

A Taste of Compassion

A publication of the Food Bank of South Jersey



FOOD BANK
OF SOUTH JERSEY
Food | Nutrition | Sustainability
Summer 2023

GIVING HUNGER A SUMMER VACATION

SUMMER SHOULD BE ABOUT FUN, NOT WORRY

MEMBER OF
**FEEDING
AMERICA**

BEING A BETTER ADVOCATE

Advocacy can mean many different things. A common definition is the act or process of supporting a cause or a proposal.

The Food Bank of South Jersey has many advocates. Our donors advocate with their dedicated and invaluable support of our mission. Our volunteers advocate every time they lend a hand to our programs. You're an advocate by sharing something from this newsletter with your family and friends.

Recently, we brought together network agencies from across the state. These leaders in the fight against hunger came together to share best practices and challenges and were encouraged to

be advocates on important policy issues.

We have a lot to advocate for today. The new Farm Bill being considered in Congress will set investment levels for The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) and will hopefully strengthen and expand access to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). So many South Jersey residents are impacted by both these programs.

In Trenton, we are always advocating the needs of our communities to our elected leaders.

We recognize that organizational power and voice must be authorized by who we serve. We live by that at FBSJ, constantly listening to our agency leaders and neighbors we serve.

When we do that, we can be better advocates to fully address the systemic inequities that often lead to food insecurity.



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

COPE TRAINING - INCREASING UNDERSTANDING OF LIVING IN POVERTY

The Health and Wellness team offers a number of learning opportunities to the public beyond healthy cooking and nutrition. Community program offerings include HeartSavr, ServSafe, and more. Our latest exercise is C.O.P.E., the Cost of Poverty Experience, created by Think Tank, Inc.

The C.O.P.E. training offers a glimpse into the lives of families impacted by poverty in America by having participants experience the daily realities of families living on a low income. Participants must go through "four weeks," following in the footsteps of real experiences, attempting to accomplish different tasks while managing various challenges.

The goal of C.O.P.E. is to deepen organizations' understanding of the complexities of living in poverty and create an urgency for groups to partner with low-income communities. The program was designed to build empathy for our neighbors, create a deeper understanding of the many factors that affect poverty, and offer new perspectives on how to address poverty in our neighborhoods.

The Food Bank staff participated in the training during a staff meeting earlier this year. Now, our community programs team is offering C.O.P.E. to other organizations and individuals. We're excited to be creating more opportunities for others to learn and, in turn, more opportunities for those in South Jersey to thrive.



SUMMER MEALS – HELPING SOUTH JERSEY YOUTH TAKE A VACATION FROM HUNGER

Throughout the summer weeks, our Summer Meals team provides nutritious food to children and teens in our four-county service area. This year, we expect to distribute 150,000 meals and snacks to 67 sites.

Several facilities in our program said that FBSJ’s Summer Meals is a huge weight off their backs, as the provided food resources help offset their costs so they can focus on other things for their kids.



Once again, the Food Bank of South Jersey is feeding children in conjunction with the Summer Food Service Program provided by USDA. This year, we are also providing summer meals thanks to our incredible partners at The Wawa Foundation, who have provided us with \$100,000 to feed South Jersey.

The food in this year’s Summer Meals program has caused a lot of excitement. Kids have been able to explore many different healthy items and have enjoyed trying new combinations of things. We hear that many have sat around tables challenging each other to explore new combinations – like dipping crackers into applesauce!

No matter the mixture, summer should be about fun and not about worry. Thanks to your support and that of our partners, we are putting the heat on summer hunger!

HUNGER GAMES RECAP

After a three-year, in-person hiatus, the Food Bank Hunger Games returned in June. Combining elements from popular cooking-challenge shows, the Hunger Games tasks teams with creating healthy meals in 45 minutes using food items that we distribute to our neighbors.

Hosted by PHL17 anchor and producer Jennifer Lewis-Hall, this year’s event showcased the skills of South Jersey groups Capehart Scatchard; Cipriani & Werner, P.C.; DeVal Lifecycle Support and Parts Life, Inc.; Holman Enterprises; and Virtua Health. Their culinary creations were scored by a panel of distinguished judges: Camden County Commissioner Virginia Betteridge; Chief Family Officer of EMZ Corp, which owns Norma’s Restaurant in Cherry Hill, Elias Bitar; owner and chef Rakesh Ramola from IndeBlue restaurant in Cherry Hill; and author and editor of NJ PEN, Matt Skoufalos.



This year’s competition was stiff, but Holman Enterprises was named the 2023 Food Bank Champions for their delicious Holman Hash!

Though the Hunger Games is a beloved event for its fun and fast-paced atmosphere, it also serves an important purpose – to highlight why so many families struggle with putting wholesome meals on the table. Our teams get a first-hand look at how difficult it is to create a healthy meal with limited resources.

We look forward to seeing you next year!

FBSJ KICKS OFF FARM TO NEIGHBOR PILOT PROGRAM

From our agencies to our neighbors, a request we hear repeatedly is for more fresh produce – and even more so now as inflation continues to strain the food network.

Recently, the Food Bank of South Jersey began an innovative partnership to bring farm-fresh produce to our neighbors. Through a community supported agriculture pilot, FBSJ invested in the growing season of Free Haven Farms, located in Lawnside and Pemberton.

By supporting the farm upfront, FBSJ not only has reliable produce to deliver directly to three of its agencies, but it also helps the local farm plan and have a reliable distribution source for the season.

“With this program, everything we grow has a home, and it changes the way we are farming now,” said Dr. Cynthia Hall, who runs Free Haven Farms with her husband Micaiah. “We know ahead of the season exactly what we need to produce. It’s been much more stable.”

“With this program, everything we grow has a home”

Micaiah said the partnership has helped bring in more business, create jobs on the farm, and it’s also helped them think about how to make the pilot even better.

“People now are meeting the farmer who is growing their food,” Micaiah said. “We are collecting a lot of data so we can find ways to improve this and do it even better.”

“Education is our strength. People are always willing to learn, so I think adding more of those programs will have a positive impact.”

During the 16-week pilot, 1,600 produce boxes will be distributed to neighbors in need throughout South Jersey.



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.

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