

TOGETHER WE CAN SOLVE HUNGER

Food for THOUGHT

SUMMER 2025

Because of You, Families Like Elodia's Aren't Facing Hunger Alone

Your support is helping thousands of neighbors across Southeastern Virginia and the Eastern Shore find hope in the face of hardship. Right now, 152,720 people in our region are food insecure. That means 1 in 8 individuals are unsure where their next meal will come from. Among children, the rate is even more alarming: 1 in 5, with some communities seeing rates as high as 1 in 3. But these numbers represent real people, like Elodia Lopez.

After nearly 20 years as a nurse, Elodia's life changed dramatically when she developed long-term complications from COVID-19. Unable to return to the career she loved, and with her husband's hours cut, she suddenly found herself struggling to feed her family.

That's when she turned to a nearby food pantry supported by generous donors like you. There, she found more than just groceries. Elodia was also connected to helpful resources and information on how to prepare healthier meals that support her diabetes and her family's well-being.



"Yes, I was a nurse, but I didn't specialize in diabetes. I wanted to learn how to cook nutritious food and keep my family healthy," she said. "Now, my son prepares dinner for us. It's helped us grow stronger together. When you feel like everything is falling down around you, you have to be strong."

Elodia's story is not unique. Even in working households, rising costs are making it harder to make ends meet. Food prices remain high, even as inflation slows. More than a third of people facing hunger in our region do not qualify for SNAP benefits, and of those who do, 12% are not enrolled.

To afford enough food, families experiencing food insecurity need an additional \$22.62 per person per week. For many, that gap is simply too large to overcome alone.

That's where you come in.

Your donations keep food on the shelves, nutrition programs running, and dignity intact. Your advocacy helps protect federal nutrition programs that millions rely on. And your compassion helps neighbors like Elodia find a path forward.

"It's helped us grow stronger together."



Dear Foodbank Friend,



As students head back to school this fall, many carry more than just backpacks and notebooks. Too many children in our region are returning to classrooms facing the uncertainty of hunger. They're unsure if they'll have breakfast before school or dinner at night. It's a reality no child should face, yet one we see daily.

That's why September, Hunger Action Month, is so important. It's a time for all of us to take steps toward ending hunger in our communities. Whether you donate, volunteer, advocate, or simply share what you've learned, every action matters.

In this issue, you'll see how your support is already making a difference. You'll read about a partner agency that goes the extra mile to meet families where they are. You'll learn about a new opportunity designed to make volunteering more accessible for differently abled groups. And you'll see the sobering new data showing that food insecurity is rising across our service area, especially among children.

But amid the challenges, there is hope. There is momentum. There is you.

Thank you for being part of this movement and this community that believes no one should go hungry. Let's make this Hunger Action Month a turning point.

With gratitude,

Christopher Tan
President and CEO

How MANNA Ministry is Meeting Neighbors Where They Are

For the team at **MANNA Ministry of Tidewater**, food isn't the finish line; it's the starting point.

The organization began during the uncertainty of the pandemic, when one family saw neighbors going without and decided to help. A simple food drive from their garage grew into something larger. Today, MANNA is a network of volunteers delivering nourishment and compassion to those who need it most. That connection drives every delivery.

Each Saturday, volunteers load their cars with nearly 100 pounds of food, hygiene products, and essentials per household and deliver them across Hampton Roads. Deliveries are scheduled through referrals from agencies, schools, and word-of-mouth, often arriving during a critical window of crisis before other help is available.

"We aim to fill the gap," one team member said. "The food is immediate, but what we're offering is connection."

What sets MANNA apart isn't just delivery; it's relationships. When people invite someone in, they offer water or something to eat. MANNA's volunteers extend the same care with a knock, a conversation, and their presence. They follow up, checking in and connecting families to resources.

This service is vital for seniors, many of whom are homebound or caring for grandchildren. A delivery from MANNA may be their only visit that week, but it's a reminder they haven't been forgotten.

One driver recalled pulling up to an apartment when a young girl's voice rang out from the second floor, shouting, "The food is here!" It became more poignant when they learned she and her grandmother hadn't eaten in days.

Since partnering with the Foodbank, MANNA has expanded dramatically. What began with a few families has grown to more than 1,200 households served last year. Your generosity helps provide hope.



