

Ending Hunger Today
Nourishing Hope for Tomorrow





Ruth Jones Nichols

Ruth Jones Nichols, Ph.D.
President and CEO



Kevin X. Jones

Kevin X. Jones
Chair of the Board

Table of Contents

A New Tagline for a New Tomorrow	3
A Look Back on 40 Years of Feeding	4
The Evolution of Addressing Hunger..	6
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion:	
Revamping our Values.....	8
Geography of Opportunity.....	10
Refreshed Strategic Plan.....	14
A Journey of Hope	22
2025 Bold Goal	23

Dear Foodbank Partners,

Upon the occasion of our 40th anniversary, we are pleased to share with you our second public report, **"Ending Hunger Today, Nourishing Hope for Tomorrow."** This report is designed to help our organization, partners and community of supporters engage in a process of looking back and forward.

Over the past 40 years, the Foodbank of Southeastern Virginia and the Eastern Shore has reached significant milestones. Our organization has provided more than 350 million meals to individuals in our community who were facing hunger and experiencing food insecurity. Additionally, our organization has collaborated with community partners to establish and operate almost 400 robust feeding program sites for vulnerable adults and children each year. We have grown to serve 11 localities covering 4,745 square miles — making us the largest hunger-relief organization in Hampton Roads.

As we reflect on 40 years of service to our community and look toward meeting evolving needs in the future, we find ourselves at a pivotal moment. Our deeper understanding about the causes of hunger and food insecurity in 2017 informed our work — pushing us toward a more holistic model of serving our neighbors. Three years later, in the wake of a global health crisis, we shifted our focus to provide more food with fewer resources for greater numbers of people. Over the past four decades, we have evolved incrementally, but we will forever be changed as a result of the past year. Nevertheless, we will continue leading the effort to close the meal gap in our service area and commit to achieving this bold goal by 2025, while making measurable progress toward ending hunger by collaborating with community partners to address the root causes of food insecurity.

In 2017, when the Foodbank unveiled its three-year Strategic Plan, the organization presented a shift in focus from simply providing food for a person to eat for a day to engaging in actions that would build awareness about factors that cause individuals to routinely seek food assistance. Now leading with a greater understanding about the causes and consequences of food insecurity, we've taken the time to refresh our Strategic Plan and include updated organizational values, goals and priorities. The refreshed Strategic Plan "connects the dots" based on what we have learned within the last five years. Further, it builds upon our 40 years of service to ensure we, together, can make a transformational impact in our community for years to come.

Moving forward into the future, we recognize that there are disparities associated with hunger and food insecurity — disparities that have been in place for hundreds of years but have become exacerbated in the past year as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. We explore these issues in this public report by outlining the concept of geography of opportunity; discussing our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion, both internally within our organization and externally in our service; and sharing the journey of what it looks like when a person has access to tools and resources needed to succeed.

In this pivotal moment, we are grateful to commemorate 40 years of service to Southeastern Virginia and the Eastern Shore. We remain humbled by the guidance from our past leaders as well as the level of support that enables us to continue *"leading the effort to eliminate hunger in our community."* Together, with you, we are committed to ending hunger today and nourishing hope for tomorrow. Thank you for joining us in this journey and movement. ■



The Foodbank remains committed to ending hunger today for the people we serve. That's why we strive to ensure that healthy, nutritious options are available to the most vulnerable communities. With 40 years of experience, we understand that providing food for someone will alleviate the issue of hunger in that moment. However, to get individuals beyond the point of relying on food assistance, we must provide additional resources and services, and we must restore hope.

Hope — a feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen; a feeling of trust. What does hope look like for individuals we serve? It could be a single mother securing a living-wage job that allows her to provide food for her family. Perhaps it's a college student whose food assistance empowers them to focus solely on earning their degree without picking up extra shifts at their job. Maybe it's a senior whose SNAP benefits conserve enough funds for them to afford medicine needed to stay healthy.

Whatever the need, our stakeholders are putting their trust in us to move forward in ending hunger today *and* nourishing hope for tomorrow. ■

Forty years ago, a small group of individuals from the Southeastern Tidewater Opportunity Project (STOP, Inc.) of Hampton Roads recognized the issue of hunger in their community and came together to address it. With \$50,000 in grant funding from the USDA, they started the initial infrastructure. What began as a Community Food and Nutrition Program was established as a nonprofit organization and one of Virginia's first food banks just a year later. >>



1981

Purpose Statement: Serve as a regional clearinghouse in collecting and distributing unmarketable but edible food to appropriate non-profit organizations for their food programs

400,000
meals provided

73 member agencies





Mission Statement: Leading the effort to eliminate hunger in our community

Vision: A hunger-free community

Over
350 million
meals provided

200
Partner
Agencies

10 Feeding
Programs

2021

<< Since then, our organization has grown and evolved to not only support but lead the effort of eliminating hunger in our community. Through a variety of programs, services and partnerships, the Foodbank continues to expand its reach and strengthen its support to make significant impacts for the people we serve. ■



40

Years of Leadership

Cindy Creed*Executive Director, 1981–2001*

Most significant milestones: It was an exciting time starting something new. We were the first or second food bank in Virginia. It was a brand new theory that we could help people that way.

Most difficult challenges you faced? Having enough storage was a problem. We moved several times during the first few years and needed to raise money for buildings. The newness made it exciting, and the newness made us tired, but the newness never made us not want to go to work the next day.

