



2021 **SPRING NEWSLETTER**

A Seasonal Publication of the
 Community Food Bank of Central Alabama

Your Generosity is a Gift to Many During These Difficult Times

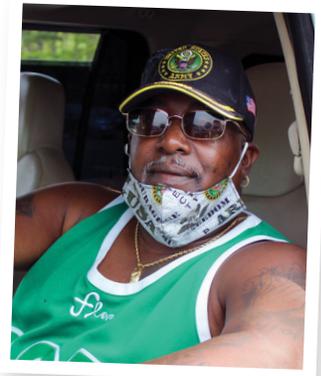
In March of 2020, life changed for everyone when the COVID-19 pandemic upended the lives of people all over the world. Suddenly, many people were without jobs and incomes, and they were unable to pay for the necessities like groceries. Every year, the Community Food Bank focuses on helping those who are struggling to afford nutritious food when, at the same time, they have a difficult time coming up with the money to pay their bills. COVID-19 has caused a huge increase in food insecurity, and with no other options, our neighbors turned to the Food Bank for assistance.



Tina is one of many affected by the Pandemic. "Our lives are just topsy-turvy right now - nothing is the same. Food, income, I mean, it's just a lot." At a recent food distribution, she was one of the many who waited in line for well over an hour to receive some much-needed assistance for her family. "We're so grateful for this ... In times of need, people are so generous."

Don is a medically-retired veteran who felt the toll COVID-19 has taken on his family. "I've lost several family members ... I have family members right now who are currently sick, and some people have had to move back to family homes ... It takes a toll." Being able to access healthy food through our mobile pantries has been a huge help to Don in supporting his family in these difficult times.

Because of donors like you, we are able to ease the burden for many people like Tina and Don. Your funds help us to purchase healthy foods, continue our many new Mobile Pantry distributions, and allow us to make sure that people aren't forced to choose between paying their rent and putting food on the table. Because of the generosity of our donors in 2020, we had our biggest year of service ever in our (nearly) forty-year history!



In 2020, the Community Food Bank of Central Alabama distributed over 21.9 Million pounds of food to over 428,000 people. That's a huge increase from serving 16.4 Million pounds to 189,000 people in 2019! Every person who we were able to serve was touched by the generosity of someone like you.

We still have miles to go in 2021 to keep up with the increasing demand to keep our neighbors healthy and fed, and we hope that you will choose to join us in that mission. Your contribution will mean more than you'll ever know to people like **Erica**, who came to her first distribution in August of last year after being furloughed from her job. Her first impression of the Food Bank is also a reflection of donors like you, "I'm so glad they can be a blessing to us."

(Learn more about how you can make a difference in the lives of people like Tina, Don, and Erica on pg. 4, "You Can Make 2021 Our Next Best Year".)

A NOTE FROM OUR CEO:



Spring is always a time for new beginnings! As the icy cold of winter melts away, the trees and flowers return to remind us of how bright and vibrant the world can be. For many of us, it felt like 2020 was the longest of winters. People needed our services more than ever, and we had the busiest year in our history, placing almost 22 million pounds of food into the homes of families who needed our help. In these acts of kindness, we can be the reminder to those less fortunate that winter does not last forever and that brighter, happier days are ahead. You, our supporters, are the reason we were able to bring a little bit of springtime to those in need. With your help, we can all come together to make 2021 another great year at the Community Food Bank! Whether you choose to donate or volunteer, know that however you decide to plant your seeds of generosity - we will help them bloom into something truly special for your neighbors in need! Here's to putting the winter behind us and charging ahead into the sunshine! Thank you for your support!

Sincerely,



Brett R. Meredith,
Chief Executive Officer
Community Food Bank
of Central Alabama

The Community Food Bank provides service for 12 counties in Central Alabama: Blount, Calhoun, Cherokee, Clay, Cleburne, Etowah, Jefferson, Shelby, St. Clair, Talladega, Walker, and Winston.

