TOGETHER WE CAN SOLVE HUNGER™

Food for THOUGHT

SUMMER 2022

Food for Thought: New Name Reflects New Model of Food Banking

You may have noticed the masthead on our newsletter has changed, and for a very good reason. Right before COVID changed just about everything, the Foodbank of Southeastern Virginia and the Eastern Shore had begun a journey to reimagine a new model for food banking. **For the past two years, we've been focusing on the root causes of food insecurity, such as education, employment, housing, healthcare and financial literacy.**

These are big issues that require a lot of thought, and that's the thinking behind *Food for Thought*. In these pages, we will feature, among other things, new approaches to tackling food insecurity, such as The Community Feed at Jordan-Newby. In a former library across the street from Booker T. Washington High School in Norfolk, we offer more than just food. Three times a week, our clients can shop in an environment very similar to a neighborhood market where *they* choose what foods they want. Additionally, they can also get health screenings, take financial literacy classes, and children can receive tutoring assistance.

This is just the beginning. Here at the Foodbank, we have a bold goal to close the meal gap in our community by 2025. To do so, we need new ideas and approaches, all of which will be reflected in these pages moving forward.

Let's Welcome Our New President & CEO

The Foodbank of Southeastern Virginia and the Eastern Shore is pleased to announce the appointment of its new President and CEO, Christopher Tan. Christopher comes to us from Catholic Charities of Eastern Virginia, where he has served as CEO for the past nine years and as COO for the two years prior. Having spent more than two decades in the human services field, he has been focused on serving and enhancing the lives of families through caring and compassionate leadership.

During Chris' last five years at Catholic Charities, he led a team that increased the size of their foundation by almost 300 percent and increased the number of families served from 6,400 to over 10,000 per year. Chris holds a bachelor's degree in Political Science and Philosophy from Randolph-Macon College and a master's degree in Public Administration from Old Dominion University.

"I could not be more excited about this opportunity to serve, and I will work hard to be worthy of the honor," says Chris. "And it really is an honor. It's an honor that we all share at the Foodbank. The only thing that's ever changed another person's life in the history of the world is the care and compassion of another human being. Food is such a universal thing. **One of the greatest ways we can show love and affection is through food. It creates a human connection.** To be a part of an organization that creates 14 million connections every year is humbling, inspiring and an amazing responsibility".

With soaring food costs and inflation driving prices up on just about everything, Chris knows that he's taking the helm during challenging times. "We are in the midst of a perfect storm," he says. "The number of people seeking assistance is on the rise and supply chain issues make it difficult to meet the need. However, we will not be discouraged. **We are going to feed the line, and through our efforts to address the root causes of hunger, we will work to end the line.** It's a line no one wants to be in, and you cannot possibly underestimate the joy a person experiences when they step out of that line and onto the path of self-sufficiency."

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Mission

Leading the effort to eliminate hunger in our community.

Vision

A hunger-free community.

Children at Suffolk Boys & Girls Club.

Summer Feeding Programs Help Children When School's Out

For children facing food insecurity, the school year gives them one thing they can always count on … at least one warm, nutritious meal, thanks to the National School Lunch program. Many also benefit from a variety of other programs offered by the Foodbank of Southeastern Virginia and the Eastern Shore, such as the At-Risk Afterschool Meals Program and Kids Cafés. **But what happens when the school year ends? That's when the Foodbank supports a wide range of summer feeding programs administered by Foodbank partners.**

Each program serves up to two meals a day on-site, offering a combination of breakfast, lunch, and/or a snack. Depending on each location's capacity, some prepare hot meals daily while others serve ready-made sandwiches along with fruit, a vegetable, and milk. This summer, the Foodbank is sponsoring summer feeding sites in Norfolk, Virginia Beach, Portsmouth, Suffolk, Franklin, Western Tidewater, and the Eastern Shore. Locations can include recreation centers, community and youth organizations, libraries, and faith-based organizations.

One such location is the Boys & Girls Club in Suffolk. "We have a great partnership with the Foodbank," says Montreal Scott, Unit Director for the club. "They serve us during the school year and for the summer. We feed approximately 100 children during the summer and about 55 during the school year. **Our program is extremely vital to our community because it not only helps children become productive citizens, but it also allows us to help shape them into becoming responsible adults."**

Foodbank and Virginia Beach DHS Team Up to Serve More than 1,500

Through a series of multimillion dollar grants authorized by Virginia Beach City Council, the Foodbank of Southeastern Virginia and the Eastern Shore teamed up with the city's Department of Human Services to hold another of its drive-thru food pantries at the Virginia Beach Amphitheater. The sixth such event since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, 1,528 people received nearly 110,000 pounds of food, with each household receiving a box filled with a mix of fresh and shelf-stable foods such as fruit and vegetables, bread, dairy products, frozen meats, canned goods, and some staple items such as pasta, sugar, and flour.

Foodbank Opens New Western Tidewater Branch in Franklin

This summer, the Foodbank of Southeastern Virginia and the Eastern Shore is fulfilling a commitment to establish a permanent presence in Western Tidewater with the opening of its new branch in the city of Franklin. Up until now, the Foodbank has been operating out of temporary facilities at the city's Martin Luther King Jr. Community Center.

Yet even without a permanent facility, the Foodbank has been working diligently in a temporary Community Produce Hub and with community partners to operate programs throughout the region, which includes: Franklin, Isle of Wight County, Southampton County, Suffolk and Sussex County. This had been made possible, in large part, due to the three-year, $300,000 grant from the Obici Healthcare Foundation.

"Obici Healthcare Foundation's vision is good health and wellness for all," says the organization's board chair, Thomas Woodward. "Access to healthy food is critical to good health. That is why the Foundation was excited to partner with the Foodbank to build its new branch in Franklin."