What misconceptions related to hunger existed then? There was some thought of, if people just worked harder, they wouldn't be in this situation. It was tricky sometimes to convince people that there were real pockets of need and of no fault to the individuals that were in need.

What changes impacted the organization's evolution in addressing food insecurity? Having a network that was beginning to become nationwide was important because we had a voice out of a national office that was clear and could address things in different localities.

What were your greatest sources of food and fund contributions? The idea of a food bank was embraced readily by the local grocers. We got surplus food from the government. TEFAP was a big deal. Radio and TV were big since we had a couple drives a year. A lot of the very first members or Partner Agencies of the Foodbank were churches that were doing soup kitchens. Taste of Hampton Roads events got restaurants involved. We were getting donations through individuals, organizations and churches. There were lots of relationships being made.

**Joanne Rovner** (formerly Batson)*CEO, 2002–2015*

Most difficult challenges you faced? When I came in, we were over a million dollars in debt. My predecessor was right there from the beginning, so she took it from a grassroots effort to move things along. We were able to not only raise money to pay that debt off but also do a lot of improvements to both locations.

What were some of your greatest opportunities? To see the number of volunteers we had, people from all walks of life who were so dedicated to helping other people — it made me a better person to be around people who were so wonderful and good.

What were some of the greatest needs? After 2008 when the economy hit the dirt, people had lost their jobs and were living off their savings. One day, I was in the front office, and a man came in the door very nicely dressed. Frankly, I thought he was bringing a check to donate. I went up to him, and he broke down. He said, "This is the first time in my life I've needed your help, and I've got to get some food to feed my children." It just tore me up as it would anybody.

What were your greatest sources of food and fund contributions? Funding was everything from a lady who lived alone and stroked checks for six or more figures to many corporations that had the right leadership to understand that they were better off if their community was better off. I also introduced mass direct mail to the Foodbank and the Virginia Federation members. It was key to us raising the funds we needed along with in-person donor solicitations.

What misconceptions related to hunger existed then? The naysayers, the ones who said things could change if people would just get jobs. I'd say not if you're third generation poverty. It's almost like the conspiracy theories. That was one of the good things too, though, to be able to educate people.



Looking Back and Forward

Ruth Jones Nichols, Ph.D.

President and CEO, 2016–Present

Most significant milestones: The Foodbank of Southeastern Virginia and the Eastern Shore has achieved several milestones over the last five years — namely, the development of a new strategic plan. Our 2017 Strategic Plan prioritized feeding people today while addressing the root causes of food insecurity essential to eliminating hunger tomorrow. Through the new plan, we started to reimagine food banking in ways that would build upon our strong foundation with traditional feeding partners and enable us to collaborate with non-traditional partners, such as community colleges and workforce development providers. In addition to executing the strategic plan, we built a more robust infrastructure, which included a focus on advocacy. Finally, moving forward to establish the Western Tidewater Branch as a more holistic model for food banking marked another tremendous milestone for the organization.

Most difficult challenges you faced? Helping people understand the difference between hunger and food insecurity was one of the most difficult challenges we faced. When we understand the difference, we can then acknowledge that the potential solutions for sustained change are not the same. Facilitating change management also presented new challenges. Our work has evolved significantly in the past few years — signaling our need to evolve as an organization, team and robust network of distinct partners. It is also important to acknowledge the Farm Fresh closure and the challenges we faced, in terms of a significant reduction in food and funds from a once valuable donor and strategic partner. The most recent challenge has been the pandemic, which completely disrupted our business model but also then presented our greatest opportunities. We were forced to evolve overnight and uncover innovative ways to continue serving the community with a greater focus on some of the most vulnerable populations.

What were some of your greatest opportunities? We have a unique opportunity to create an environment where people are open to exploring disparities in food insecurity throughout our service area and ac-

knowledging the root causes of such disparities, which are often outside of the control of people experiencing hunger. Secondly, COVID presented us with unexpected opportunities. We talked for years about our evolving model and what it means to be innovative and reimagine food banking. During the pandemic, we were able to collaborate with non-traditional partners to address immediate needs. We also expanded our food distribution locations and bolstered our service delivery model through online ordering, home delivery to seniors and food hubs where support services are co-located to improve food access in places where people live or receive other assistance.

What were some of the greatest needs? Storage is still a need, but it's not just storage. We need a new Foodbank that will accommodate the new vision for food banking with space to move food in and out as well as space to offer core services and partnerships to address root causes of food insecurity. An equity lens guiding our work moving forward remains a necessity for our organization to ensure we target resources to communities with the greatest needs. Everyone should have access to healthy food, but how we achieve that goal should be tailored based on the needs of each community.



What excites you the most when considering the Foodbank's efforts moving forward? What excites me the most are the people who are involved in our movement. It's a combination of people who feel very strongly and passionately about feeding our neighbors and people who feel very strongly and passionately about ending hunger through addressing root causes. There is diversity of thought, perspective, and lived experiences within the people who have been engaged with us for years as well as new and emerging leaders in this movement. These individuals will, collectively, achieve our ideal vision for food banking in the future. They are also positioned to have conversations about the intersection of race and food insecurity or other complex social issues. Acknowledging that intersectionality is a critical step toward creating transformational change. ■

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: *Revamping our Values*

Diversity, equity and inclusion — we've heard a lot about these ideals in the past year as racial tension and social unrest has impacted our nation and our community. Businesses and organizations have committed to incorporate these values in their work cultures and to view situations and transactions through a DEI lens. What does this look like for the Foodbank?

