 agencies, each customizing their programs to address specific needs within various demographics in the most effective way. Our agency partners contribute

unique perspectives and methods, ensuring our efforts resonate with the communities we serve. From residential programs that facilitate recovery to coordinating mobile food pantries for underserved areas, as well as backpack programs and school pantries that support entire families, our partners employ a comprehensive approach to tackle hunger and food insecurity in our North Alabama communities.

Throughout this year, we will highlight some of these remarkable initiatives, sharing your stories of creativity and resilience to inspire others. By collaborating, exchanging ideas, and learning from one another, we can address hunger in ways that align with the diverse needs of our population. Stay tuned to discover how other partners are pioneering efforts in this vital battle against hunger and how, together, we are making a meaningful difference in every community we serve.

UPDATES FOR USDA GROUPS



You talked. We shared. They listened!

This month, Kelly attended a training session in Montgomery organized by the USDA team at the Alabama State Department of Education. She not only gained valuable insights, but also participated in a roundtable discussion that allowed her to share feedback from our agency partners. Some of our recommendations were specifically about the USDA Eligibility forms.

We are delighted that they were very open to our suggestions. Not only did they listen, but they also incorporated several of our ideas into the revised forms! Notable changes include the addition of fields for County, Phone Number, and Veterans – **all of which were directly suggested by our agency partners in North Alabama.**

Additionally, recording addresses is now OPTIONAL.

Other Key Updates:

Posting Requirements:

The following 3 items are the only required documents to be posted for viewing by program participants:

- Written Notice of Beneficiary Rights
- “Justice for All” Poster
- Complaint Procedure

Demographic Reporting:

We are now required to submit your demographic reports to USDA directly. Therefore, it is imperative USDA groups adhere to the 15th of the month deadline for submissions.

Consistent failure in reporting on time may result in loss of USDA distribution status.



Complaint Procedure Forms:

We have new Complaint Procedure information available for you to print and display. These updated posters streamline the process for program participants and include a Spanish version as well. Please send a completed copy to Amanda or Kelly, ensuring that your organization's information is filled out.



We've made a change! Starting now, you'll receive our newsletters in the first week of each month instead of the last day.

Updated forms can be printed from our Agency Zone website or picked up during your scheduled warehouse appointment.

DEMOGRAPHIC REPORTING

Submit February's Distributions by March 15th!

PAC ANNOUNCEMENT

Change of plans... Introduction of our first Partner Advisory Council will be in our March edition!

stay tuned...



Succession planning is essential for future success. I often hear from groups struggling to find someone to take the lead. So, what can we do? Begin early. Start small.

The concept of "Taking Over" can feel overwhelming, especially if it's expressed that outgoing pantry leaders receive no assistance. To gather insights, I reached out to experts – directors from agency partners with successful volunteer bases and future plans.

Two recurring themes emerged from these discussions: Be Intentional. Be Specific.

Be Intentional about your vision, outreach, and plans. Just like our neighbors who rely on food assistance, potential volunteers appreciate consistency and clear communication regarding the when, where, and why. Clearly defined roles, schedules, and training make it easier for individuals to show up when you need them.

Be Specific about your needs for donations and assistance. Vague requests can be confusing or convey uncertainty. When seeking donations, identify a particular pantry staple you frequently use; this way, even if there isn't an immediate need for that item, you can maintain a steady supply for future use.

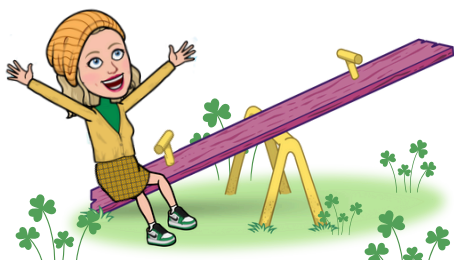


When recruiting volunteers, break down your requests into specific dates, times, and roles. If you need help unloading, specify the date, time, and number of volunteers required. Consider various roles like "welcome table," "load up league," "stocking squad," or "admin assistant of the day." It's important to offer both front-facing and behind-the-scenes opportunities, as not everyone is comfortable interacting with the public or has the physical ability to lift boxes, but many still want to contribute.

Additionally, don't overlook tasks that don't require a fixed time commitment. Some individuals may not be available during scheduled hours, but they could assist with pantry cleaning or administrative duties (*like those demographic reports due by March 15th*) on their own schedule. By breaking it down this way, you allow people to discover how they can contribute to the organization's legacy.

Too often, we cling tightly to our responsibilities, which can hinder others from stepping up. It's similar to visiting someone's home for an occasion; while you want to help, you hesitate because they have their own way of doing things. By requesting assistance with specific tasks we can encourage involvement without overwhelming ourselves or others.

Ultimately, the only way pantries will continue to thrive is through the passion that develops today in anticipation of future needs.



***"Alone we can do so little;
together we can do so much"***
— ***West Tuscumbia native, Helen Keller***