



PHOTO BY ALESSA SCHUMER

Nourishing Teens and Fostering Community: The Good Food School Market Deepens Student Engagement

In 2012, Jen Knick, then teacher and now assistant principal at Broadway High School (BHS), noticed the snacks she bought for her students weren't enough to meet their needs. "With overwhelming support from staff and the school community, we launched a weekend-food bag program," Jen said. And over the next three years, their program expanded to serve about 30 families per week.

But weekend-food bags weren't the best solution for all students. Stigma remains a major obstacle when it

comes to providing food to teens in need.

Drawing on student feedback and successful program models from across the nation, the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank partnered with local high schools in 2019 to reimagine what food assistance for teens could look like. So, the Good Food School Market—a school-based food pantry—was born. Initially piloted at Harrisonburg High School, this pantry model was adapted for and implemented at BHS. Known locally

The Good Food School Market was engineered to meet the nutritional needs of high school students. Established in 2019, the program operates at Harrisonburg and Broadway High Schools.

as Broadway Eats, BHS' program is run by and for students.

Several student leaders and groups stepped up to help by designing outreach materials, preparing food samples to raise awareness and reduce stigma, and managing the ongoing operation itself. And thanks to a gift from Perdue Farms, the Food Bank was able to provide BHS with shelving, cold storage,

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Fueling Your Mission: Tips for Engaging Volunteers

We all love our volunteers and rely on them to live out our missions. From unloading trucks and packing boxes to managing Link2Feed intake and distributing food outdoors, volunteers help make our collective work possible!

Throughout the pandemic, we've seen increased community engagement. For example, mutual-aid networks have activated a new stream of volunteers. But even with more hands on deck and more neighbors ready to serve, national data reveals another trend: Long-term volunteer commitments are declining as one-time volunteers become the norm. This is particularly true among younger generations.

So, what can we do to step into this change, especially as volunteer burnout surges due to the crisis?

If you're interested in a training session on volunteer recruitment and management, please reach out to your Partner Engagement Coordinator.

Formalize volunteer training and orientation.

An Urban Institute study revealed that nearly 75% of organizations didn't provide adequate volunteer training. Formal orientation sessions solidify expectations: When volunteers know up front what they are to do, they're more likely to enjoy the experience and want to come back. And to simplify recruitment and reduce onboarding time, consider writing and sharing standard position descriptions.

TIP

Invest in an online presence.

Many people research charitable causes online before volunteering. Engaging community members on social media helps amplify the story and impact of your mission. What's more, sites like Volunteer Match are helpful places to post volunteer openings.

TIP

Develop remote volunteer opportunities.

Accounting, data entry, grant writing, social-media marketing, newsletter creation, and food delivery are a few tasks that volunteers can take on remotely. Maintain a list of computer-based and COVID-safe opportunities to mobilize episodic volunteers.

TIP

Partner with high schools and colleges.

Schools often have community-service requirements, so look for ways to cultivate student connections. Plus, college based-service learning organizations and/or departments can provide steady streams of eager volunteer recruits.

TIP

Communication is key. Regularly touching base with volunteers is extremely important, especially during a pandemic that's upended many organizations' policies and procedures. Wondering where to start? Look into email and social media first! You can quickly share information and activate audiences through these channels.

TIP

Thank volunteers for their contributions.

If you do nothing else, remember to *always* thank your volunteers. Providing specific praise can increase the likelihood they will continue donating their time. When possible, show your appreciation by sharing how many boxes volunteers packed, how many families their work will nourish, or how their service lightens the load for others in the organization.

TIP

Some ideas referenced above were adapted from the blog "6 Volunteering Trends to Watch in 2020," published by Volunteer U.

The Food Bank Is Turning 40!

As the Food Bank enters its 40th year of operation, we recognize and cherish the sustained effort, compassion, and care you've shown your neighbors throughout the decades. This passion adds up and proves that, while hunger doesn't quit, neither do we!

Times have changed, but three things remain the same. As a network of hunger-relief organizations, we stay committed to the following:

Stabilizing communities and lives

by providing a safety net for when times get tough



Directing resources and effort

to best meet the unique needs of our neighbors

Building community

by engaging with clients, preserving dignity, distributing sustenance, and fueling hope



As we pause to reflect, we hope you feel how valued and appreciated you are. From our Food Bank family to yours,

Thank you!

Nourishing Teens and Fostering Community

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and plenty of nourishing food—including produce and milk.

Pivoting for COVID-19: Adjusting the access model, serving more families

In March 2020, Broadway Eats was all set to launch—but COVID-19 had a different agenda. When the pandemic closed schools, Jen and teacher teams quickly coordinated biweekly home deliveries to participating families. “In March, our numbers increased from 32 to 75 families. In May, we started serving 130 families (more than 300 students),” said Jen. “Without the Food Bank’s support, we wouldn’t have been able to keep up.”

“I’m grateful that we’ve been able to help so many families throughout the pandemic,” Jen adds. “Some of our students are now working full time and doing their schoolwork at night. They’re dealing with a lot. Many are helping their families pay their bills. Thankfully, the food deliveries eliminate one worry around where they’ll get their next meal[s] from.”

Revisiting the original plan: Incorporating student leadership

BHS intends to return to a hybrid-learning schedule in February, and students have expressed excitement about moving the program forward. The vision for a student-led, stigma-free space—reserved for sharing wholesome food, strengthening relationships, and deepening student engagement—is a beacon of hope for brighter days ahead.

To Jen and her passionate crew of delivery drivers and student leaders: Thank you for re-envisioning food assistance for high schoolers and pivoting to meet the growing need head on during this crisis.



Blue Ridge Area FOOD BANK

Everyone should have enough to eat.



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Serving your
community
from one
of four
locations:

Our **VISION** is that everyone has enough to eat.

Our **CORE BELIEFS** are that hunger is unacceptable, that everyone deserves access to enough food, that food sustains life and nourishes health, and that we are called to serve our neighbors in need without judgment.

Our **MISSION** is to provide nourishing food to our neighbors in need through vibrant community partnerships and passionate public support.

Snackables

Lay the Foundation for a Bright Future

Need more cold storage and/or shelving? Looking to move to a new location or acquire a van or truck? The deadline for applying for this year's Agency Capacity Fund grant is **Friday, March 5, 2021**. We're here to support your dreams and help further your vision!

Food Bank News

We do our best to elevate local impact and innovation, but there's a world of other great ideas to draw on. Check out www.foodbanknews.org for all things new and newsworthy in food banking.

Food Finder Overhaul

We're enhancing our Food Finder Tool (also known as the "Pantry Locator") on our website to better assist clients seeking food in their communities. The updated tool will be more user friendly and accessible in several languages. Be on the lookout for more updates this spring!

TEFAP Food Sourcing Remains Strong

Virginia has been approved for another \$6.3 million in USDA commodities. Expect to see our TEFAP inventory flush for many months to come. If your agency does not currently provide USDA foods but you'd like to learn more, please contact your Partner Engagement Coordinator.