



Blue Ridge
AREA
FOOD
BANK

Partnering With Purpose

WINTER 2022

A NEWSLETTER FOR FOOD BANK PARTNERS

Growing Solutions to Impact Senior Hunger

About 1 in 16 (6.2%) older Virginians are food insecure, according to Feeding America's most recent Senior Hunger Study.

Among those we serve, seniors face varied and unique challenges.

These include specific dietary needs, declining health and mobility, social isolation, stigma associated with accessing food assistance, and limited options for affordable nutritious foods, especially in rural communities. And with rising health care costs and inflation now putting pressure on

fixed incomes, hunger among older Americans will rise now and in the years ahead.

With her ear to the ground in Fluvanna County, Faye Anderson is sprouting fresh solutions to better serve their needs.



Faye is a program assistant with the Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE), an educational outreach program charged with helping Commonwealth residents improve their well-being.

Enhancing food access and engagement

For the past 23 years, Faye Anderson has been working for VCE's Family Nutrition Program. In this role, she teaches limited-resource families, seniors, and youth how to make healthier food choices and become better managers of available food resources.

Most recently, Faye used funding from the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank's Agency Capacity Fund to build eight raised beds for a community garden project at the Fluvanna Parks and Recreation site in Fork Union.

"We have been able to directly engage with seniors by gardening with them, teaching them about healthier ways



Faye Anderson, above right, serves as a program assistant with the Virginia Cooperative Extension. With support from the Food Bank's Agency Capacity Fund, she has built eight raised beds for a community garden project.

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Meet John Gilbert

Chief Collaboration Officer

John Gilbert's career path has traversed political campaigning, non-profits, and a global policy role at Airbnb. Along the way, he developed strong leadership and strategic planning skills, as well as innovative thinking.

After grinding in the corporate world for a few years, John was looking for ways to apply his community engagement skills to foster deeper meaning and impact in his life and the world. We're grateful he's joined the Food Bank family as Chief Collaboration Officer. In this new role, he will help us carve a path forward in how we engage with our communities and support our partners' success.

Our editor sat down with John to learn a little more about his vision for our shared work.



"I am most excited to learn about and lean into opportunities our partners see to harness greater impact, better serve your guests, and strengthen our partnership."

"As a network, we bring out the best in each other when we share ideas, troubleshoot challenges, elevate needs, align strengths and resources, and work to build a brighter future for ALL."

Why is food banking important to you?

JOHN: We all have an individual and shared role to play in addressing systemic issues in our society. Reliable access to nutritious food is critical to the health and stability of families and communities—it paves the way for people to reach their potential. We all deserve an equal footing in life, and that starts with having enough nutritious food to eat.

I am most excited to learn about and lean into opportunities our partners see to harness greater impact, better serve your guests, and strengthen our partnership.

Bottom line: We are **stronger together!** As a network, we bring out the best in each other when we share ideas, troubleshoot challenges, elevate needs, align strengths and resources, and work to build a brighter future for ALL.

What does the future of food banking look like to you?

JOHN: The future is more collaborative, equitable, and data driven. I see an opportunity for the Food Bank to better listen to and learn from pantry guests and our partners. This will help guide how we address access barriers, acquire and provide foods that better meet their cultural food preferences and unique health needs, and uplift their voices to advocate for effective policies and resources.

Bringing together guest feedback, Link2Feed information, partners' knowledge and experience, and other data sets, we can identify where to expand and enhance services. We know those needs differ by community, and so too will the strategies, tools, and resources needed to ensure everyone has enough to eat. I look forward to embarking on that journey with our partners.

If you would like to connect with John, please contact him at jgilbert@brafb.org or 540-213-8420.

Evolving Language: From Client to Guest



At the Food Bank, we are becoming more mindful about the language we use. For example, we are now referring to food pantry and program clients as guests.

We view this slight change as a reflection of the quality, care, and stellar customer service we all strive to provide to best meet people's needs.

In short, language truly matters. It shows up in how we relate to and engage with each other. It has the power

to create welcoming environments that reduce stigma, build community, and strengthen trust by bringing our shared humanity and dignity to the forefront.

This is part of a broader discussion on how we can all provide food assistance services that meet people where they are, reduce judgement, and address access barriers.

We hope you will join us, as well as contribute to the discussion by sharing your thoughts and ideas with Tyler Herman at therman@brafb.org.

Growing Solutions to Impact Senior Hunger

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to prepare the vegetables they grew, and illustrating how harvesting vegetables is a great opportunity to increase their physical activity," said Faye.

Continuing to bloom

Faye has big plans for the garden project in the year ahead. She is engaging with 4-H to make the project multi-generational. And she is working with Agriculture Research and Extension officers to offer classes on everything from pruning berry bushes to setting up irrigation systems to starting a gardening project at home.

If your food pantry or program has unused yard space, consider planting community gardens. It could

be a budding solution to reducing local food/nutrition-insecurity, engaging your guests in food production, and cultivating community connections.

About the Virginia Cooperative Extension

The VCE's programs—born out of a partnership between Virginia Tech and Virginia State University—focus on basic nutrition, physical activity, safe food handling, and thrifty food shopping. Many VCE program assistants partner with food pantries to offer fun and engaging nutrition education programs, food preparation classes, and sampling of pantry foods.

To learn more about VCE's services and how your food pantry or program might benefit, contact your local VCE office at <https://ext.vt.edu/offices.html>.

Thank you, Faye, for being an innovator, for nourishing lives, and for sowing renewed hope!



Blue Ridge Area FOOD BANK

Everyone should have enough to eat.

A member of
**FEEDING
AMERICA**

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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

Annual Contracts Go Digital

For 2022, we are sending all our annual contracts and agreements via DocuSign. Hurray for less paperwork! Please contact your Partner Engagement Manager if you need assistance.

Agency Capacity Fund Turns Six

Need additional cold storage or technology? Looking to enhance your services to better serve your guests? Apply for an Agency Capacity Fund grant. The application opens March 4 and materials are due April 1.

Culturally Familiar Foods

We are working to source foods that best meet the preferences and needs of your guests. Have ideas to share? Contact Tyler Herman at therman@brafb.org.

Trainings on the Horizon

We are developing training opportunities to help you build your organization's capacity and capability to better serve your guests. Watch for more information in the months ahead.

Increasing Public Awareness

Thank you for helping us create more awareness about the breadth and depth of hunger in our region and about our collective impact. You have opened your doors and engaged in conversations with Food Bank communications staff and with local media to that end. Please follow us on Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter and engage with our content. Check out our newsroom for recent media coverage: www.brafb.org/newsroom.