We have modified our diversity statement to focus more intently on inclusion:

DIVERSITY STATEMENT: We believe that the ethnic, cultural, and social diversity of our service area should be reflected in our staff, board of directors and volunteers in a manner that promotes inclusion and a sense of belonging.

Moving beyond surface-level categorizations such as ethnicity, age and gender, we embrace diversity of thought and perspective that comes from lived experience of people from different backgrounds. Aspects like shared values and life experiences have a meaningful place for our DEI efforts in that our team can connect with the diverse communities we serve based on commonalities beyond social categorizations.

When using an equity lens to view our evolving work, we can focus on communities of color that have disproportionate access to healthy food,



healthcare and employment offering a living wage. The rise of food insecurity rates in our community because of the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacts predominantly African-American localities, as well as Latino populations on the Eastern Shore, both of which were already challenged with issues such as low income and lack of access to transportation. By providing services through an equity lens, we level the playing field for our most vulnerable neighbors.

Inclusion requires a reexamination of workplace culture and encouragement of healthy conversations around race. The Foodbank has established a DEI taskforce, which is now a permanent committee, to evaluate the organization's practices and policies and put forth recommendations that inspire a more diverse, equitable and inclusive environment.

We have also revamped our values to concentrate more on equity:

VALUES

Quality: We are committed to excellence in services, products and operation.

People: We will treat all people with respect, dignity and courtesy. We will work to provide an inclusive culture in which all can work and learn together.

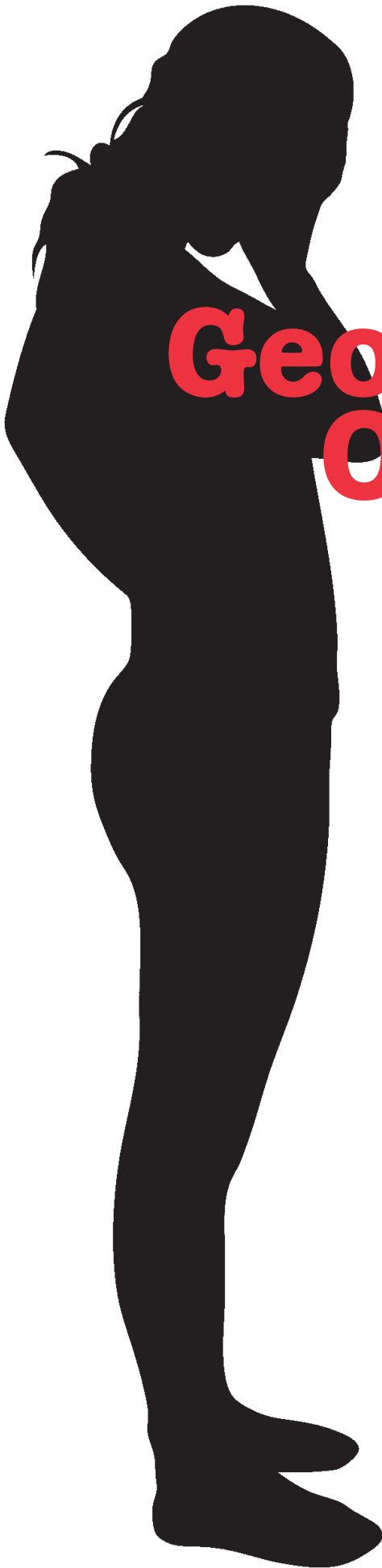
Stewardship: We will use our resources wisely, with accountability to the public and concern for the environment.

Integrity: We will be honest and fair in our dealings with others.

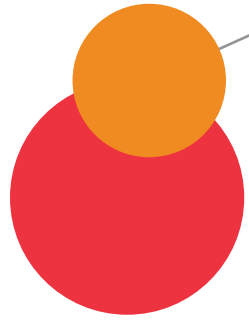
Collaboration: We are appreciative of our community partners, donors, volunteers and employees for their commitment and support.

Equity: We will encourage increased access to resources and opportunities that people or communities need to reach their full potential. ■





Geography of Opportunity



K

Kiara* is a single mother who lives in Franklin and works at a local processing plant. She works hard and is grateful to have a job, even if it means leaving the house at 4 a.m. each day for work. Her son, Vincent*, is an eighth grader who has difficulty waking up on time and getting himself fed, dressed and on the bus. When Vincent gets to school, he's usually tardy for class and disengaged because he hasn't eaten a nutritious breakfast. School administrators attempt to schedule meetings with Kiara but always during a time when she's working. A missed meeting makes her seem irresponsible, but a missed shift could be the difference between paying rent or affording groceries. Kiara is in a cycle of survival mode, struggling to afford necessities and simply trying her best to create a good life for her son.

