

TOGETHER WE CAN SOLVE HUNGER

Food for THOUGHT

SPRING 2025

Hunger Heroes Combats Summer Hunger in Our Community



As temperatures rise, so does the need for food in our community. With schools closed, many children lose access to daily breakfast and lunch, increasing the burden on already stretched family budgets. Meanwhile, as donations to the Foodbank decline, it becomes more difficult to meet the heightened demand.

That is where Hunger Heroes comes in. This revitalized summer-long initiative ensures that children and families have access to fresh, nutritious food when they need it most. Through the 757 Mobile Market, Hunger Heroes delivers seasonal produce, dairy, proteins, and pantry staples directly to underserved communities. These client-choice distributions allow families to select the items they need most. This approach preserves dignity and reduces food waste.

Each Hunger Heroes distribution is fully funded by a corporate or business partner and serves approximately 50 households per event. Beyond financial support, sponsors can engage with their community firsthand by volunteering at their sponsored distribution — stocking the market, assisting families as they shop, and seeing the direct impact of their generosity.

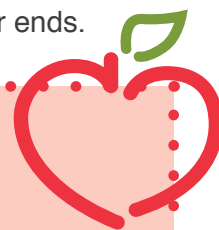
In its pilot year, Hunger Heroes will host 18 distributions across five localities. Each will occur on

the same date and time in June, July, and August, offering families a predictable schedule that allows them to plan ahead with confidence. By bringing food directly to high-need areas, Hunger Heroes eliminates barriers such as transportation challenges and financial strain, making healthy food more accessible.

Our goal is to make participation as seamless as possible for sponsors while providing strong visibility for their support. Distributions are strategically coordinated in advance to target some of the most high-need communities in our service area. The Foodbank also curates the food selection for each distribution, prioritizing foods to best support the well-being of our neighbors. Additionally, we manage all promotional efforts to maximize outreach and ensure successful events.

With a sponsorship of \$2,000, our partners can provide a fully stocked market for a community in need. Every dollar above that helps sustain access to nutritious food even after the summer ends.

Join us in making a difference this season. To learn more about how you can get involved, visit foodbankonline.org/hunger-heroes.



Dear Foodbank Friends,



Summer has a way of slowing things down. The mornings stretch a little longer, the sun lingers in the sky, and for children, the season brings a sense of freedom. But for too many families in our community, summer also brings a quiet worry.

When school doors close, so do the cafeteria lines that many children rely on. Parents feel the weight of providing extra meals, stretching already-tight budgets. And while summer should be a season of abundance, many families struggle to access the nutritious food they need.

That is why Hunger Heroes is stepping in, ensuring that summer is a season of nourishment and stability. In this issue, you will also read about how we are making food distribution more efficient with barcode scanners. You will hear about some powerful partnerships that make our work possible — organizations like CAFI and K.U.S.P., who are not just feeding people but building stronger communities, and Harvest for Heroes, which ensures military families have access to the healthy food they deserve.

The fight against hunger does not take a summer break — but together, we can make sure no family has to face it alone. Thank you for being part of our mission.

With deepest gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chris Tan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Christopher Tan
President and CEO

From Paper to Pixels: Barcode Scanners Boost Warehouse Efficiency

For 44 years, our warehouse operations relied on pen and paper — a system prone to errors, misplaced records, and inefficiencies. Now, with handheld scanners and barcoding through the Automated Data Collection System, we have modernized our processes, improving accuracy and efficiency. Many food banks across the country have already adopted similar systems, and now we are catching up, aligning our operations with industry best practices.

One of the first major upgrades was pallet movement tracking. Previously, staff manually recorded item numbers, pallet numbers, and bin codes before passing the information along for entry into the system. Now, barcode scanners allow pickers to update inventory instantly, eliminating paperwork and delays. This upgrade was only possible after transitioning from lot tracking, where entire shipments shared the

same identifier, to pallet tracking, which assigns unique IDs to each pallet for more precise inventory management. While this shift took time, it laid the foundation for a more efficient system, thanks to the hard work of our operations team.

Building on this foundation, the new system revolutionizes inventory management. Cycle counts and year-end inventory are now faster and more precise, and barcode scanning has replaced paper pick tickets to reduce errors. For example, if two similar cans of soup — one low-sodium and one regular — are stored side by side, scanners confirm the correct item is picked, ensuring that the right products reach the people who need them.

Originally expected to take five years, this transformation is now nearly complete in just two and a half. After months of preparation and training, the barcoding process is fully operational, bringing our warehouse operations into the future and better equipping us to serve our community.



CAFI Gives Back with the Kindness That Once Welcomed Them

Pastor Gerado and his sister, Ilma, the leaders of Casa de Adoracion Familiar Internacional (CAFI), understand struggle on a personal level. Originally from El Salvador, they fled their country's civil war in search of safety and better opportunities. They faced challenges in making ends meet and remember relying on the charitable food system during difficult times. This experience fueled their passion for giving back. Now, having built a strong foundation in their church and community, they are determined to provide others with the support they once needed.

