



Blue Ridge
AREA
FOOD
BANK

Partnering With Purpose

SUMMER 2022

A NEWSLETTER FOR FOOD BANK PARTNERS

A “Culture of Collaboration”: Dinner Together in Front Royal

Led by an ambitious group of women pastors dedicated to identifying and responding to community needs, a collection of church leaders decided it was time to combine their energy. First Baptist Church and Front Royal Presbyterian Church, both Blue Ridge Area Food Bank partners, are two of the four independent churches guiding this effort in Front Royal. They’ve created a network of more than 14 organizations working together to provide a centralized meal program called Dinner Together.

Growing partnerships for the community

For about 20 years, these organizations offered meals in their own spaces. But now, rather than serving meals at different locations, each church serves food on its assigned day from the same site: First Baptist Church’s Fellowship Hall. The network teams on planning, fundraising, volunteer recruitment, food sourcing, and community outreach.

Dinner Together is producing results beyond its original goals. What started as a dozen meals per service has grown to 60-100 meals, and up to 1,200 meals each month.

“Meals become a stepping stone to other services.”

—Jill Smedley, Outreach Coordinator,
Front Royal Presbyterian Church

First Baptist’s Fellowship Hall has become a well-known beacon, offering groceries to go as well. Meanwhile, Food Bank partners, Reaching Out Now, Inc., Loaves and Fishes Food Pantry, and Front Royal/Warren County CCAP



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SWAP: Increasing Access to Nutritious Food in our Network



We recognize the strong connection between hunger and health. We are committed to offering healthy, nutritious food by encouraging the adoption of a traffic light nutrition ranking system called Supporting Wellness at Pantries (SWAP).

SWAP helps promote healthy food choices by ranking foods Green, Yellow, or Red based on the levels of saturated fat, sodium, and added sugars. Food pantry guests can see the rankings and make choices that support a balanced diet.

Benefits of using SWAP

Through SWAP, your pantry can:

- Provide simple guest messaging by using provided shelf tags: **Green** (choose often), **Yellow** (choose sometimes), and **Red** (choose rarely)
- Promote health messaging, such as “diabetes friendly” or “heart healthy” to help guests identify foods that may help manage their chronic diseases
- Encourage healthy food donations from the community to increase Green foods

Respecting the dignity of our guests means giving people the ability to choose the foods that suit their family’s preferences and dietary and cultural needs. SWAP champions guest choice, without judgement, while offering clear guidance to make the healthy choice the easy choice.

How can your pantry implement SWAP?

The nutrition rankings have been added to the Agency Express ordering system. You can see the Green, Yellow, and Red rankings by clicking on the product number. This can help promote nutritious foods in your program. Talk with your local food

donors and those running food drives about donating healthy items, too.

The Food Bank started providing Agency Capacity Fund grants this year for partners to acquire SWAP. This year, four partner pantries were awarded funding to implement the SWAP system.

To learn more, contact your partner engagement manager or program manager. You can also explore these resources by scanning the QR codes with your smartphone.



SWAP Toolkit:
<https://tinyurl.com/yckmm8bz>



(Webinar) Hunger and Health United:
Promoting Healthy Food With SWAP:
<https://vimeo.com/688974232>



(Video) SWAP Training for Food Pantries:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=rsRWH2RAvCs

Source: Institute for Hunger Research & Solutions



A Focus on Nutrition Security



Have you noticed the term “nutrition security” being used more often? Where food security focuses on *having enough calories*,

nutrition security focuses on *access to enough nutritious calories*.

Lack of access to nutritious, affordable foods leads to chronic disease, poor school performance, and disparities in health outcomes.

The Food Bank continues to prioritize sourcing more nutritious, culturally familiar, and fresh foods. Produce continues to be available at no cost to our partners.

Because USDA foods make up 35% of the total food distributed through the Food Bank’s network, we are thrilled that the USDA is making health equity and nutrition security a top priority. Contact your partner engagement manager or program manager to find out more about the diverse, nutritious USDA products in our warehouses.

A “Culture of Collaboration”: Dinner Together in Front Royal

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contribute resources and food when needed. These partners help address guest needs through referrals to any of the 14 organizations in the Dinner Together network.

By focusing on more than weekly meals, these cooperating agencies can also direct efforts to other services like backpack programming and the Food Bank’s Reach program (food boxes for seniors) and to working with families without homes.

“We are all smaller churches with older congregations. There is no way we could impact the community in the way we are, by doing this by ourselves,” noted Pastor Christy McMillin-Goodwin of First Baptist Church.

Dinner Together, and the women that lead it, brought organizations together to create a stronger, more reliable safety net.



To all those involved in Dinner Together: Thank you for working together to increase your efficiency and impact in the community. You’ve provided a powerful example for all!

Read more about this partnership: www.brafb.org/blog-chew-on-this/

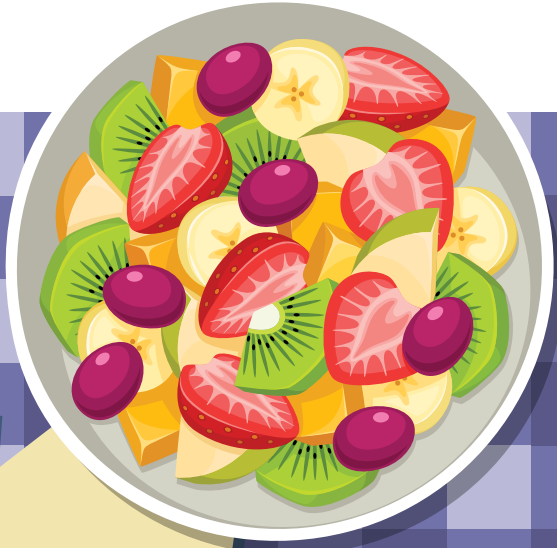


Blue Ridge Area FOOD BANK

Everyone should have enough to eat.

A member of
**FEEDING
AMERICA**

HEADQUARTERS | P.O. BOX 937 | VERONA, VA 24482



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 without judgment.

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

Snackables

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The Virginia Department of Agriculture will conduct its annual audit at the Food Bank in October. For TEFAP and CSFP (senior food box) partners, please remember to submit your monthly reporting.
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Thinking of transitioning from a faith-based organization to a 501(c)3 non-profit? Check out this video on next steps:
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www.youtube.com/watch?v=VjTefkITHqM

SCAN ME WITH YOUR SMARTPHONE



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We are creating communication tools and resources to help partners share news of their good community work. Please reach out to Les Sinclair with ideas on resources that might help your agency: lsinclair@brafb.org
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Thanks to the generosity of donors, the Food Bank will continue to waive all fees on donated food and deliveries, and discount by 25% your cost to access purchased food. Find the full statement at <https://tinyurl.com/2p839y59>. We value you and your work!
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