In Jackson, Kentucky, more than one in four residents live below the poverty line. That’s more than 500 people. In Breathitt County, Feeding America estimates that more than 3,200 people aren’t always sure where their next meal will come from.

Thanks to overwhelming generosity from friends like you, God’s Pantry Food Bank has recently expanded its mobile food pantry service in Breathitt County.

In partnership with the Breathitt County Cooperative Extension staff and community volunteers, God’s Pantry Food Bank launched the first monthly community food distribution at the Robinson Forest building in Jackson on November 18, 2020. Nearly 150 individual food boxes were distributed to hungry neighbors in the COVID-safe drive-thru market.

Families were greeted with friendly hellos, warm smiles and lots of groceries. At the end of the day, more than 7,900 pounds of food, enough to create 6,500 meals, were on their way to family dinner tables. The food provisions extended well beyond nonperishables like pasta and sauces, fruit and nut mix, applesauce, and canned green beans. Neighbors also received frozen meats, blueberries, shredded cheese, and potatoes.

God’s Pantry Food Bank donors are heroes to struggling individuals and families in Breathitt County. Thank you for supporting our work to reduce hunger and deliver hope through this much-needed mobile food pantry program.
Working Together, Anything Is Possible

We hope the early months of this new year have brought you, your family, and your loved ones many blessings. As we go to press with this newsletter, the February ice and snow storms wreaked havoc across Central and Eastern Kentucky. Urgent food demand required immediate action around our service region. Here in Lexington, the Food Bank held pop-up emergency food pantries, providing groceries to hundreds of families who were struggling to put food on the table in the storms’ aftermath. Our network of 400+ food pantry and meal program partners worked diligently to stay open, cope with power outages, remove snow and ice at their facilities, and distribute much-needed food as quickly as possible.

And through the pandemic and long winter months, God’s Pantry Food Bank has much to be thankful for; namely generous friends like you. You made possible the unprecedented hunger-relief measures communities needed in 2020 as families faced extremely difficult health and economic circumstances. Through tremendous community support, we:

- gathered and distributed a record-breaking 43+ million pounds of food
- reached more underserved communities through new partner food pantries and meal programs
- increased warehouse and transportation staff, and added a new delivery truck to our fleet
- expanded our capacity to rescue more food from grocery stores, restaurants and food service establishments, redirecting 10.6 million pounds of food to soup kitchens, homeless shelters, and other nonprofits
- established a monthly Mobile Food Pantry in Breathitt County (see cover story), and much more.

2021 holds more promising opportunities to provide families and individuals with access to nourishing food that will help folks stay healthy during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. We recently welcomed AppHarvest and Canteen Vending as new donors to our food rescue program (see story on page 3), significantly impacting the lives of our neighbors and the health of the communities we serve.

A huge effort will be needed throughout our service area to help individuals and families recover from the effects of the storms – power and water outages, food spoilage due to electricity loss, and impassable roads hindering access to jobs, grocery stores, and hometown food pantries.

Please join us as we work together to help our neighbors. They need our support now to get through this season and move into spring with a renewed sense of hope. Many are reaching out to us for the first time, and together with you, we can make a lasting difference in their lives.

Together, anything is possible Thank you for caring!

Michael J. Halligan
Chief Executive Officer

Morehead Distribution Center—5 Years of Community Partnership

September 2020 marked the fifth anniversary of the Morehead Regional Distribution Center. Through a community-wide effort, the Food Bank realized the construction of this important hub to gather and distribute food in Rowan and surrounding counties. By concentrating operations closer to our food pantry and meal program partners that serve thousands of families and individuals in this area, the Food Bank team processes food orders and delivers them to Morehead with greater speed and efficiency.

Highlights of the great work being done by our staff and volunteers in Morehead include:

- More than 35 agencies across 10 counties have faster, better access to nourishing food
- 15 partner agencies benefit by regular pickups that are closer to their hometowns, saving them time and fuel, improving their efficiency in serving neighbors in need
- Nearly 10 million pounds of food (almost 8.25 million meals) have moved through the Distribution Center since its opening, feeding thousands of children and adults

Thank you to the Morehead Regional Advisory Board members, donors, friends, volunteers, and Food Bank staff whose tireless efforts made this dream a reality!
Leftovers Become Lunch

Ever wonder what happens to slightly bruised apples, unsold foods from your favorite restaurant or bakery, or the food pulled from grocery store shelves? The Food Rescue Team at God’s Pantry Food Bank delivers this food to the people who need it most, reducing waste and keeping edible food out of the landfill. Our pickup and distribution operation rushes it to people facing hunger in Central and Eastern Kentucky.

Last fiscal year, over 10.6 million pounds of edible rescued food reached neighbors in need. That’s over 28,000 pounds every day of the year!