Founded in a home in 2019, CAFI quickly outgrew its space and moved to a nearby office before settling into its current location on Kempsville Road in Norfolk. As the church grew, so did its awareness of the needs in the surrounding community. People were not just coming for spiritual support — they were coming hungry. The need was evident, but at the time, there were no food distributions in the area.

With a heart for service, the CAFI team began purchasing non-perishable items with their own money, stocking up on rice, beans, and canned goods to share with anyone in need. They clipped coupons, sought out sales, and even personally delivered food to elderly neighbors who could not travel. But as demand grew, so did the challenge of sustaining their efforts.

Three years later, an opportunity arose. Someone introduced them to the Foodbank, and though they were not sure what it would take to become a partner agency, they were willing to try. They filed for 501(c)(3) status and were soon approved to be a Foodbank partner agency. From there, everything changed.

What began as a small effort out of their own pockets transformed into an organized, large-scale food distribution. Every second Thursday of the month, CAFI's parking lot fills with up to 150 cars. Volunteers form eight lanes to ensure a smooth drive-thru experience. With the Foodbank's support, they distribute nearly two tons of food at each event, providing fresh produce, non-perishables, and other essentials to a diverse community. People from all backgrounds line up, often sharing how they heard



about the distribution through word of mouth, social media, or CAFI's radio station.

While Pastor Gerado provides spiritual leadership, Ilma truly runs the food distribution program. She coordinates logistics, ensures smooth operations, and works tirelessly to secure enough food to meet demand. Under her leadership, CAFI has expanded its services by distributing additional food boxes twice a week through the Retail Rescue program. By picking up surplus items from local grocery stores, they ensure that no food goes to waste while reaching families who may not be able to attend the monthly event. The impact is undeniable. Volunteers work unceasingly, no matter the weather, because they see the gratitude in the faces of those they serve. They take pride in providing high-quality food, ensuring everything is clean and organized before it is given away.

Beyond food, CAFI strengthens the community, teaching younger generations the importance of service and giving them purpose beyond screens and distractions. As their outreach grows, CAFI is already looking ahead. They see an urgent need on the Eastern Shore, where food resources are scarce. With their established network and passion for service, they hope to expand their distributions there, bringing the same sense of hope and support to even more families.

For CAFI, this work is not just about handing out food — it is about restoring dignity and fulfilling a dream that began with a simple desire to help. Thanks to their partnership with the Foodbank, that dream continues to grow, one meal at a time.

A Grassroots Approach to Food Access

For Jay Boone, food access is personal. Growing up as a military kid, she experienced firsthand how families across different socioeconomic backgrounds shared one essential need: food. That led her to create Keeping Us Secure & Prosperous (K.U.S.P.) in 2020, with the goal of ensuring that communities move beyond surviving to truly thriving.

As a proud partner agency of the Foodbank, K.U.S.P. takes an innovative approach to food access by meeting people where they are — through home deliveries for seniors, weekly community distributions, or partnerships that offer wraparound support services. Their flexible, mobile-first model allows them to reach more people in need, especially children, seniors, and their families, creating generational impact.

Collaboration is at the heart of their mission. By working alongside other organizations, K.U.S.P. extends its reach and strengthens the support network available to the community. Now, they are planting the seeds for long-term sustainability through urban agriculture, with three community gardens in Norfolk already underway and plans for future growth.

Just like the gardens, their work is rooted in nourishment, nurtured by partnerships, and growing toward a future where every community can flourish.



Harvest for Heroes Strengthens Food Access for Military Families

Access to healthy food is a challenge for many military families, but the Foodbank is committed to providing a solution through Harvest for Heroes. This initiative utilizes the 757 Mobile Market, a grocery store on wheels, to bring nutritious food directly to active-duty service members, veterans, reservists, and National Guard members.

Recognizing the need for consistent food access, the Foodbank launched Harvest for Heroes with the support of two key funders, making this initiative possible. Last summer, Humana extended an opportunity to the Foodbank to apply for funding to sponsor the 757 Mobile Market for military families, securing support for 16 distributions in early 2025. Additionally, the Foodbank was selected by Feeding America to receive a grant from USAA, which funds 17 distributions through September 2025.

To ensure this food reaches the communities where it is most needed, the Foodbank is working in collaboration with Liberty Military Housing and the Armed Services YMCA, which serve as key site partners across multiple cities in the region. These partnerships help connect military families with essential food resources in convenient and accessible locations.

By bringing fresh food directly to military communities, Harvest for Heroes is uplifting the heroes who serve our nation and their families, ensuring they have the nourishment they deserve.



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



POINTS OF LIGHT



Main Office

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

Western Tidewater Branch

618 South Street
Franklin, VA 23851
Phone: (757) 544-9027

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