

Food Distribution Programs

MISSION

To harness and supply resources so that no one goes hungry in Central and Eastern North Carolina.

MAJOR PROGRAMS

FRESH PRODUCE PROGRAM

In August 1998, the Food Bank began a concerted effort to increase acquisition and distribution of fresh produce and reduce the amount of edible and nutritious food being trucked to landfills. More than 2.5 million pounds were distributed to families in need through our partner agencies in fiscal year 2000. Thanks to funding from Kraft and the generosity of local growers and packers, the Food Bank distributed 7.9 million pounds of fresh produce in fiscal year 2006.

MOBILE FOOD PANTRY

The Mobile Food Pantry program began in 2000 and distributes an average 2.25 million pounds of food each year. Refurbished beverage trucks serve as self-contained food pantries that provide food assistance in rural communities that lack substantial infrastructure. The Food Bank works in partnership with local sponsors like food pantries and churches to bring the Mobile Food Pantry to rural areas. Volunteers help distribute the food to people who need it. The Mobile Food Pantry distributes produce, perishables, bread, and other food items that are difficult for traditional pantries to provide. Many families who receive this food lack transportation to emergency food services. This program operates out of the Food Bank at Greenville. There are currently one tractor and two trailers serving as Mobile Food Pantries; they provide food to 33 sites in six counties and average 7,000 pounds of food at each distribution.

RETAIL RECOVERY PROGRAM

Every day, retail grocers throw out edible foods (such as meats, deli products, and other perishable sources of protein) to make room for new inventory. Changes in consumer demand and a shortage of retail shelf space contribute to this dilemma. Thanks to a partnership with Food Lion, the Food Bank and its partner agencies rescue over 5 million pounds of nutritious meats, produce, deli foods, and baked goods each year. Other grocery partners—Kroger, Lowes Foods, and Harris Teeter conduct food drives throughout the year. After a donor contributed a truck dedicated to this program, we picked up over 67,000 pounds of food a month, or 869,000 pounds total, during fiscal year 2006. The donations from our retail partners consist of high-quality, protein-rich items such as turkey, ham, and beef. The Food Bank partner agencies have expressed extreme satisfaction with these products and the demand for them is great.

SALVAGE PROGRAM

The Food Bank receives 1.3 million pounds of salvage each year. Salvage consists of dented, but safe, cans and packages with compromised labels from retail reclamation centers. Volunteers repackage and quality check these items. After internal quality control measures are followed, 98% of these salvaged foods and nonfoods are rescued and ready for distribution.

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RURAL ENRICHMENT PARTNERSHIP

At the request of its grassroots partner agencies, the Food Bank established a Rural Enrichment Partnership in 2001. The Food Bank, with its network of partner agencies, developed this project with the intention of leveraging regional resources so individual communities can effectively address issues affecting the root causes of hunger.

This project has taught the Food Bank that any group of community members on the front lines of poverty, when gathered around a table, will interact positively with one another to find solutions. In accordance with the changing conversation, these groups are now called Talking Councils.

THE FOOD BANK SEEKS TO FOCUS ON THREE KEY ISSUES:

- 1) improving the overall physical well being and social health of low-income communities;
- 2) improving the health of disadvantaged children; and
- 3) creating more opportunities for effective grassroots advocacy through the Food Bank intranet site and Talking Councils in their geographic areas. Inherent in the work of the Rural Enrichment Partnership and Talking Councils is the idea that the Food Bank cannot only address the immediate problem of hunger but also the underlying causes of hunger.

BLUE CROSS AND BLUE SHIELD OF NORTH CAROLINA KIDS CAFE PROGRAM

The Kids Cafe program is one of the nation's largest charitable meal service programs; it provides free and prepared food and nutrition education to children. Initiated by America's Second Harvest, Kids Cafe provides a safe and positive environment for school-aged children to gather after school. The Food Bank's programs are presented in collaboration with Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina. The Kids Cafe programs each have the following core components to engage both the children and their parents: academic enrichment, mentoring, nutrition education, nutritious meals, physical activity, and parental empowerment. Volunteers are essential to this program; they help with tutoring, meal preparation, enrichment activities, and mentoring.

The goal of the Kids Cafe program is to provide children, who are at risk of hunger, access to nutritious meals in addition to academic and health education in a safe, well-supervised and easily accessed environment.

BAYER CROPSCIENCE BACKPACK PROGRAM

The Backpack program is intended to meet the nutritional needs of children during non-school hours, specifically weekends and long school breaks. It targets those children who would benefit from nutritious meals. Once each week, kids are given backpacks filled with non-perishable food that can be used to meet their weekend nutritional needs. A typical pack, depending upon the Food Bank's inventory, will contain: a protein (such as beans, tuna, soup, beef stew, peanut butter, and/or soup), vegetables (such as canned spinach, string beans, etc.), canned fruits (such as peaches, pears, pineapples, etc.), and miscellaneous items (such as individually wrapped fruit juice, crackers, multigrain bars, individual boxes of cereal, pudding cups, etc.).

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