This Hunger Action Month, Your Compassion Fuels More Than Meals

Every morning, Robert Font starts the day with a familiar ritual: six kids in the car, seatbelts clicked, lunchboxes packed. “Where’s Nana?” he calls. “She’s in our heart!” they respond in unison. It’s a tradition his late wife started, one he’s proud to continue.

Robert didn’t expect to raise a second generation of children in his fifties. But when the need arose, he stepped in. Today, he’s doing everything he can to give his grandchildren a stable, loving home. And thanks to supporters like you, he’s not doing it alone.

When budgets are tight and bills pile up, your generosity helps families like Robert’s keep food on the table. That support matters every day, especially in September, during **Hunger Action Month**, when we invite the entire community to take action against hunger.

Hunger Action Month is a nationwide campaign to raise awareness and inspire change. Across the country, people

This September, you’re part of something powerful:

- You’re showing kids that they’re not forgotten.
- You’re helping seniors feel cared for and connected.
- You’re reminding struggling parents they’re not alone.

Your actions matter. Whether you give, volunteer, or use your voice to spread the word, you’re making a real, local impact for Robert and so many others.



will wear orange, volunteer their time, and donate what they can to support hunger relief. And here at the Foodbank, we’ll continue working alongside supporters like you to ensure that every child, every family, and every neighbor has access to nutritious food.

Whether you donate, volunteer, advocate, or simply share what you’ve learned, every action you take fuels change.

Families like Robert’s are proof that your support is a lifeline. With a single income and six growing kids to feed, he turns to the Foodbank for help when the fridge gets empty. “Those kids are what I live for,” he said. “And I’m doing everything I can to make sure they’re taken care of.”

Because of you, meals become peace of mind, renewed energy for learning, and a sense of normalcy during tough times.

Make Every Month Matter With Feed 365



Hunger doesn’t take a break, and neither does your impact when you give monthly through Feed 365.

This community of over 1,000 donors powers the Foodbank with steady, reliable support. Monthly gifts ensure that shelves stay stocked, trucks keep moving, and families across Southeastern Virginia and the Eastern Shore have access to the food they need.

Becoming a monthly sustainer is simple, but the difference you make is powerful. Your ongoing support helps the Foodbank respond faster, plan smarter, and reach more people every day. When we act together, hunger doesn’t stand a chance.

You're Opening Doors for Inclusive Volunteering

"My son lights up when he talks about volunteering."

Thanks to growing interest from the community, the Foodbank now offers accessible group experiences, welcoming volunteers of all abilities into our warehouse on a regular basis.

It started with a partnership between Sentara Health and Families of Autism Coming Together (FACT), offering individuals with autism the chance to build confidence, gain job skills, and connect with others while helping fight hunger. What began as a special shift has now become a standing opportunity.

Volunteers help with essential tasks like sorting donations, packing BackPacks for children, and bagging fresh produce for distribution, all while engaging in meaningful service and connection.

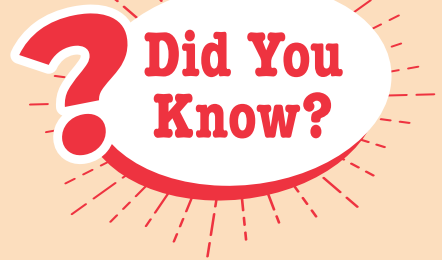
"My son lights up when he talks about volunteering," shared a parent. "It's given him such a sense of purpose."

Another group leader noted, *"This is the first time many of our participants have felt truly included in something bigger. They leave feeling proud of the difference they've made."*

Your generosity makes these moments possible. Your donations help us stretch resources further by allowing us to purchase fresh produce in bulk and pack it in-house with the help of volunteers. This reduces costs and means we can provide more nutritious food to families who need it most.

Your support also covers essentials like gloves, produce bags, and packing materials, and ensures trained staff are available to guide each group and create a safe, welcoming, and empowering experience from start to finish.

Because of you, volunteering isn't just about giving back ... it's about belonging.



1 in 4 children go to bed hungry.



Last year, we distributed **over 20 million meals.**



1 in 8 neighbors is food insecure.



\$1 provides **2** meals.



95¢ of every **\$1** donated goes directly to those in need.