



"I always had a passion for farming... but I found my purpose with the Food Bank."

As grocery prices continue to rise, fresh fruits and vegetables are among the most expensive and least accessible items for people facing food insecurity. Families are often on the lookout for these items at our mobile markets and network pantries — where we always strive to improve the nutritional quality of meals and improve health outcomes for neighbors.

That's why the Food Bank's Bank prioritizes locally-grown produce, meat, and dairy in our food sourcing efforts. And with your support, we're able to work with incredible North Carolina farmers like Bill Hering and the Jarvis family to make these products available throughout the region.

On his family farm at the border of Duplin and Sampson County, Bill Hering works nearly 300 acres of land, growing exclusively for the Food Bank. We'll soon mark a decade of partnership with Bill and his team, who provide us with enough fresh produce and herbs — including versatile, culturally-familiar foods like turnips and collard greens — to fuel more than two million meals each year.

"I'm grateful for the opportunity to be able to work with the Food Bank. It kept me doing what I enjoyed and the need is clearly there for our food. It's changed my whole perspective on what we have in that field and how it can be utilized," Bill said. **"I always had a passion for farming... but I found my purpose with the Food Bank."**

In East Durham, Immanuel and Valarie Jarvis aren't just providing the Food Bank with chicken, pork, and eggs; they're training the next generation of growers and producers. Each summer at Jireh Family Farm, children come to the farm to learn sustainable ways to grow food — tasting bell peppers and other vegetables cut fresh from the vine. Over the years, they have watched children from summer camp pursue degrees in agriculture and start their own operations.

"I think our ancestors always wanted to have an opportunity to take the produce and the sweat of their brow and turn that into money to be able to support their family," Immanuel said. **"This is something that could pass on to their children's children."**

Over the past year, we've worked with more than 50 farms and distributors across North Carolina to source fresh products to share with our network of local food assistance sites. By supporting local agriculture, we can ensure all our neighbors — including the farmers who grow and raise our food — stay healthy and strong. When food is shared locally, everyone benefits!

Read more about Farmer Bill and Jireh Farms at FoodBankCENC.org/News.



Striving for a Hunger-Free Future Amid Challenging Times

As we close out the year and look to the future, we do so in a time of challenge that calls for courage and commitment. **More than 600,000 people in our region are experiencing food insecurity — that's 1 in 7 neighbors, including 1 in 5 children and teens.** And the numbers are expected to grow as federal cuts to SNAP and Medicaid reach every corner of our state. These are not small shifts; they directly impact the resources local farmers and neighbors rely on, affecting the overall health of our community.

Despite the clear and rising pressures across North Carolina, we've accomplished so much together. The ways we've already adapted and evolved form a strong foundation for the future. The work highlighted in our annual report exemplifies what the Food Bank and our community look like in action: farmers and donors, volunteers and advocates, partners and allies, all working in unison to ensure everyone has access to the food they need to thrive.

Looking ahead, I feel a genuine sense of hope. Our 2030 strategic plan is rooted in elevating the voices and experiences of neighbors. This is our north star as we build solutions with — not for — our community.

No matter what changes may come, our mission and vision for a hunger-free future remain steadfast. We will ensure neighbors have access to the nutritious food they need by continuing to invest in local farmers, strengthening partnerships, and advancing community-led solutions — even as the funding and policy landscapes shift.

Thanks to all of you, our work doesn't just survive challenges; we meet them head-on. And together, we'll ensure our network remains a steady, dependable resource for the long-term.

Amy B

AMY BEROS

President & CEO



Our Shared Impact

Your support means our friends and neighbors don't have to make impossible choices between food and other essentials like housing and medicine.

96 million meals

shared with neighbors throughout central and eastern North Carolina

63% of all food distributed

was fresh or frozen produce, protein, and dairy products

970,000 meals

provided through our Pop-Up Markets

1.2 million meals

provided through school year and summer child nutrition programs

3.7 million meals

provided through dedicated senior nutrition programs

160,000+ volunteer hours

fueled our efforts to end hunger and its root causes

700+ community-based partners

including pantries, no-cost food markets, meal sites, and delivery programs

630,000 miles

driven picking up and distributing food throughout our service area

\$9.5 million invested

in local economies through benefits



Home Deliveries Reach More Seniors

Each month, the Food Bank's Senior Nutrition Team serves nearly 9,000 seniors across our 34 counties through management of the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), a monthly food box program. For many seniors, barriers such as transportation or mobility mean that home delivery is critical to accessing their box each month. And thanks to our pantry network, dedicated local volunteers, and partners like DoorDash, we delivered more than 19,500 boxes of food and other essential resources to seniors' homes this year.

"I am so thankful every month for my box," a local senior recently shared. **"Thank you from the bottom of my heart to you. There's never enough words to say how pleasant everyone is there."**

Of the 1,500+ participants in our recent survey, 88% reported that the box makes up at least half of the food they consume in a month. The challenges are even deeper in rural communities, where full grocery stores and traditional pantries are less accessible. With the senior population in North Carolina on the rise — and SNAP and Medicaid cuts on the horizon — programs like CSFP are more important than ever before!

For more information about our Senior Box Program, visit FoodBankCENC.org/seniors



Market on Greenfield Celebrates One Year Serving Wilmington Families

The Food Bank's Market on Greenfield St. celebrated a full year of operation this year. Functioning as a partner agency pantry, the Market offers neighbors the opportunity to shop weekly for shelf-stable items, fresh produce, prepared meals, and toiletries. Beyond providing food, the Market partners with local community agencies to offer wrap-around services such as blood pressure monitoring, vision and hearing testing, and nutrition counseling. **This year, the Market served more than 27,000 individuals with the help of 1,100 amazing volunteers.**



Chef Tip: Boil: boil dry minutes. Soak: 1-4 hours Cool: with water. Cook: in desired recipe

Consejo del chef: Hervir: hervir los frijoles secos 2-3 minutos. Remojar: 1-4 horas. Enfriar: con agua. Cocinar: en la receta deseada.