With the help of 17 volunteers, 300+ food donors, 99 partner agencies, and transportation staff from the Food Bank, daily donations are picked up from grocers, retailers, restaurants, caterers, wholesale distributors, universities and more.

Using the MealConnect food rescue app, our staff and volunteers pick up nutritious, delicious food from the food donors and deliver it to the clients in less than eight hours. Today’s pizza shop leftovers become an early evening snack for children in an after-school program.

On average, 40 percent of U.S.-produced food is thrown away. But thanks to YOU, literally tons of food destined for the trash are instead feeding hungry people across Central and Eastern Kentucky. Thank you!

Welcome to Our Two New Food Rescue Partners

Recently, God’s Pantry Food Bank has partnered with AppHarvest and Canteen Vending to provide nourishing food through our Food Rescue Program. These new opportunities expand our ability to rescue more food and transport it quickly to food pantry and meal programs that will put it to immediate use.

Through a new program with Feeding America and Canteen Vending, sandwiches, salads, snacks and beverages pulled from vending machines in Central and Eastern Kentucky are becoming meals for our homeless neighbors experiencing hunger. In January 2021, more than 5,900 pounds of food were redistributed to local nonprofit agencies to create nourishing meals in shelters and soup kitchens. This new partnership is well on its way to helping our neighbors during these difficult economic times.

AppHarvest, a new company making great strides in the field of sustainable agriculture, provided 2,500 pounds of fresh tomatoes from the first harvest at its flagship greenhouse in Morehead. Jonathan Webb, Founder and CEO of AppHarvest, along with several members of the company’s leadership team, visited the Food Bank’s Lexington distribution center in January and delivered the delicious, Appalachian-grown bounty.

Touring the warehouse with Mike Halligan, CEO of the Food Bank, the AppHarvest team shared the importance of fresh, healthy produce grown through sustainable methods. They learned how the Food Bank team distributes more than 43 million pounds of food annually through its modern, high-tech system of real-time food ordering processes and efficient transportation services.

Caring about our neighbors and sharing healthy food and locally-grown vegetables to alleviate hunger and improve health outcomes are key mission components for the Food Bank, AppHarvest, and Canteen Vending. We are excited to welcome these new food rescue donors and look forward to fruitful partnerships homegrown right here in Appalachia!
Look what YOU made happen in 2020!

Last year was a whirlwind of obstacles, challenges and change. The pandemic overtook us like a fierce storm. As our signature fundraising events were canceled one by one, we regrouped with new opportunities to engage our donors and friends in the mission-critical work of the Food Bank.

Businesses and restaurants were struggling to make ends meet, and our Events Team remained determined to help. Your generosity buoyed the Food Bank’s outreach throughout the crisis.

Thanks to you, the obstacles didn’t stop us. With our in-person tasting events indefinitely postponed, we created More Than Just a Meal. Held last September during Hunger Action Month, funds from this “fun-raiser” enabled the Food Bank to purchase and distribute more food through our Fayette County Food Pantry program, while also supporting the Lexington restaurant and beverage community. Over $6,000 was raised, along with helping spread awareness of the crisis of hunger across our region.

The Sharing Thanksgiving Basket Brigades to build holiday food boxes in Lexington and London also encountered challenges and had to change plans. These in-person events switched to virtual platforms in November, and an amazing $48,000+ was raised! The generosity of so many donors, participants, sponsors and volunteers ensured that 5,800 families in need enjoyed a nourishing Thanksgiving meal with plenty of leftovers.

Canceling our annual Taste of the Bluegrass event left us with many donated items on hand, so the Food Bank launched Stuff Your Stocking in December. Donors and friends got on board this online holiday auction and raised nearly $11,000 to help feed hungry neighbors.

Adding to Stuff Your Stocking was a first-ever holiday raffle. Five hundred tickets were made available to win a full flight of Pappy Van Winkle—one of the world’s most sought-after bourbons. The raffle generated $50,000 for the Food Bank, and Tracy Durham-Beall was the lucky first prize winner!

The obstacles, challenges, and changes were more than met, thanks to good friends like you. Through these newly created events alone, donors provided over $115,000 to feed hungry families. That’s 920,000 meals!

YES, Mike! Working together, anything is possible. Use my gift to help our neighbors recover from the winter storms.

I want to become a Hero for the Hungry with a recurring, monthly gift of $______. I understand I can change or cancel at any time and have provided payment information below.

Charge my gift to: ☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard ☐ Amex ☐ Discover

Card Number ____________________________
Expiration Date _________________________

Signature _____________________________

For recurring monthly gifts, please charge my card on the ☐ 1st ☐ 20th day each month.

Please make your check payable to: God’s Pantry Food Bank, 1685 Jaggie Fox Way, Lexington, KY 40511-1084

Please call 859.288.5335 to charge your gift by phone, or visit give.godspantry.org to make a gift online.