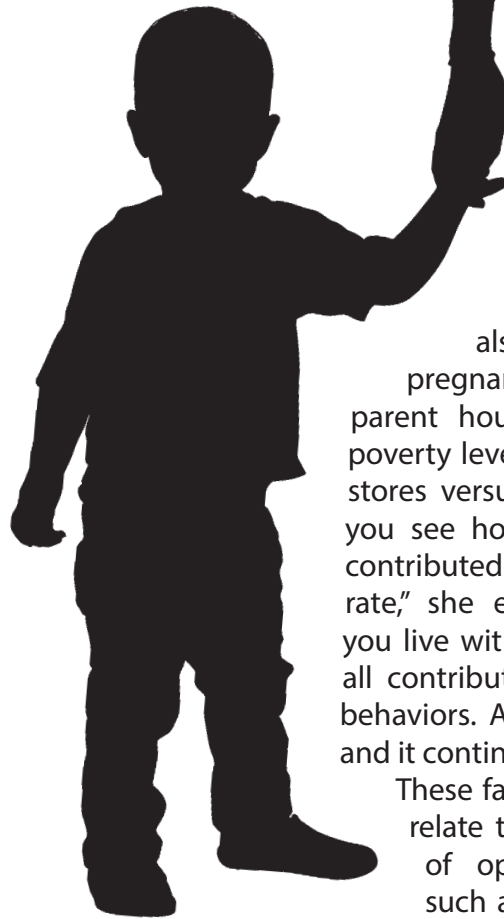
Kiara's schedule doesn't allow time to help Vincent with his homework or sign him up for extracurricular activities, so he spends most of his time on his phone or with his friends. Eventually, education becomes less of a priority and Vincent starts skipping school days at a time. He starts hanging out with friends who encourage him to get into trouble. At the age of 14, he gets a girl pregnant, and they both drop out of high school to start working. However, the stress of parenthood and financial challenges cause major disputes, and the relationship doesn't last, beginning a new cycle of single parenting in survival mode.

“

Just as specific needs aren't the same for each person to thrive, services must be holistically layered to effectively instill positive change across multiple communities.”

Retired Judge Alfreda Talton-Harris has seen this story play out time and time again. From 1992 until 2016, she served on the bench for the Fifth Judicial District of Virginia (Franklin, Suffolk, Isle of Wight and Southampton) for juvenile and domestic relations court. She often asked herself at what point the judicial system needed to intervene. “We can't cast stones upon a mom who's trying to work,” Talton-Harris explains, “and if she stays home to raise her kids, that's looked upon as a negative. She's doing what is prescribed upon her to do, but she only has the same amount of hours as the rest of us.”

In her former law practice and during her time on the bench, Talton-Harris had been acutely aware of crime and other issues happening in Franklin, but in 2014, a newspaper headline commanded her attention: “Franklin leads Hampton Roads in VSP (Virginia State Police) Crime Report.” The graphic accompanying the front-page article depicted a lineup of dark-colored figures each holding a sign with their city name, as one would hold a number in a mug shot.

