

Food Bank: Demand outweighing supply

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Donations are down while demand is up at the Food Bank of Central and Eastern North Carolina.

The economic downturn is hitting food banks hard. Supplies are dwindling and demand for free groceries is expected to continue to increase until the economy turns around.

Every Tuesday at Mount Peace Baptist Church, Bonnie Richardson fills boxes with food. She calls it a mission. Margaret Hinton, who gets a food box, calls it a lifeline.

“It just helps stretch the budget with the money I have,” Hinton said. “We don't have any other help, any other source at this time.”

“In this current economic climate, we are all seeing unprecedented numbers this year,” Food Bank President Peter Werbicki said.

Nearly 30 percent of the people helped by the Food Bank's network are children, and another 18 percent are elderly. Distribution is up 30 percent, Werbicki said, with 3.5 million pounds of food served during October.

In an average month, the Food Bank provides around 2.7 million pounds of food to nearly 900 nonprofit, community-based, emergency food programs.

Those smaller food pantries, such as the Upper Room Church of God in Christ, are struggling as well.

“We just ran out of food. We don't have anything in our food pantry now,” volunteer Myrtle Campbell said.

The Food Bank is urging people to give as much as they can, especially as the holiday season approaches.

“Sometimes we kind of run out, and I'm so thankful that they're here to fill in for us,” client Agnes Royster said.

Royster says the Food Bank helps feed her eight grandchildren.

“When I come, the children are all happy. They meet me at the car to get the bags,” Royster said.

A lot of the people who need help this year are new people, Werbicki said, those who have recently lost their jobs or have been laid off and have never sought help before.

The [Food Bank has information about how you can help](#). Meanwhile, participating Wake County restaurants are doing their part by donating 10 percent of their breakfast, lunch and dinner receipts Tuesday to the Food Bank.

Restaurants in Durham will benefit [Urban Ministries of Durham's Community Kitchen](#) and those in Chapel Hill and Carrboro will benefit the [Inter-Faith Council for Social Service](#).

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