After conducting a community health needs assessment in 2018, the Foundation learned that the food insecurity rate in the region was nearly 20 percent and approximately 35 percent in the city of Franklin. Moreover, access to healthy food was limited. "We can't talk about health without talking about healthy food and access to healthy food," says Obici Healthcare Foundation Program Officer Jessica Mullen. "We are excited about the progress being made by the Foodbank over the past couple of years and its ability to partner with leading community organizations to begin narrowing the meal gap."

Nearly 17,000 square feet, the new Western Tidewater Branch and Community Produce Hub features a large warehouse area as well as collaborative workspaces for programs aimed at addressing the root causes of food insecurity, namely workforce development, education, housing, healthcare, and financial literacy. **Together, Team Foodbank, with the support of community leaders, is now able to more effectively conduct its mission to help people facing food insecurity and move them toward a path of self-sufficiency.**

Legislative Update

By Leah Williams-Rumbley, Senior Director of Advocacy

While the economy has shown some signs of recovery for some, many families are still recovering from the financial impact of the pandemic, economic crisis, and now, inflation. The Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act is under review this year, and there are several opportunities to ensure that children have access to healthy and nutritious food. Child nutrition and school meal programs were made possible by temporary adjustments to federal policies; making those changes permanent will be critical in supporting children and families. They include:

Expanding Community Eligibility Provision makes free school meals easier and efficient.

- At the beginning of every school year, letters and meal applications are shared with student households and must be returned for youth to receive free or reduced-price meals at school.
- The Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) allows high-need schools to make meals available at no cost to all students. Expanding CEP eligibility may result in nearly 400 additional schools in Virginia and 300,000 more students having access to meals.

Take Action: *Ask Congress to expand Community Eligibility to reach more kids experiencing hunger.*

Summer is the hungriest time of year for kids – it doesn't have to be with permanent Summer EBT.

- Summer meal sites are found throughout Virginia and serve nourishing meals to students when school is not in session. Even so, a variety of barriers, such as transportation, severe weather, and scheduling complications often prevent kids from accessing sites.
- The Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer (Summer EBT) provides a one-time payment of $375 in the summer to help families cover the cost of food in between school.

Take Action: *Ask Congress to make Summer EBT permanent to help keep families nourished when school is not in session.*

Non-Congregate meals help summer sites reach more kids.

- Before the pandemic, summer meal sites were required to serve meals at a defined location, also known as congregate meals. Due to safety concerns, sites and schools were allowed to serve non-congregate meals, meaning parents could pick up meals or organizations could drop off multiple meals at a child's home. Thanks to this flexibility, Virginia served nearly 3 million more summer meals in 2020, compared to the year before.

Take Action: *Ask Congress to make non-congregate meals permanent in a process called Child Nutrition Reauthorization in 2022.*

Take action by visiting the Foodbank's website at foodbankonline.org/how-to-help/become-an-advocate/take-action

Above and Beyond

Smithfield Foods Kicks Off Legal Food Frenzy with Dig Donation

The legal department at Smithfield Foods kicked off this year's Legal Food Frenzy in a big way, donating nearly 27,000 pounds of protein to the Foodbank of Southeastern Virginia and the Eastern Shore. Legal Food Frenzy is an annual fundraising competition held during the spring, created in partnership with the Virginia Attorney General, Young Lawyers Division of the Virginia Bar Association, and the Federation of Virginia Food Banks.

Law firms from across the Commonwealth participate and proceeds go to their local food banks. To date, more than 20 million pounds of food have been donated to hungry families through Virginia's seven regional food banks and their 1,500 partner agencies. The Smithfield Foods donation had a retail value of more than $100,000.

Setting Sail to Fight Food Insecurity

Thanks to Captain Mark Haynie and his boat, the Sharon Kay III, the Foodbank of Southeastern Virginia and the Eastern Shore is able to get food to residents of Tangier Island, an old fishing village in the middle of the Chesapeake Bay. In this recent delivery, the Foodbank was able to send more than 5,000 pounds of food to help residents on the island who are facing food insecurity.

Volunteer Profile

At the Foodbank's Western Tidewater Branch, Alonzo Joyner and James Saxon are referred to as the Dynamic Duo. "They alone could run a whole Mobile Pantry by themselves if necessary," says Teri Zurfluh, Regional Impact Coordinator for Western Tidewater. "They've taught me a lot about running a smooth event and they are dependable, capable, and hilarious!"

Twice monthly, Alonzo and James run two Mobile Pantries, one in Franklin and the other in Courtland. They arrive two hours before everything gets started, bagging produce and organizing cars as clients come. Alonzo is the traffic manager and maintains outstanding customer service while keeping the lines moving. He can see all the moving pieces of a Mobile Pantry and is always looking for areas that need improvement. Teri says he knows how to be nice to most customers ... and firm to those who might need it.

James is constantly moving and making sure that no time is lost while members of the crew serve their neighbors. "If we gave away bowling balls, I think James would load 15 at a time!" says Teri. "James has a relentless work ethic, always offering to take the heaviest items. He's a great, quiet coach on the pantry line, helping all the volunteers do their best to serve — and he's always smiling!"

James and Alonzo are both the last ones to stay and help staff clean up. They also pick up food to deliver to several other families who are unable to come by. There are approximately 22,000 people in Western Tidewater who experience food insecurity. Roughly, 5,200 of them are children.

The Foodbank could not fulfill its mission without volunteers and people like James and Alonzo, who go above and beyond, not just giving out food but with their infectious attitude and offering hope.

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

Eastern Shore Branch
Physical Address:
24530 Coastal Blvd.
Tasley, VA 23441
Phone: (757) 787-2557
Fax: (757) 787-7850

Mailing Address:
PO Box 518
Tasley, VA 23441

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

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