Volunteer Spotlight

YOUTH IN ACTION

When the COVID-19 pandemic caused a dramatic increase in the number of people who relied on the services provided by the Community Food Bank, we suddenly found ourselves shifting focus, hosting more contactless drive-through distributions, and packing more food boxes for our Mobile Pantry program than ever before. With an increased demand for our services, when volunteers were cleared to come back into the facility, our staff began relying heavily on the hard work of volunteers to ensure that the needs of people in our community were met each and every day. Some volunteers were retired, while others found they had a little extra time during the pandemic to give back to their community. One special group proved that even the youngest volunteers can have a huge impact.



Ngar Deighton oversees service projects for two groups: the Happy Homeschoolers and the Birmingham Homeschoolers Community (BHC) Beta Club. When she saw a story on the local news about the need for volunteers at one of our Mobile Pantries, she believed it was

a great opportunity for her students to make a difference in their community. This group of about a dozen homeschoolers (and their parents) helped staff four special distributions and have now become a regular presence at our monthly distribution in Montevallo. The Happy Homeschoolers and BHC Beta Club also regularly volunteer at the Community Food Bank warehouse to assemble the food boxes they distribute. They are a hard-working crew and seeing the impact their work has on others keeps them coming back. "The best part of volunteering is distribution day. When the truck backs up, it's the best sound. We know that the love we are about to share and receive makes all the hard work worth it," says Deighton.

Deighton also reflects on the different types of volunteers who assist the Food Bank in helping those in need. At one distribution in Montevallo, her group volunteered alongside a variety of other people: "... businessmen who took time off from work, a school for special needs children, moms and daughters from out of town ... people from all walks of life. The best part of the day was that we focused on what we had in common and what we were there to accomplish ... NOTHING else mattered! We were united through volunteerism."

The students have definitely made an impact through their service to the Food Bank, but Ngar also spoke to how the Food Bank has given back to them: "The biggest and most unexpected impact is how much fun we have while working and how fulfilled we are afterwards. The parents and kids are equally eager for the next time we can volunteer."

If you would like to get involved with our volunteer program, please visit us online at www.feedingal.org/volunteer or email us at volunteer@feedingal.org.

AGENCY SPOTLIGHT: RACE AGAINST THE CLOCK

Our Partner Agencies are key to our mission of feeding people in need and collaborating toward ending hunger in Central Alabama. Without them, we could not reach half of the families and individuals we do every year. So, when a power outage threatened to keep Alabama Childhood Food Solutions (ACFS) in Sylacauga, AL, from being able to serve their clients – the Community Food Bank stepped up to provide a solution.

Last fall, in the early morning hours, tropical storm Zeta made its way through Central Alabama. When it hit ACFS, the power supply to the agency's drive-in freezer and refrigeration units was severed. With the temperature of the food rising every moment and no generator available, the agency was in danger of losing over 12,000 pounds of frozen product. Desperate, the agency began to reach out to anybody who could help them salvage their food before time ran out. Without hesitation, the Community Food Bank sent two employees and a freezer truck to Sylacauga. With flashlights and sheer determination, the Community Food Bank employees and ACFS volunteers quickly loaded the endangered product onto the refrigerated truck and let them keep the truck for 5 days; the product was saved and people were served.

Jim Jones, the director of Alabama Childhood Food Solutions, said: "Because the Food Bank cared so much,

21,000 pounds of assorted products were saved from being ruined. Over 750 families received food five days after the power outage as if nothing had ever happened."

In the past year, ACFS increased food distribution by over 40%, which includes 750 families receiving around 80 pounds monthly and over 1,900 kids receiving a weekend "backpack" full of food each week. During the summer of 2020, ACFS experienced a major increase in community need, and they were able to serve 20% more children than was previously possible.

