

## "I am a part of a program that cares about my future." ELEVATING VOICES OF OUR YOUTH

Tomorrow's leaders are working to institute change today. The Camden Youth Advisory Council is a group of 16 middle and high school students who are eager to make their community a healthier place.

Twice a month, students meet with members of FBSJ's Health and Wellness team to develop and implement initiatives that improve the wellbeing of the residents of Camden. Past projects have included improving school food, increasing access to clean drinking water, and organizing a day of play for community members.

CYAC also acts as an advisory board for the Campbell's School Food Collective called Full Futures, which fosters a school nutrition environment that ensures all students are well-nourished and ready to thrive.

"I want the kids to have the opportunity to experience as much as they can while they are young, so that they can get their minds going and planning for the future," said Envy Young, Youth Program Associate at FBSJ. "They will be able to take the information they are gaining now and apply it as adults."

Recently, the students talked about what it meant for them to "be able to make decisions and actually being heard by adults and school leaders," and "being able to say I am a part of a program that cares about my future."



# A Taste of Compassion

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## CHANGES TO SNAP BENEFITS

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as food stamps, provides assistance to low-income families and individuals to help them buy nutritious foods to keep them healthy. So when the pandemic hit in March 2020, the federal government authorized an emergency increase to monthly allotments to help SNAP recipients pay for groceries.

However, these emergency allotments ended February 28, 2023, returning SNAP households to their regular benefit amounts. This shift is putting a strain on those who depended on the additional benefits, particularly during this time of high inflation. And, even in this short timeframe, the Food Bank has seen an impact.

In the first three months of 2023, FBSJ served 58 percent more people than the same period last year. In March alone, we served 48 percent more people – **more than 150,000 neighbors**. Also, 60 percent of our agency leaders reported that there was more or significantly more need at their agency in March, and more than 40 percent said that the reduction in SNAP benefits was the cause.

FBSJ anticipated this rise in demand and purchased more food for our 200+ partner agencies. We will also continue to monitor and support our agencies in meeting the increased need.



## ELEVATING VOICES AND STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES



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#### OUR MISSION:

The Food Bank of South Jersey exists to provide an immediate solution to the urgent problem of hunger by providing food to people in need, teaching them to eat nutritiously, and helping them to find sustainable ways to improve their lives.





## STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES TOGETHER

I recently had the pleasure of representing the Food Bank of South Jersey at the annual Feeding America conference, an event that brings together food banks from across the country to learn and share best practices. I participated in a panel discussion highlighting the conference's main theme – Strengthening Communities.

Specifically, I spoke about an exciting project that we are engaged in – the Camden Food Security Collective. The Collective, which was created to foster food security in Camden through structural equity, is a unique impact project bringing together 28 community organizations and seven residents. Our goal is to co-locate community resources, increase residents' financial security, and transform the local food economy by 2031.

None of this can get done if we aren't elevating the voices of everyone in the community – from our partner agencies to local community organizations to the neighbors we serve. We can't do all this ourselves. And we cannot do it without listening.

Which is why we've engaged the neighbors we serve in regular listening sessions throughout South Jersey, in order to learn more about the issues that hold them back from thriving and how we can serve them more effectively.

Strengthening the communities we serve is an important element to reducing food insecurity and building long-term sustainability. By embracing a community-led vision, based on mutual respect and our desire to always learn and be better, we will build a more food-secure South Jersey... together.



Fred C. Wasiak  
President & CEO  
Food Bank of South Jersey



## ELEVATING VOICES OF OUR PANTRY LEADERS

Our pantry partners are on the forefront of serving South Jersey. Over the past few years, we have added to our board of trustees four pantry leaders who see the challenges facing our neighbors and what's needed for fighting hunger week after week.