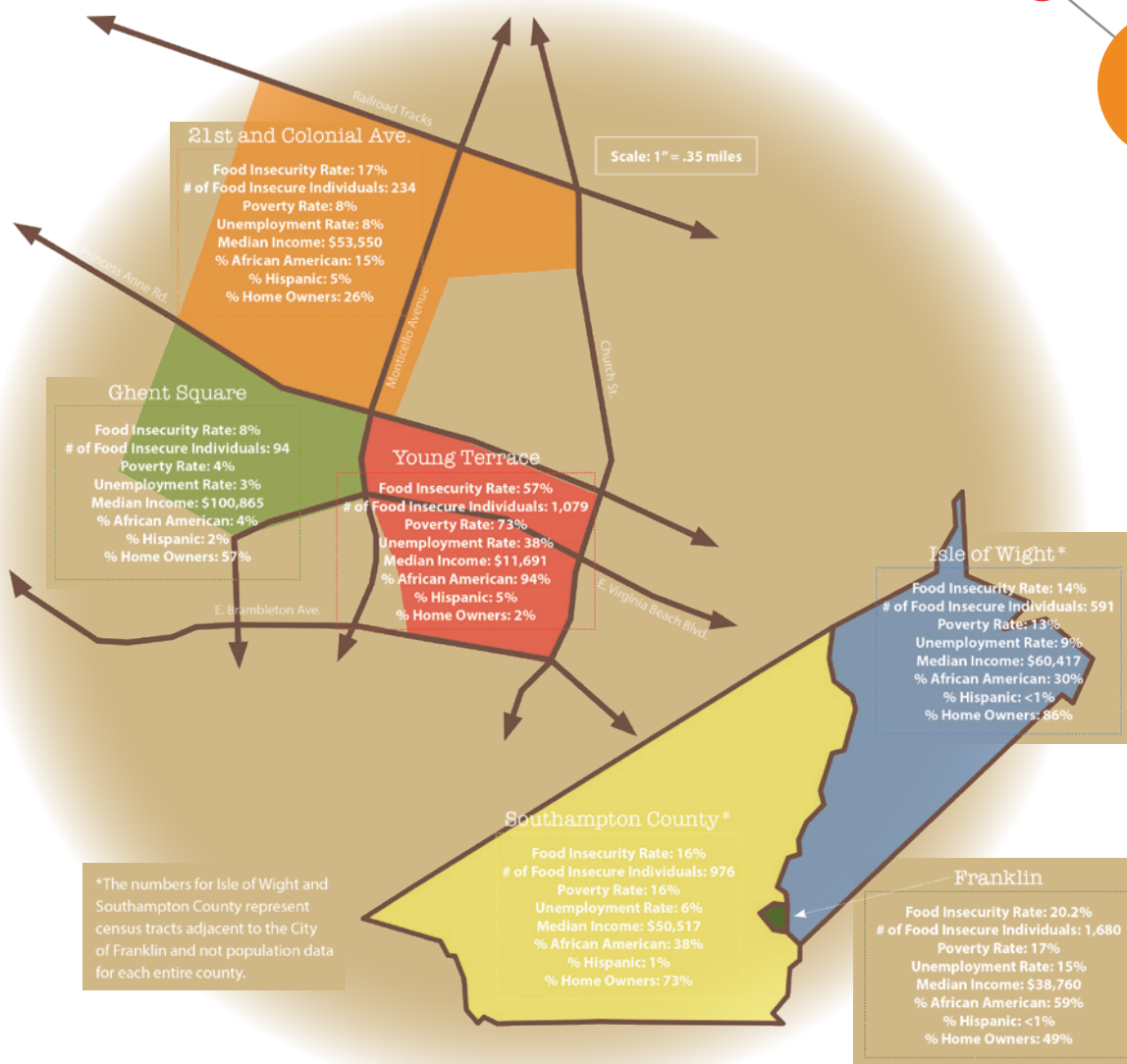


The article set her on a path to dig deeper and analyze the situation. What she found were more alarming statistics about Franklin, which was also leading in the rates for teen pregnancies, children living in single-parent households, children living below poverty level and neighborhoods with retail stores versus food stores. “All of a sudden, you see how these other negative factors contributed to a higher proportion crime rate,” she explains. “Where you live, who you live with, the pressures of how you live all contribute to obesity, engaging in risky behaviors. And then the cycle continues ... and it continues and it continues.”

These factors that Talton-Harris describes relate to an issue known as geography of opportunity whereby challenges such as food insecurity, poverty levels, crime rates and so on are all determined by location. We've heard phrases like, “pull yourself up by your bootstraps,” implying that in order to succeed in life, people should be able to elevate themselves out of their current situation without any outside help. If certain conditions are keeping someone from achieving success, however, it can feel impossible for that person to pull themselves up.

The concept of the American dream — an ideal by which equality of opportunity is available to any American, allowing the highest aspirations and goals to be achieved—is only possible if all Americans have access to certain tools and resources. Since this is not the case, it means that the American dream can be attained by *some* people but not *all* people — and much of a person's success depends greatly on where they reside.

In 2018, the Foodbank conducted extensive mapping to identify communities with high rates of food insecurity and low access to grocery stores. These neighborhoods represent the wide range of food insecurity rates in our community, even in areas that are adjacent to one another. The mapping initiative also uncovered glaring and consistent trends indicating that higher rates of food insecurity are prevalent



in communities of color. Information gleaned from Feeding America's Racial Disparities Dashboard shows that 25% of Black residents in Franklin live below the poverty line, compared to 4% of White residents. Franklin's racial inequity — which is the difference between poverty rate for Non-White residents versus White residents — is at a staggering 20.6%, compared to 10.6% for Isle of Wight County and 11% for Suffolk.

What will it take to break the cycle? Through research to understand root causes of food insecurity, the Foodbank is working to provide food access and other pertinent services in areas like Franklin through programs and collaborative partnerships. This way, additional resources and services can be layered to address disparities in access to healthy food, jobs that pay a living wage, affordable housing, reliable transportation, healthcare, financial lit-

eracy and higher education. Just as specific needs aren't the same for each person to thrive, services must be holistically layered to effectively instill positive change across multiple communities.

The disparities in certain communities are visibly detrimental, but Talton-Harris believes that the dynamics contributing to negative outcomes can be altered by intervention. "The earlier we can intervene, the earlier we can offer alternatives in the perspective and life of a child," she says, noting that parents must also be afforded self-care, personal and professional development and quality time. "You'll be able to see these positive outcomes trickle down through generations." ■

**Names have been changed*



For example, in the Foodbank's 2019 report, *Hunger and Food Insecurity: The Root Causes and Consequences*, Norfolk's Ghent Square neighborhood has an 8% food insecurity rate, a 4% poverty rate and a 3% unemployment rate. Ninety-four percent of the neighborhood's residents are white with a median income of \$100,865. Just across the street in the Young Terrace neighborhood where 94% of the residents are African American and have a median income of \$11,691, the food insecurity rate is 57% with a poverty rate of 73% and an unemployment rate of 38%. For residents living in Young Terrace, access to amenities such as grocery stores, healthy goods, healthcare facilities and pharmacies are over a mile away. Residents would have a 21-minute walk across two busy roadways.

Examples such as Young Terrace are all too common in Hampton Roads. The persistence of inequality has roots in America's racist past of segregation and redlined neighborhoods. The Urban Renewal examined the region's neighborhoods and observed that these areas had individuals who lived in high-density housing, worked part time, did not own a car, had no health insurance and did not have basic amenities such as easy access to grocery stores and healthcare facilities. Mortgage loans, housing insurance and business investments were limited in redlined neighborhoods because white leaders deemed those areas risky investments. Moreover, these areas have the highest Social Vulnerability Indices illustrating how poverty, race and food insecurity go hand in hand.

