



2021 **FALL NEWSLETTER**

A Seasonal Publication of the
Community Food Bank of Central Alabama

A Commitment to Fresh Produce

When you think of the food coming out of a food bank, the images that come to mind probably involve canned goods and dry beans. But if you walk back into our warehouse, you will regularly see pallets and pallets of fresh heirloom tomatoes, wooden crates of corn stacked higher than you can reach, and countless boxes of deep purple eggplants. We are full to the brim with fresh produce.

Daily consumption of fruit and vegetables is critical to the nutrition and health of the individuals we serve. The Community Food Bank is committed to increasing our neighbors' access to fresh and healthy produce, which is why in addition to donations, we are purchasing and giving out more than ever before.

Starting in February this year, we developed an improved version of the *Farmers to Families* program to help support the growing need for fresh produce within central Alabama. We are placing more fresh produce in the hands of our neighbors in a number of different ways... via *Farmers to Families* distributions, agency deliveries and mobile pantries.

At each *Farmers to Families* distribution, we provide households with 20-pound boxes of fresh fruits and vegetables. These distributions increase the access to fresh produce to families across central Alabama, especially to those who may not be able to regularly access nutritious food. We partner with over 20 distribution sites to help give out this produce, and with their help, we are able to serve nearly 9,000 households a month through this program alone.

A few specifics: each week, we purchase 1,800 produce boxes from Southeastern Regional Cooperative (that's 36,000 pounds a week!), filled with things like squash, bell peppers, potatoes, cabbage, corn, and more. Twice a month, Publix donates 30,000 pounds of fresh produce. (Picture this: an *entire semi-trailer* filled to the brim with a fresh assortment of fruits and vegetables.) On top of that, starting in June, we began receiving 1,600 boxes of fresh produce from the USDA monthly.

While the final numbers of this summer are still being calculated, **we distributed more than 7.1 million pounds of FRESH produce in central Alabama over the past year** (May 2020–May 2021), thanks to partnerships with Publix, Southeastern Regional Cooperative, Kontos Fruit, as well as generous produce donations from our network of retail partners. We would not be able to provide our community with this many fresh fruits and vegetables without the unwavering support from our donors and volunteers.



Check out our recent article

in *Southern Living* about Giving Gardens, and see how you can donate the bounty of your backyard garden to the Community Food Bank!

[southernliving.com/garden/
turn-victory-garden-into-giving-garden](https://southernliving.com/garden/turn-victory-garden-into-giving-garden)



WALMART TEAMS UP WITH THE COMMUNITY FOOD BANK TO FIGHT HUNGER AND SPARK CHANGE

The Community Food Bank of Central Alabama heavily relies on grants and donations to keep our doors open and mouths fed. Walmart is one of our corporate partners that fully understands the weight of food insecurity and the impact hunger can have on a person's life. For eight years, Walmart and Sam's Club have come together with their supplier partners, customers, members, and Feeding America® member food banks for the **Fight Hunger. Spark Change.** campaign to address hunger in communities nationwide.

The campaign supports local Feeding America® food banks through in-store checkout donations, online round-ups, and participating products that, when bought, constitute a direct donation to the food bank in that area. In addition, Walmart offers grants to food banks across the country. This year, CFBCA was one of the campaign grant recipients. The Fight Hunger. Spark Change. campaign made a *huge* impact in central Alabama.

"The Community Food Bank of Central Alabama has faced a number of challenges this past year, and we have worked hard to serve our neighbors in their time of need. Walmart and Sam's Club are longstanding partners in the fight to end hunger," said Brett R. Meredith, Community Food Bank CEO. "We are grateful for Walmart, Sam's Club and their suppliers, members and customers for their generous support of this campaign."

Our staff visited with a few partner agencies that pick up donations directly from Walmart and Sam's Club stores across our 12-county footprint. We talked about how they serve their community, their dedication to the mission, and to see firsthand what their needs were. Thanks to this grant, each one of the agencies that we visited was gifted with something that fulfilled a need. Some received an industrial cooler or freezer, and some received a grant to expand their food sourcing capabilities. We know that when organizations have the resources they need, the community benefits. More people will be served, and financial strain was lifted, thanks to the Fight Hunger. Spark Change. campaign.

Walmart makes an impact in communities year-round, especially rural communities that qualify as "food deserts." Thanks to the partnership between Walmart and the Community Food Bank, we can connect our partner agencies with their local stores, enabling them to pick up food, free of charge, multiple times a week. This food is a varying mixture of fresh, frozen, and shelf-stable product that was either over-ordered or nearing its sell-by date, and *all* is good to eat. These agencies then distribute the reclaimed food to the community, removing the barriers to food access.

Our partnerships bring food closer to home and ensure that our neighbors have consistent access to free, healthy food.

"Instead of them going to the store and spending their last five dollars, they can get food here... a box full of stuff that would cost much more than five dollars," says Arlene Driskill, Food Pantry Coordinator at Servant of Jesus Church. "We get meat, and we get plenty of vegetables, oranges, apples, onions... it's just so much that [Walmart] gives us!"