"It's funny, because when I was asked [to be on the board], I was stepping out of my comfort zone. But it's important. Food insecurity is a critical issue in our communities," says Carol Strock, Director of the food pantry at St. Paul's United Methodist Church in West Deptford. "And I am very grateful. I've learned everybody on the board truly cares about what's going on and helping with food insecurity. I am very impressed with that. A lot of people go above and beyond."

Having pantry leaders, who are embedded in our shared neighborhoods, lend their voices to help direct and lead our organization is so powerful.

"Being a board member of the Food Bank of South Jersey has allowed me to be a part of the bigger picture, and while hunger may be global, the provision is universal," says Darlene Trappier, Executive Director of Beacon of Hope Food Pantry in Mt. Holly. "We always strive to shoot for the stars, but if we just hit the moon, we are still on track."

FBSJ is also regularly in conversation with our network of 200+ pantries as we look for new ways to support these vital partners in the fight against hunger. Most recently, we've been in conversations with leaders over the recent changes to SNAP allotments and how this is affecting our neighbors.

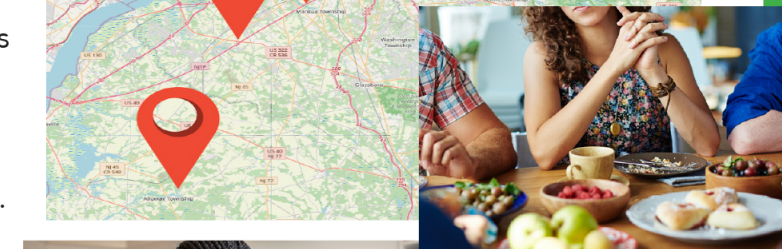
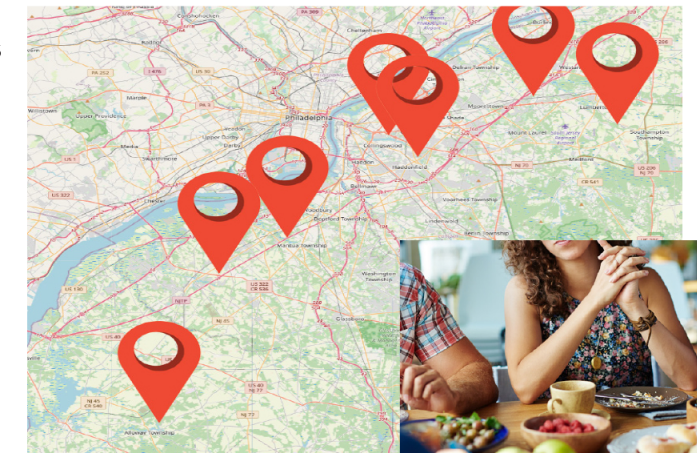
## ELEVATING VOICES OF OUR NEIGHBORS

To make lasting change, we need to view challenges from many lenses. To end hunger, we must hear from neighbors with lived experiences.

Last fall, the Food Bank of South Jersey began holding listening sessions in our four-county service area of Burlington, Camden, Gloucester, and Salem. These opportunities to come together with our neighbors to break bread and talk about the needs of our communities were something we had been wanting to implement for some time.

These intimate conversations have provided rich, eye-opening insights. And we're only just getting started. You may be familiar with some of the stories our neighbors have shared with us from our mailings or a recent video, but for every story that is told, there are hundreds we have not yet heard.

"I wish I knew the Food Bank before [COVID]. Getting food from the Food Bank makes a big difference in my house. Really big." - Martha, a neighbor in Camden County. *To hear Martha's full story, please visit [foodbanksj.org/neighbors](https://www.foodbanksj.org/neighbors).*



## THERE IS ROOM FOR ALL AT OUR TABLE

Our new Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging commitment underscores the importance of elevating voices. As our statement emphasizes, we work vigorously to address the root causes of hunger that prevent so many from fully thriving and will use our collective voice for positive change. By honoring the voices in our community, we learn how we can evolve and enhance our mission to improve the lives of those we serve.

*Welcome to our table –*  
**THERE IS A PLACE  
FOR EVERYONE.**

