

COMMUNITY foodbank

OF CENTRAL ALABAMA

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Community Foodbank of Central Alabama

SPRING NEWSLETTER

Bold New Mission

In 1982 a small group of committed volunteers worked side by side with United Way of Central Alabama to open the Community Food Bank's doors – the very first food bank in the state. In our early years, we focused exclusively on feeding neighbors in need.

Although the Food Bank has operated for over three decades, the number of people in Central Alabama who cannot afford to buy enough food to eat has only increased.

"Today there are over a quarter million people in Central Alabama at risk of hunger. This figure is staggering," says David Wilson, Vice President of the Community Food Bank. "In addition to providing meals, we also need to address hunger's root causes so there are fewer children, seniors and families at risk." This fall, Wilson, Marketing Manager for UPS, led the Food Bank's Board of Directors through a strategic planning process. "We took the bold step to broaden our mission. Now we take a two-pronged approach to solving hunger," says George Bradford, CEO of Mrs. Stratton's Salads and President of the Community Food Bank.

New mission:

We feed people in need today
and foster collaborative solutions
to end hunger tomorrow.

We accomplish this mission by supplying millions of meals a year to a network of over 230 food pantries, shelters and children's programs in 12 counties of Central Alabama. We also operate an array of direct service programs to ensure the needs of especially vulnerable populations are met. For example, the Community Food Bank delivers fresh produce to isolated communities, provides weekend meal kits to children and supplies high-protein meals to undernourished mothers of critically ill infants.

In addition to these hunger relief activities, the Community Food Bank incubates social enterprises that promote nutrition, saves wholesome food from going to waste and tests new initiatives that go beyond charity to create healthy food access for all.

Each month we're feeding over 60,000 people at risk of hunger.

"With our new mission, we're looking forward to pursuing proactive strategies aimed at addressing hunger's root causes through collaboration across sectors and regions," says Executive Director, Kathryn Strickland. "In partnership with such an innovative, generous community, we believe we can meet this challenge and ensure everyone has the nutritious foods they need to lead healthy, active lives."



Community Food Bank Partners with Schools

Free and reduced price school meals sustain 82,000 children in Central Alabama during the week, but what happens to these students over the weekend?

This is the question we asked ourselves nine years ago after receiving reports from teachers about children arriving to school hungry on Monday mornings. In response, the Community Food Bank launched the Weekenders Backpack program that provides weekend meal kits to children on Fridays so they arrive to school Monday ready to learn without the distraction of hunger. Today, we provide meals to over 1,000 children in 31 schools each week.

Last year we asked ourselves a second question – Are we doing all we can for the children we serve? “By surveying the students in the Weekenders Backpack program, we learned that 95% of the children share the food we give them with siblings and adult family members. This led us to design an entirely new program model that would foster healthy food access for a child and his or her entire family,” said Aoife Dowd, Child Hunger Corps Member at the Community Food Bank.

Thanks to the generous support from the Morgan Stanley Foundation, Feeding America and the Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham, the Community Food Bank was able to launch the Weekenders Family Market this fall – a pilot program that provides staples like whole wheat pasta, tuna and fresh fruits and vegetables to families referred by teachers, guidance counselors and school principals. This free Market is open at school once a month at convenient times when parents are picking up or dropping off their children.

“This innovative model helps us serve more children with even healthier food options such as fresh produce,” says Jon Barnacastle, the Community Food Bank’s Programs

Coordinator. In addition to 25 pounds of dry goods, families receive 10-15 pounds of fresh produce each month.



Since the program began, the Community Food Bank has provided healthy foods to 700 children in over 300 households. These results show that the school pantry program reaches more children than we can in the Backpack program alone. The pantry’s location at school make it possible for working parents to benefit from the Weekenders Family Market. “We reached out to partner with schools because they are the center of many neighborhoods,” noted Dowd.

Kathy Tice, principal of Moody Elementary School believes the program not only helps to provide food for families in need, but also strengthens the relationship between families and schools. “Now we’re not just a school; we’re here to help... The food families are getting is of great quality and helps us create new bonds – it’s a new avenue to help our families be successful,” says Tice.

In addition to local schools, Weekenders Family Market also enlists the help of local hunger relief organizations and volunteers. Dawn Ellard, Executive Director of Shepherd Supply in Moody, sees many benefits to this new model. “It has been a catalyst for a healthier community. It has given children and families food in their bellies and built relationships. It has been a tremendous tool for impact”, says Ellard.



Volunteer Spotlight

Each year, over 1,700 people volunteer their time at the Food Bank. Dedicated volunteers help us inspect, sort and pack the food we give to children, seniors and families in need.

Led by Scott Curlings, Group Fleet Manager, employees of Enterprise Rent-A-Car have volunteered at the Community Food Bank four years in a row. Multiple times a year, Curlings brings teams of Enterprise employees to help us pack weekend meal kits for children who rely upon free meals at school. “Strengthening our communities is a core value at Enterprise,” shares Curlings.



This year, during one of their volunteer shifts, the Enterprise team made a surprise donation to the Food Bank that provided over 300,000 meals to neighbors in need! “We are thrilled to support those in our area who need a little help to reach their full potential with our \$40,000 donation to the Community Food Bank of Central Alabama,” says Curlings. “And through our ongoing volunteerism, we see the impact of our donation first hand.”

This extraordinary generosity gained national attention when our photo of local Enterprise employees volunteering at the Community Food Bank flashed across the screen at the People’s Choice Awards!



Partner Spotlight

During their careers in nursing, Jim and Linda Jones cared for thousands of sick people around the world on several continents. In 2011, the Joneses decided to help children in their own backyard. They provided 40 weekend meal kits to children at risk of hunger at a neighborhood school. The next week teachers asked for over 100 bags of food – then 200, 300, and 400 plus. The Joneses soon realized they needed partners to help meet the need they saw in their own community. In 2012, they founded the nonprofit Alabama Childhood Food Solutions (ACFS) and partnered with the Community Food Bank of Central Alabama. Today ACFS provides children with 57,000 weekend food bags a year and works with 35 churches and organizations who support their mission. Last year, the Food Bank supplied ACFS with over 400,000 pounds of food to support these efforts. To build upon ACFS's success, the Joneses are now sharing how other small groups across Alabama can run impactful charitable meal programs. It is all part of their dream to see that no one goes hungry in Alabama.

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