In addition to the annual campaign and food reclamation program, **Walmart regularly donates food directly to the Community Food Bank, which strengthens our ability to feed the nearly 500 thousand individuals** that we reach annually. Without Walmart's fresh produce, healthy frozen goods, and meat, distributions would not occur as often, and more families would go without food. We are truly better together.

To learn more about this campaign and to meet the agencies we highlighted, visit [feedingal.org/blog](https://www.feedingal.org/blog).

FIGHT HUNGER
SPARK CHANGE



Volunteer Spotlight

HELLO, DOLLIE!

The Community Food Bank of Central Alabama is blessed with a team of amazing, dedicated volunteers that help us in our mission to fight hunger every day. While we have volunteers come in and out every day, our longstanding, consistent volunteers become family. Ms. Dollie is one of those family members. Dollie Sumlin volunteers in our warehouse four days a week, helping us sort donations and pack mobile pantry food boxes, as well as any other task that is sent her way. She volunteers with joy, bringing a smile to anyone's face who is lucky enough to come across her path.

One day, busy sweeping up in the warehouse, she talks about what brought her to the Community Food Bank: "It was back in November [of 2020], and I saw on the TV that you all were in desperate need of volunteers," Ms. Dollie said. "I'd never had the opportunity to volunteer in the last 40 years because I had always been working full-time! Because of the pandemic, I knew this was where I'd be needed most. Everything fell into place."

Ms. Dollie's passion about the Food Bank mission influences everything she does here. "Other than water, food is the most VITAL necessity!" she emphasizes. "It's so important that people have access to those two things. And that's what we do here - we make



sure that people who need food can get it." **Dollie also understands that it takes an entire community of volunteers to help us feed the roughly 145,000 people every month who rely on our services.**

She hopes that other newly retired people like her will see how important the Food Bank is and be inspired to volunteer as well.

"It is my hope that many others would consider becoming a volunteer here at the Food Bank," she says. "The staff and other volunteers show a real sincerity in trying to help, and they have a real devotion to the cause. If you're on the fence about volunteering... just concentrate on the NEED and KNOW that you are making a difference." Without a doubt, Ms. Dollie makes a difference each time she comes through our doors.

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, contact us at volunteer@feedingal.org. Come join Ms. Dollie and be a part of our volunteer family.

Summer Meals were BACK!



On the heels of a tumultuous 2020, CFCBA is so proud to have brought back our Kids Café Summer Meals Program in 2021. During the summer when school is out of session, free and reduced lunches are not available, so the Community Food Bank works together with the USDA, ALSDE, and Alabama Food Bank Association to provide the consistent nutrition needed to those kids and teens who may need assistance.

This year, Kids Café Summer Meals Program provided approximately 70,000 healthy, balanced lunches and snacks throughout June, July, and into August, thanks to the partners like local YMCAs, churches, schools, and other kids programs that administered the meals. Summer meals are vitally important, ensuring nutrition for young people, and providing relief for families struggling to put meals on the table.

No kid should be worried about where their next meal is coming from. Good nutrition fuels the mind, body, and affects their life in more ways than hunger alone. Thousands of kids would go hungry across Central Alabama every summer without school lunches, and the Community Food Bank of Central Alabama is proud to stand in the gap.



ALABAMA LEGAL FOOD FRENZY MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Each spring, the Alabama Attorney General's Office, the Alabama State Bar, and the Alabama Food Bank Association join forces to combat child hunger through the **Alabama Legal Food Frenzy**. Firms across the state compete to raise funds for their local food bank. This year, Alabama lawyers stepped up in a big way, surpassing their goal by more than \$20,000.

Congratulations to the winners in each category:

Sole Proprietor: Dagney Johnson Law Group

Small Law Firm: Martin & Helms, P.C.

Medium Law Firm: Hill Hill Carter Franco Cole & Black, P.C.

Large Law Firm: Carr Allison – Birmingham

Legal Organization: U.S. District Court - Southern District of Alabama

Overall Winner: Martin & Helms, P.C.

Our heartfelt thanks go out to the individuals, law firms and legal organizations in our state who competed. Together, they raised \$55,000 for children in the state of Alabama.

BECAUSE NO ONE SHOULD GO HUNGRY: LIMITED-EDITION SHIRTS FROM YELLOWHAMMER CREATIVE!

Did you miss out on pre-ordering our *Yellowhammer Creative* Locals Series shirt? Well, it's your lucky day... because we have a limited number of shirts for sale at our office! These Limited-Edition shirts are only available while supplies last, so be sure to snag one!

Available for \$25, they are locally screen-printed on 100% cotton vintage white t-shirts. All proceeds of this shirt sale support the Community Food Bank of Central Alabama. Stop by our office Monday-Friday 8am-4pm to purchase one, or you can order online at [cfbca.square.site!](http://cfbca.square.site)



Save the Date!

Keep an eye out for more information about our Inaugural Signature Event, happening

March 5, 2022!

Make plans to enjoy a culinary experience, featuring creative cuisine by the extraordinary members of the Birmingham Chapter of *Les Dames d'Escoffier International*.



Les Dames d'Escoffier International
BIRMINGHAM CHAPTER



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