Thus, as we consider the ongoing challenges of food insecurity in Hampton Roads, we must acknowledge that the problem has its roots in our past, a past that has not been acknowledged as fundamentally unfair and discriminatory to the African American population. Not until leaders break this ongoing cycle will our region address food insecurity and the racism that helped to accelerate and institutionalize this pernicious and crippling health crisis. ■



Dr. Cassandra Newby-Alexander

Dean, College of Liberal Arts

Professor of History

Director, Joseph Jenkins Roberts Center
for African Diaspora Studies

Norfolk State University

Race and Residence: *The Intersection of Food Insecurity*

Food insecurity is a major international public health problem. Katrina McPherson's 2006 study, *Food Insecurity and the Good Bank Industry*, argues that as health and income inequalities have significantly increased since 2003, so have chronic health conditions such as high blood pressure, obesity, cancer, high cholesterol rates and depression. Income has not kept pace with food and housing prices, leaving many families choosing between a meal or a place to live. Those most impacted by these impossible choices are children who are the largest demographic living in zones of poverty and food insecurity.

Individuals in food-insecure households also live in zones of inequality restricting access to basic amenities that would guarantee a healthier living environment. Moreover, in regions such as Hampton Roads, in which racially segregated neighborhoods persist, the geography of food insecurity, race and poverty are correlative factors.

Lead



As leaders in the effort to eliminate hunger in our community, we understand the importance of spreading education, awareness and information about hunger and food insecurity in our community.

Significant attention was brought to the issue of food insecurity because of the COVID-19 pandemic. For months, people across the country have watched food bank lines stretch for miles as more individuals than ever found themselves in need of assistance.

Because food insecurity is heavily impacted by economic drivers including unemployment and income shocks, it was simple to understand why business closures and job losses impacted food insecurity by 33% for individuals in our service area and 47% for children.

One factor that wasn't as quickly distinguishable, however, is that COVID-19 has impacted people of color differently and uncovered disparities by geography. Even though the detrimental effects of the pandemic are widespread, economic factors have contributed to African Americans, Latinos and other people of color, as well as some individuals in rural communities, experiencing both unemployment and poverty at higher rates.

The issue of racial disparities contributing to food insecurity has been exacerbated and brought to light by COVID-19, but these are problems that have occurred long before the start of the pandemic. Before COVID-19, African Americans were two and a

half times as likely to live in food-insecure households as White individuals, and Latino individuals were twice as likely to live in food-insecure households as White individuals.

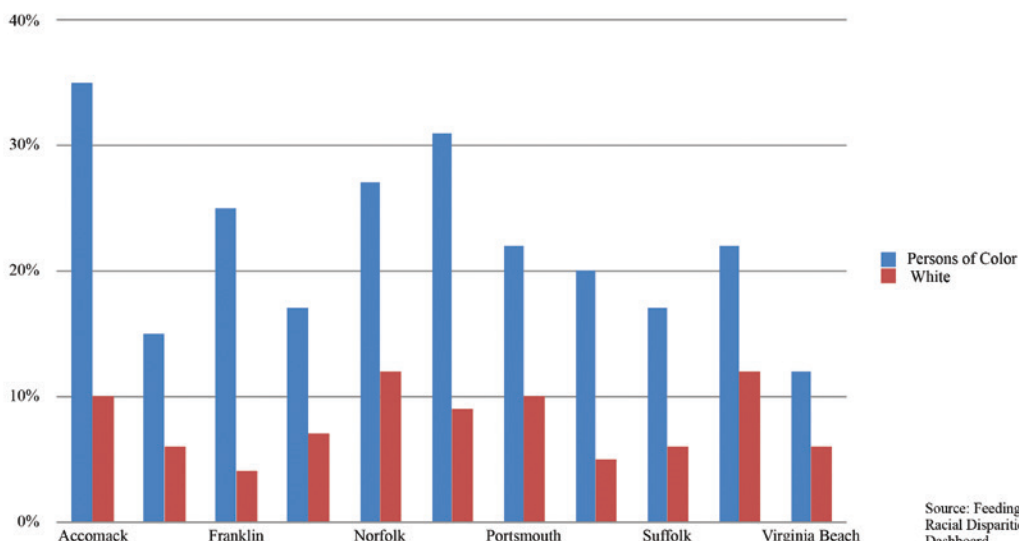
With this research and understanding in place, it is critical to educate the general public about not only the causes and consequences of food insecurity, but also the disparities contributing to a person not having enough healthy, nutritious food for their household.

Goal 1: Increase community awareness about the causes, consequences and disparities associated with hunger and food insecurity in Southeastern Virginia and on the Eastern Shore.

Goal 2: Mobilize the public to advocate for hunger-relief programs serving vulnerable adults and children.

We need individuals to share voice as well as use their own voice to help us bring education and awareness about the causes, consequences and disparities surrounding food insecurity and the individuals impacted. Take action by advocating for federal and state safety-net programs that are integral to providing food for children, seniors and families in our community. Connect with us on our social media channels and help to spread pertinent messaging to bring these issues to light. ■

Percentage of Individuals Living Below the Poverty Line



Source: Feeding America
Racial Disparities
Dashboard

Feed

Providing access to healthy food is at the core of the Foodbank's mission because we understand the critical role that nutritious meals play in a person's ability to live an active, healthy life. Children must have balanced meals in order to grow, thrive and stay focused in school. Seniors must be properly nourished to stay healthy and well. Families need access to enough nutritious foods for every member of their household.

Individuals in low-income urban neighborhoods who lack transportation and don't live within walking distance of grocery stores — or who live in rural areas and must drive more than 10 miles to the nearest store — are severely disadvantaged when it comes to accessing food. Oftentimes, however, the issue isn't lack of stores altogether but rather stores offering healthy options. Dollar stores, for example, provide basic necessities but not fresh produce, lean meats and dairy items that are needed to create balanced meals.

