2023 IMPACT REPORT
A NOTE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Your support is critical to our mission of improving nutrition security and empowering strong, healthy communities. Through our statewide programs and collaborative efforts, we are achieving greater, more sustainable change across Virginia.

Our work at the Federation starts with ensuring that our neighbors have access to the resources they need to grow and thrive.

In 2023, we launched our statewide Healthy Pantry Initiative and saw substantial growth in our Food Pharmacy programs. We also made great strides in building capacity across our network to receive referrals from healthcare providers and connect eligible individuals with SNAP benefits. We are excited to further accelerate this work through the Virginia Food is Medicine Coalition and advocate for policy change to provide sustainable funding for more nutritious food for our neighbors.

We expect continued high demand for food assistance as families face high prices at the grocery store and fewer options for support. We stand ready to meet our neighbors where they are and will work with them to achieve a nutrition secure future for the Commonwealth. Thank you for your unwavering support.

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2023 AT A GLANCE

• 157 million pounds of food distributed to 1,100 partners throughout Virginia
• 20 million pounds distributed through TEFAP (USDA Commodities)
• 700,000 people served from 230,000 unique households
BOUNDLESS COLLABORATION FOR HEALTH EQUITY

The Federation and our seven member food banks are working together like never before to not just feed people, but also promote positive health outcomes. Below are some of the accomplishments we’re most proud of from the last calendar year:

- Food banks are collaborating with healthcare payers and providers to distribute food on-site at clinics via Food Pharmacy locations. This program reaches over 29,000 patients annually and grew by a remarkable 65% in calendar year 2023.

- Food banks are preparing for new regulations that require healthcare practitioners to assess their patients’ social needs, including food. Food banks are using the Unite Us platform to receive referrals from healthcare once these needs are identified. In 2023, food banks helped 1,714 people get connected to food and/or benefits using the Unite Us platform.

- 520 food pantries have joined the Healthy Pantry Initiative, a statewide program that connects pantry partners with the training, tools, and resources to implement more health-focused and neighbor-centered practices.

- We have formed a Virginia Food is Medicine Coalition with partners from the food access and healthcare sectors to advocate for state policy change that ensures sustainable funding for nutritious food to address food insecurity and diet-related diseases.
FOOD IS MEDICINE

Research shows that it’s much harder for people facing hunger to maintain good health. Food insecurity often worsens health outcomes and further increases healthcare costs for people facing hunger, leading to a vicious cycle of food insecurity and chronic disease. In response, we embarked on a health-focused, neighbor-centered transformation of Virginia’s charitable food system, to better connect neighbors facing hunger with the food and resources they need to lead healthy, thriving lives.

FOOD INSECURITY INCREASES THE RISK OF DEVELOPING CHRONIC DISEASE.

- Adults facing food insecurity are 2-3 times more likely to suffer from diabetes than food secure individuals (CDC).
- A USDA study estimates that the prevalence of Cardiovascular disease was 6 times higher in households with very low food security compared to food-secure households (Gregory & Coleman-Jensen, 2017).
- On average, food insecure individuals spend $1,539 more on health care per year in Virginia (Feeding America).
Farms to Food Banks

Agriculture is the Commonwealth’s #1 private industry, yet more than 700,000 Virginians face food insecurity. This year, food banks and 65 agricultural partners moved more than **2.8 million pounds** of fresh, nutritious food from farms to people in need.

### The Virginia Agriculture Food Assistance Program
- Distributed more than **1.2 million pounds** of Virginia-grown produce and eggs through a network of more than 1,100 food pantries.
- Enabled growers to receive a state tax credit of up to 50% of market value when donating excess produce that would otherwise go to waste.

### Farms to Families Food Box Program
- **43,000 produce and protein boxes** distributed through food pantries and home delivery.
- Sourced from **25 produce farmers** and **14 protein producers**.
- This program delivers some of the highest quality, nutritious foods our network had received on a consistent basis.

### Local Food Purchase Assistance Program
- Partnered with 4P Foods to deliver **54,000 boxes** (nearly **740,000 pounds**) of locally grown produce, meat, and dairy.
- Supported **44 farmers** and growers in **26 Virginia counties**.
- Focused on underserved populations including older adults, Hispanic households, and rural communities.

### Milk for Good
- Provided **67,000 half-gallons** of fresh, local milk to Virginia families.
- Once again partnered with the Virginia Tech Dairy Club to sell milkshakes at the State Fair which raised enough funds to provide **5,000 half-gallons** of local milk.
SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Over the past year, we seized significant opportunities to raise awareness of SNAP and expand our network’s capacity for statewide outreach. Notable achievements this year include:

- Expanded our network’s capacity for SNAP outreach by providing food banks and their partners with trainings and resources for outreach partners, including 20 statewide SNAP training sessions and a SNAP outreach toolkit.

- Spread awareness of the SNAP program to over 87,433 potentially eligible people through digital and printed ad campaigns targeting the general population, seniors, low income families with children, and mixed-status families.

- Deepened our collaboration with other state partners, including Unite Us and the Virginia Poverty Law Center, to streamline our processes for helping individuals apply for SNAP.

The Federation recognizes that far too few eligible seniors participate in SNAP. We will work with our partners to advocate for policy change and engage in outreach to address the growing senior hunger crisis. We will use powerful stories to inform elected officials about the impact of reduced benefits on seniors and their everyday lives.

Meet Diane, Fredericksburg’s Flamingo Lady!

Diane Grimes, the "Flamingo Lady," serves as the SNAP Outreach and Referral Coordinator at the Fredericksburg Regional Food Bank. Her strategic efforts aim to streamline SNAP benefit access for those in need. With her office adorned in vibrant flamingo-themed decor, Diane creates a welcoming environment. In a recent visit, she highlighted challenges faced by neighbors, emphasizing the need for compassionate support. Diane's work stresses the importance of empathy and proactive support in addressing food insecurity, fostering healthier, resilient communities.

Read the full interview at vafoodbanks.org.
**ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE**

Effective public policy is essential to achieving our mission. Healthy food access has a legacy of bipartisan support, and we work hard to educate elected officials and government leaders at all levels about the impacts of food insecurity on our region. We are collaborating with the Virginia Food Access Coalition and the Virginia Agribusiness Council to advocate for state funding and policy priorities that will expand access to healthy, nutritious foods while supporting local growers and producers. We are also working with our partners to support state initiatives that address senior hunger, expand access to free school meals, and support the growth of Food is Medicine initiatives.

We work hard to ensure the needs of food insecure Virginians are shared with the Federal government as well. 2023 was supposed to be a Farm Bill reauthorization year, but our nation’s largest nutrition legislation was extended for a full year, giving us more time to make the case for our priorities: 1. Protect and strengthen SNAP and 2. Double funding for The Emergency Food Assistance Program to help us meet the need across the state.

In June, the Fredericksburg Regional Food Bank hosted a Farm Bill Roundtable with Congresswoman Abigail Spanberger, Virginia’s only representative on the House or Senate Agriculture Committee. Partner agencies, community advocates, and other service providers shared their experiences addressing food insecurity in the region and the critical role of Federal commodities and nutrition programs.
Thank You to Our Partners

The Federation of Virginia Food Banks is grateful to our many partners for their support this year, including:

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The Federation is a Partner State Association of Feeding America, working on behalf of:

Blue Ridge Area Food Bank
Capital Area Food Bank
Feed More
Feeding Southwest Virginia
Fredericksburg Regional Foodbank
Foodbank of Southeastern Virginia and the Eastern Shore
Virginia Peninsula Foodbank

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