

Kids Cafes Nourish Children's Minds and Bodies

With the holidays over, children across the Food Bank's 34-county service area will return to school – many to spend their last few months preparing for important end-of-grade testing. Many children will look forward to going to a beloved activity or to spending time with friends. But many children look forward to going back to two meals a day and possibly the support of an after-school program that can provide even more.

When you arrive at Avent Ferry United Methodist Church in Raleigh on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, you will find Denise Simmons setting up for an after-school program for middle school children called Kids Cafe.

Since 2002, the Food Bank has partnered with community organizations like Avent Ferry to provide children with a safe place and a hot meal after school, along with mentoring, tutoring, and physical activity. Simmons, the Site Director at Avent Ferry, originally hails from New Jersey and has an extensive background working with children – including time as a science teacher and homeschooling her own children.

"One of the things that makes your job enjoyable is the fact that people do appreciate what you do," said Simmons when asked about the best part of the role.

With 1 in 6 children in the Food Bank's 34-county service area living in food-insecure households, programs like Kids Cafe are essential as they address hunger, child development, and educational achievement. The Food Bank currently operates 27 Kids Cafe Programs along with several other programs that provide children with access to food and other resources.

As rising costs continue to force families to make difficult choices, the Food Bank will be there to support our friends and neighbors with your help. For more information about our work visit foodbankcenc.org/childrensprogram



From the President & CEO

Dear Friends,

My first few months at the Food Bank of Central & Eastern North Carolina have been exciting and fast-paced! Former President Peter Werbicki spent two weeks with me visiting branches, meeting key allies and partners in the community, and getting to know staff and board members.

In every visit we talked about how far the Food Bank has come in the past 25 years and it's so clear that Peter has led nothing short of a movement to alleviate hunger in North Carolina and laid the foundation for continued impact for decades to come.

What is also apparent across the organization is the passion that everyone has for the mission of the Food Bank. What I have heard repeatedly in my first few months, beyond the love of the depth and impact of our work, is a true appreciation for the teamwork and culture of the organization. With just those two attributes, the future of the Food Bank promises to be bright and inspiring. I'm humbled to be able to lead the effort.

The Food Bank has never been stronger – from the loyal base of supporters who donate and volunteer, to the staff and the board, to the new capital assets and buildings -- our ability to fulfill our mission and increase access to food continues thanks to you. So many contributed to bring us here and my greatest aim will be to honor the values built by those who came before me.

Looking forward to a bright future of continued service.



The HOP Program: Health Starts at Home

Access to nutritious food is an integral part of a household's well-being. While it's only one piece of the puzzle, it is one worry the Food Bank seeks to eliminate for our friends and neighbors.

To address the systemic healthcare issues facing North Carolinians, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) received \$650 million in funding from the federal government to launch its Healthy Opportunities Pilot program (HOP) in eastern and western North Carolina. This program is the first of its kind. NCDHHS will collaborate with entities in the state that specialize in the areas that impact the social determinants of health to deliver 29 services to the target regions.

The Food Bank is one of those entities, acting as an agency within the more extensive network of the pilot program, furthering our mission of nourishing people, building solutions, and empowering communities.

The Food Bank will provide three services:

- Food and Nutrition Access Case Management. Our Benefits Outreach Coordinators will assist individuals in navigating the SNAP application process.
- Distributing Healthy Food Boxes. These boxes are given to households who are facing food insecurity.
- Fruit and Vegetable Prescriptions. The prescriptions are filled weekly and contain low-sodium, no-sugar-added items for people experiencing nutrition-related chronic illnesses.

When the first deliveries went out, there was an immediate impact. Emily Kraft, the Director of Community Outreach & Support Services for the Food Bank, said that the first person called the branch five minutes after the delivery was made to say how excited he was about their healthy food box, sharing "my wife is already chopping a snack for us to eat!"

Alice Hudson, the Food Bank's Support Services Program Manager has a significant role on the ground working with agencies in the HOP pilot. She knows firsthand the impact of the program: ***"The HOP program really excites me because it acknowledges that health starts at home, far before the problem visits at the doctor. It's about understanding the power that food and other resources have in determining someone's overall health."***

Alongside the food delivery services, households receive assistance in utilities, housing placement, and free bus passes, all of which is the primary goal of the HOP pilot – to engage people, identify their needs, and connect them to resources that will lead to healthier communities.



Moore County Response

In December, **45,000 people in the Sandhills area were left without power** after an alleged incident of domestic terrorism disabled an electrical substation. In response, the Food Bank secured generator power for our Southern Pines Branch to continue to serve our network of partner agencies.

We organized Pop-Up Markets to distribute emergency food to those affected by power outages in and around Moore County and provided support to partner agencies that were managing additional distributions due to the loss of power. We also coordinated with Feeding America to put together additional resources for the community and continued to monitor the situation even as power began to be restored.



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