Through a variety of feeding programs, the Foodbank will increase access to healthy foods in communities with high rates of food insecurity and poverty, determined by data trends and extensive mapping capabilities. In addition to distributing a selection of healthy foods, the Foodbank will continue to provide nutrition education so that individuals can be armed with the information and resources needed to prepare healthy meals for their families and themselves.

Goal 3: Expand healthy food service options in underserved, low-income neighborhoods.

Goal 4: Increase access to healthy food in communities with a high prevalence of food insecurity and poverty rates.

A

Healthy Hub in Western Tidewater

Certain communities within our service area are disproportionately affected by food insecurity. For example, the city of Franklin is a predominantly African-American community where rates of food insecurity are projected to rise to 18%, which is higher than average for our service area. Challenges such as high poverty rates, low access to jobs that pay a living wage and limited transportation are all factors contributing to the need for increased food access.

In order to address food insecurity in Franklin and Western Tidewater, Obici Healthcare Foundation provided a three-year grant of \$300,000 for the Foodbank to launch a Western Tidewater Community Produce Hub that will also serve as the permanent home of the Western Tidewater Branch of the Foodbank. This two-level space will feature a marketplace, café and commercial kitchen, as well as a warehouse and distribution center. Upon the project's completion, the Community Produce Hub will serve as a one-stop shop for individuals to access healthy food in the form of prepared meals and fresh grocery options, and it will also provide Partner Agencies in Western Tidewater with bulk orders of fresh foods to distribute at their locations to residents throughout the rural region. ■





Strengthen



The Foodbank's efforts are made possible by the robust support received from individuals, businesses and groups which provide funding, food donations and volunteer time to support the organization's mission. There are many circumstances that impact the level of support contributed. Factors such as state of the economy, supply chain disruptions and critical events — including natural disasters, government shutdowns and public health crises — can all play a critical role on the pounds of food donations, the level of financial support and the amount of time volunteers are able to give. As with many nonprofits, the pandemic has taught us many lessons over its course, but it has specifically underscored the need to diversify food, funding and volunteer resources in order to scale and sustain hunger-relief initiatives.

We will pursue this goal by expanding our network of donors, considering innovative channels for acquiring food and engaging additional individuals and groups to donate time. Above all, we will prioritize responsible stewardship of any funds, food or time in order to serve the most vulnerable communities in our service area.

Goal 5: Diversify food, funding and volunteer resources to scale and sustain hunger-relief initiatives.

Goal 6: Nurture a workplace culture where employees are engaged and feel valued.

Just as it is crucial to ensure the strength and diversity of external support, it is equally important to bolster an organizational culture that allows employees to remain engaged and feel valued while carrying out the Foodbank's mission. Team Foodbank is made up of thoughtful and passionate employees who utilize their individual and collective strengths to help the Foodbank sustain services and continuously evolve to meet the needs of our community and the people we serve.

As the organization grows and evolves, so does its workplace culture. In 2019, a new role of senior director of organizational culture was established to strengthen the Foodbank's work culture in ways such as analyzing individuals' change management style, creating activities and events focused on team building and self-care, and learning ways in which team members most feel appreciated, valued and celebrated. The organization's culture will continue to be a priority in the years ahead as additional focus will be given to diversifying the team carrying out our critical mission. ■





Transform





For 40 years, the Foodbank has provided food for vulnerable populations in our community in an effort to eliminate hunger. We have heavily concentrated on the nutritious meals that individuals need in order to live healthy, active lives because we know that these are the types of foods needed to produce positive physical health outcomes.

However, giving someone access to food only meets their immediate needs. It doesn't address the underlying factors of food insecurity that cause individuals to seek food assistance for themselves or their families.

In September 2019, the Foodbank partnered with Old Dominion University to complete a research study and public report, *Hunger and Food Insecurity: The Root Causes and Consequences*. Through a mixed methods research design incorporating a series of interviews, survey questionnaire and statistical analyses, researchers recognized consistent themes that led us to identify these as five root causes of food insecurity: lack of access to healthcare, higher education, housing, financial literacy and workforce development.

Using information gleaned from this report and additional research, the Foodbank is well positioned to address root causes of food insecurity by collaborating with partners in these five realms. Access to higher education and workforce development are the most crucial factors in achieving success, and we are prioritizing these partnerships to propel individuals forward in accessing living wage careers. We believe that providing food *plus* additional tools and resources is the first step in helping individuals reach economic self-sufficiency.

Goal 7: Collaborate with traditional and non-traditional partners to promote food security and positive physical health outcomes.

Goal 8: Collaborate with higher education and workforce development partners to implement comprehensive solutions that help individuals access living wage careers.

What is a Food Hub?

A food hub is a central location providing access to healthy foods plus additional resources, such as information on affordable housing, employment opportunities, medical and legal services, education and more. The Foodbank has launched three food hubs in our service area in Portsmouth, Norfolk and the Eastern Shore. These three locations were chosen based on mapping of food insecurity rates and racial inequality data. Individuals visiting the food hubs can select items from a pantry, a farmers market and via online ordering. Food access will then be layered with other services to address root causes of food insecurity, thus ending hunger today and nourishing hope for tomorrow. ■

A Journey of HOPE

Some days, when Keisha would step up to the grocery store checkout counter, she wondered what others around her might assume. “When I took out my card, I felt like people were looking at me thinking, ‘Why does she have her hair done and she’s using food stamps?’” She didn’t understand some of the opinions she’d heard people voice about food assistance. “I’ve heard people say there should be restrictions on the types of food people can buy, like shrimp,” she says. “It’s like because you’re receiving assistance, you still can’t live, you still can’t eat.”