The Community Food Bank and Alabama Childhood Food Solutions: partners in our mission to **feed people in need today and foster collaborative solutions to end hunger tomorrow.**



A Very Cool Expansion

On January 21st, the Community Food Bank hosted a ribbon cutting ceremony – led by CEO, Brett R. Meredith – to celebrate the completion of the new refrigerated cooler and freezer expansion in our warehouse. The Food Bank immediately put this new home for fresh and frozen meat, dairy, and fresh and frozen produce to good use. In 2020, we increased our food distribution to unique individuals by 126%, without any increase in storage. While we were already outgrowing our cold storage capacity long before the COVID-19 pandemic, this sharp rise in demand created a dire need for more cold storage space. This expansion increases the Community Food Bank's cold storage capacity by 305%, adding space for 226 additional pallet spaces. Before this expansion, there was capacity for just 74 pallets in cold storage.

With this new cooler and freezer, the Community Food Bank will not have to outsource any cold storage, saving us around \$36,000 a year in fees. This will help the Community Food Bank's ability to store and distribute more fresh and frozen food, in a greater variety, to the communities we serve.

Because of donors like you and corporate sponsors, we are continuing to serve more and more people every day!

The Community Food Bank thanks the following donors for making our new addition possible: Jefferson County CARES Grant, Feeding America, Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham, Publix, The Daniel Foundation, Valley National Bank, and Honda Manufacturing.

If you are interested in making a charitable gift to help the Food Bank continue to improve our Warehouse for the clients we serve, please contact our Director of Development, Nicole Williams, at nwilliams@feedingal.org or 205.942.8911.



YOU CAN MAKE 2021 OUR NEXT BEST YEAR

Communities all over the United States are still reeling and recovering from the devastation of the COVID-19 pandemic. You have read about the many ways that the Community Food Bank stepped up to help those in need here in Central Alabama and how the increased need for our services led to our busiest year of service ever.

Right now, there are over 230,000 families in the state of Alabama who have no idea where their next meal is coming from due to unexpected job loss, unpaid medical bills, or the expense of losing beloved family members. Many families will opt to forgo healthy food options in order to keep up with other expenses. Nearly a quarter of these people will be children or senior citizens, some of our most vulnerable neighbors.

The Community Food Bank has stepped up over the last year to increase the number of contactless Mobile Pantry distributions; expand the amount of storage in our facility for produce, dairy and meat; and best utilize our volunteers to serve those facing food insecurity in our community. Because of you, we experienced our most successful year of service in our almost 40-year history. With your help, we can continue to do the same in 2021.

Your tax-deductible donation, no matter the amount, is so important! You can help us increase our Mobile Pantry distributions, expand our ability to help our partner agencies in times of need, and grow our ability to spread acts of kindness in a world that needs hope.

Your charitable giving goes incredibly far with us – just \$1 can help us provide six meals to a family in need. Please consider the words of our CEO, Brett R. Meredith, and plant your own seeds of generosity this spring for the children, adults, and senior citizens we serve in Central Alabama.

You can donate online at give.feedingal.org, or use the enclosed slip to make your gift today!

126% INCREASE

in **unique individuals** served
in 2020: more than 428k in
2020, over 189k in 2019

259

PARTNER AGENCIES
i.e. food pantries, local food
banks, and organizations

FOOD DISTRIBUTED: 13 MILLION LBS IN 2018
14 MILLION LBS IN 2019
21.9 MILLION LBS IN 2020

1 IN 4

CHILDREN ARE FOOD INSECURE IN OUR AREA

That's more than **85,000** children
in our service area. Over **35,000**
children do not qualify for federal
nutrition aid – those who would fall
through the cracks without us.

CFB distributes an average of

697,000

lbs. of produce each month

12,000

Holiday Meal Boxes
were distributed in
2020. In 2019 we
distributed 2,400.

1 IN 6

ADULTS ARE FOOD INSECURE

That's more than **264,000** people in our service area.



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[WWW.FEEDINGAL.ORG](https://www.feedingal.org)

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