

GOD'S PROVISIONS: HOPE IN A TIME OF GRIEF

During challenging times, even the strongest among us need a helping hand.

One local woman had spent her life caring for her elderly mother and found deep purpose in her role. But when her mother passed, grief overwhelmed her—compounded by the heartbreaking loss of her father soon after. Suddenly, she was alone, navigating a world that felt unfamiliar and uncertain.

The family's home had been a place of warmth and love, but now carried unexpected financial burdens. As she was dealing with the complex details of funeral arrangements and estate plans, the expenses were piling up. Soon, she found herself facing the struggle of so many in our community: the challenge of putting food on the table.

"... we can ensure that even in the hardest times, there is a place to turn."

During the Thanksgiving season, hunger and uncertainty led her to God's Provision Food Pantry in Columbus, GA. What she discovered was more than food—it was hope. The kindness she encountered was overwhelming. Shelves stocked with nourishing food, provided by generosity from



a community that cared. Moved to tears, she whispered, "This is food for Christmas, not just Thanksgiving." She had come in search of a meal but left with something far greater—compassion, dignity, and the reassurance that she was not alone.

"We are able to help many of our neighbors who are facing loss and hardship," says Pastor Israel of God's Provision Food Pantry. "No one has to suffer in silence. Because of our partnership with Feeding the Valley, we can ensure that even in the hardest times, there is a place to turn."

Because of the strength of the community and the generosity of so many, hope continues to shine—even in life's most difficult moments.

FRESH THOUGHTS

From Frank Sheppard, President & CEO



According to World Food Program USA, “Hunger is the world’s greatest solvable problem.” And at Feeding the Valley Food Bank, we know this to be true.

Here in the United States, an estimated 30% to 40% of our food supply goes to waste each year. That’s good, nourishing food that never reaches a plate, while families in our own communities face impossible choices: Eat dinner or keep the heat on? Fill a prescription or pay the electric bill?

For too many, these choices are a daily reality. But together, we can change that. By rescuing surplus food, strengthening local resources, and ensuring access to nutritious meals, we can turn abundance into opportunity—because no one should have to choose between a warm meal and a warm home.

With the expansion of our warehouse in 2024, we increased food distribution by 10.5%, despite food shortages. Thanks to our dedicated team, we expanded frozen meal deliveries and grew our Big Gobble Thanksgiving meal program from 3 counties to 16.

With our larger capacity, we’re serving even more children and seniors. Kids Café meals grew by 59% in Muscogee County and 41% overall, while

our Senior Meals program saw a 120% increase—ensuring more neighbors have the nourishment they deserve.

All of this is only possible because of the generosity of donors like you! YOU fuel our mission, helping us reach more families, provide more meals, and build stronger, more resilient communities. Every gift you give brings comfort to a senior, nourishment to a child, and hope to a family facing tough choices.

This past year, thanks to USDA Reach and Resiliency funding, we’ve strengthened our support for rural Partner Agencies—equipping them with the tools they need to serve more families facing hunger. With new kitchen equipment, forklifts, pallet jacks, and shelving, these agencies have expanded their capacity, making nutritious food more accessible in their communities.

Your gifts are an investment in us, and we are so grateful for your support! Through you, we’re not just providing food—we’re building stronger, more resilient networks to nourish more neighbors for years to come.

Thank you for being part of this work and for making a real, lasting difference in the lives of our neighbors.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Frank Sheppard', written in a cursive style.

Frank Sheppard
President & CEO



EMPTY BOWL LUNCHEON

What a “souper” afternoon! Hundreds of stunning handmade and hand-painted bowls, paired with delicious soups from our incredible local restaurants and delis, made this year’s Empty Bowl Luncheon a big success. For 31 years, this cherished community event has brought people together, forming a unique blend of art and generosity, all to help provide meals for children through our Kids Café program.



A huge thank you to the talented Britt David potters, our host Columbus Parks and Recreation, and our generous sponsors and supporters who make this mission possible. Your kindness and creativity continue to fill hearts—and bowls—across our community!

WOMAN OF THE YEAR!

Congratulations to Claire Babineaux-Fontenot, CEO of Feeding America, for being recognized as one of TIME Magazine’s 2025 Women of the Year!

Claire’s journey as a servant leader is deeply rooted in her extraordinary upbringing in a family of 108 children—biological, foster, and adopted siblings—where life was always filled with love, energy, and purpose. Her passion for ensuring that everyone has access to nutritious food shines through in everything she does.

“There will be nothing I’m asked to do in this work that will ever be anywhere near as difficult as what tens of millions of people in this country are asked to do every day. And I’m privileged that I get the chance to be their partner in this,” Claire shares.

We were honored to have Claire attend the ribbon cutting of our Albany, GA. Warehouse in 2022.

Her leadership is an inspiration, and we celebrate this well-deserved recognition!





HANNAH SKIPWORTH SNAP OUTREACH

The Feeding the Valley Food Bank's SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) strives to make a meaningful impact on the community. It's a program that's still in its infancy, but new team member Hannah

Skipworth has quickly learned the ropes as SNAP Benefits Coordinator. She is dedicated to guiding neighbors through every step of the SNAP application process, takes time to connect, listen, and understand individuals and their struggles, and advocates for them in a compassionate and supportive way.

One such neighbor, 54-year-old Charles Tucker, is a father of two. He believes that faith and family are key to ensuring his children's future success. But after the recent loss of his wife, Charles's children are grieving in ways they never have before.

However, Charles and Hannah completed a SNAP interview together, and Hannah submitted an application on his behalf. When she shared the good news that he'd been approved, Charles revealed that his son, Charles Jr., who had been struggling with the loss of his mother, had recently found a good job and was beginning to regain his sense of purpose. Hannah recently checked in with Charles, who shared that he appreciates the reliable support she provides. He knows that he can count on her to offer support whenever he needs it.

When you schedule a time to discuss SNAP assistance with Feeding the Valley, you're not just making an appointment—you're gaining a dedicated ally who will listen and provide the best help possible. We are proud to continue offering SNAP assistance to our community!

CONGRATULATIONS FEEDING THE VALLEY TEAM!

We are thrilled to share some great news: our warehouses recently underwent the rigorous AIB (American Institute of Bakers) food safety audit, and earned passing scores!

This comprehensive inspection is a key requirement from Feeding America for its network of food banks, ensuring we maintain the highest standards of food, safety, and quality. Our team worked diligently to prepare, and their hard work and dedication have paid off.

We are committed to ensuring that we can continue providing safe, nutritious food to our neighbors in our communities.



LOOKING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Visit our website feedingthevalley.org for ways to get involved! You can donate food, start a food drive, volunteer at the Food Bank, or make a donation. Join us in ensuring that no one in our community goes hungry.