Keisha hadn’t always needed assistance. After graduating high school, she attended college but needed to work full-time in order to pay for it. She eventually put her education on hold and started a career as a payroll specialist.

She wanted to return to school, but she was busy with 11-hour workdays followed by helping three kids with homework in the evenings. Plus, her job provided health coverage for her children. A coworker suggested that Keisha’s family could be supported by government assistance, but this option felt uncomfortable. “I worked ... my kids weren’t going to be on Medicaid,” she insisted, until her coworker reminded her that it would only be temporary.

Keisha took a step and resigned from her position in March 2019. “It was the scariest thing I’d ever done,” she remembers, but in just a year, she earned her bachelor’s degree in accounting. She was hoping to land a position with a local payroll company, but her face-to-face interview was canceled because of a pandemic sweeping the globe. “I was so close to going back to work,” she says, “and it didn’t happen.”

Within days, the barber shop where her husband worked was closed. With the kids being out of school and home all the time, grocery bills were climbing. “Things got really tough for us,” Keisha remembers.

Their family was able to get assistance along the way. The kids’ school introduced Pandemic EBT cards, and their family was also eligible for additional Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. “Without that, we would have been struggling to feed our family of five,” she says. “It helped just knowing there are tools out there to support you.”

In summer 2020, Keisha was notified about a part-time payroll coordinator position. She was hesitant to take on a part-time role since being employed again would cause her to lose her benefits. However, she took a chance and started the new position in August 2020. Within just a few months, Keisha was promoted to senior staff accountant, a full-time position with benefits to help support her family.

Looking back over the past year — the concerns about leaving her job, looking for work during the pandemic and needing to apply for benefits — Keisha says there were three things that kept her going. One was her kids. “Not wanting them to say, mom didn’t finish school, so we don’t have to either.” Another was her husband. “When I would start stressing, he would remind me to focus on school and assure me that things were going to be OK.” Finally, Keisha kept herself going by continuing to focus on her goal. “That full circle feeling for *myself*, knowing that I did it,” she says. “I started it, and I finished it.”

It’s incredible to discover a person’s story for the first time, and it wasn’t until Keisha had joined the Foodbank in August that we had an opportunity to learn her story. Keisha also didn’t know a whole lot about the organization when she started part-time, but she began to feel like it was a place where she could belong. “When I heard Ruth talking about feeding the line and ending the line, something clicked, and I realized ... that’s me,” Keisha remembers. “Ever since I’ve been here, I’ve had a sense of fulfillment knowing the mission of the Foodbank and everything that takes place.” ■



2025 Bold Goal

The Meal Gap is the number of meals still missing after the Foodbank and our hunger-relief partners provide meals for individuals and families in our community who would have otherwise gone without food. The Meal Gap differs in each city and county we serve and greatly depends on each area's food insecurity rate and meals provided by the Foodbank in that area.

By 2025, we will close the Meal Gap for our service area and make measurable progress toward ending hunger by collaborating with community partners to address the root causes of food insecurity. ■





Foodbank

of Southeastern Virginia and the Eastern Shore

MAIN OFFICE

800 Tidewater Dr.,
Norfolk, VA 23504
(757) 627-6599
Fax: (757) 627-8588

EASTERN SHORE BRANCH

Physical Address:

24530 Coastal Blvd., Tasley, VA 23441
(757) 787-2557
Fax: (757) 787-7850

Mailing Address:

P.O. Box 518, Onley, VA 23418

WESTERN TIDEWATER BRANCH

Temporary Physical Address:

680 Oak St., Franklin, VA 23851



The Foodbank of Southeastern Virginia and the Eastern Shore is a proud member of:



Special Thanks...

to the Strategic Planning Steering Committee:

David Chase

Wall Einhorn & Chernitzer P.C. (Finance), Board Member

Emanuel Chestnut

*Tidewater Community College (Higher Education Partner),
External Stakeholder*

Steve Cook

*Hampton Roads Workforce Council (Workforce Development Partner),
External Stakeholder*

Ercelle Drayton

*Basilica of St. Mary Church (Food Pantry/Soup Kitchen Partner),
External Stakeholder*

Andre Elliott

*YMCA of South Hampton Roads (Health and Wellness, Eastern Shore),
Board Member*

Paul Finch

Finch Consulting PLLC (Operations/Architecture Design), Board Member

William Goings

Food Lion (Grocery Store Industry), Board Member

Kevin X. Jones

Dollar Tree/Family Dollar (Transportation/Logistics), Board Member

Bishop B. Courtney McBath

*Calvary Revival Church (Food Pantry Partner/Donor),
External Stakeholder*

Jessica Melton

Sentara Healthcare (Healthcare Partner/Donor), External Stakeholder

Kay O'Reilly

Eastern Shore Chapel (Food Pantry Partner), Board Member

Tonya Walley

*Cox Communications (Field Operations/Food Bank Logistics),
Board Member*

Thank you to the Marshall Advisory Group, our community of donors, partners, volunteers, board members, stakeholders and staff for your thoughtful engagement and meaningful contributions to move our strategic planning efforts forward.