

# A Taste of Compassion

A Publication of the Food Bank of South Jersey



**FOOD BANK**  
OF SOUTH JERSEY  
Food | Nutrition | Sustainability  
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## In this issue:

- Aspiring to be Better Through Innovation
- Stories From Our Neighbors
- 2023 Impact & Beyond
- Innovations in Operations
- MLK Day of Service
- Getting Involved with FBSJ - Virtual Food Drives

# Impact Beyond the Numbers

MEMBER OF  
**FEEDING  
AMERICA**

# ASPIRING TO BE BETTER THROUGH INNOVATION

While I don't typically make New Year's resolutions, I do try to focus on my aspirations for the year - broader objectives that I hope to work toward.

At the Food Bank, we have an ongoing aspiration: to always try and do better. Yes, it's simple, but it also reflects our efforts to examine and re-examine how we do things, and how we can better serve our neighbors.

Last year, we worked hard on this aspiration, and one way we did it was through a focus on innovation.

We launched a new senior feeding program that has served our neighbors with more variety and better nutritious options to meet health needs. The result is a waiting list of senior communities that want to be a part of the program.

We developed a new approach to our Summer Meals program that reaches children when they are out of school and don't have access to free and reduced-cost meals. The impact of the new program not only increased satisfaction among children, but it also got them to try new things.

Additionally, we significantly increased healthy produce in our communities by partnering with local farmers on fresh approaches that pushed our farm-to-neighbor delivery.



We've also taken on the challenge of finding innovative, collaborative ways to better serve some of our toughest food deserts in South Jersey. We want to transform food access and think more comprehensively with community partners on how to co-locate community resources.

Of course, not everything will always be successful. But that doesn't mean we shouldn't make the full effort.

In doing this work, with the end goal of being better and providing better service to our neighbors, we will examine our data and analyze the important numbers. But it's the stories that I hear - from our pantries, Health and Wellness educators, and SNAP Navigators - that ensure our impact always aspires to go beyond the numbers.

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



## STORIES FROM OUR NEIGHBORS

**"People need help right now. ... Tomorrow is too late for some people."**

Last December, Sheila, a compassionate nurse dedicated to providing in-home care, faced a sudden and life-altering event when she slipped on black ice. The resulting injuries meant she could no longer work, unraveling the stability she had painstakingly built as a single parent.

"It was devastating because everything I had built up, it was just gone," Sheila shared. "We lost our house. I'm still trying to get back on my feet."

Sheila turned to the Food Bank of South Jersey's network of compassionate partners for support and crucial resources.

"The food program in South Jersey has been a blessing. If I went there today, they would give me food and say, 'We're gonna be here for you.'"

Since we last met with Sheila, she has found a new place to call home, and we are just so grateful our community was able to support her on her journey.



# 2023 IMPACT & BEYOND



Our new Summer Meals program served more meals, increased healthy options, and improved satisfaction. Our **Kids Thrive 365 program** works to increase access to food afterschool, on the weekends, and in the summer.



Through **673 educational sessions**, FBSJ educators helped children, seniors, and families improve health outcomes. We also launched the Healthy Outcomes Pantry Empowerment program to help partners incorporate healthy food options.

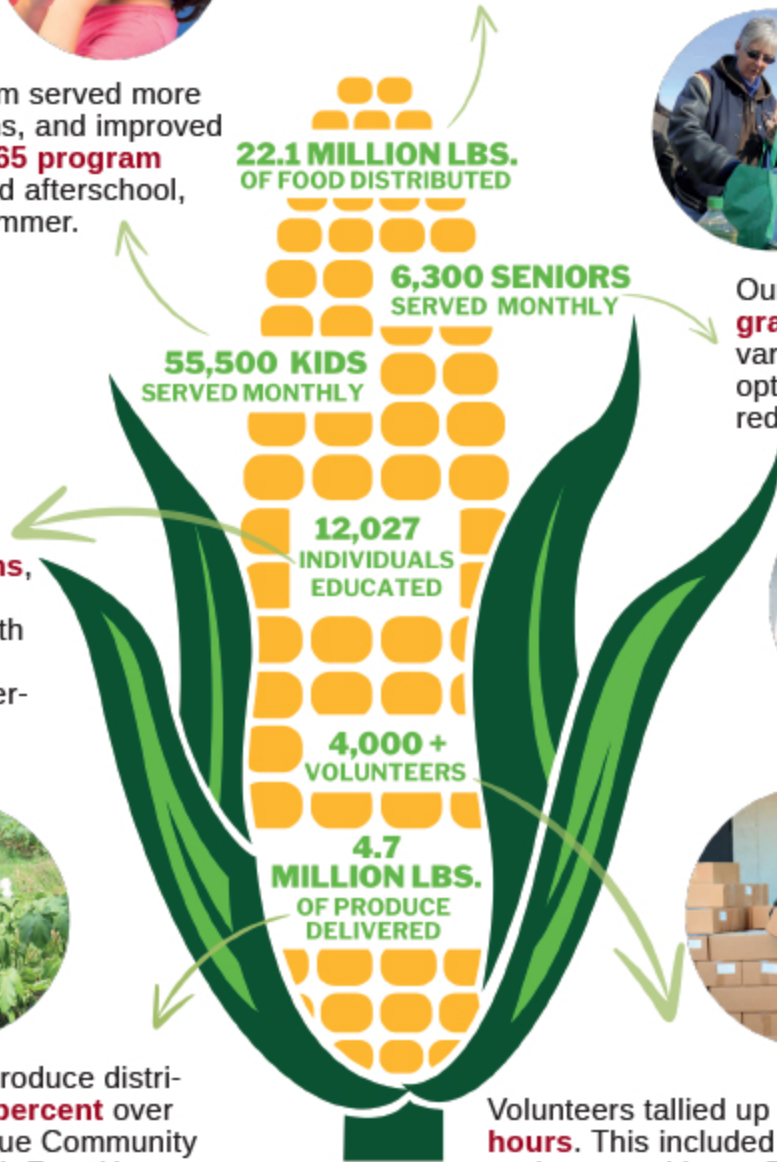


We increased the amount of produce distributed to our neighbors by **67 percent** over last year. This included a unique Community Supported Agriculture pilot with Free Haven Farms that focused on the regular delivery of produce from farm to neighbor.

This is the equivalent of **18.4 million meals**, reaching more than **177,000 neighbors** each month. Food is distributed through **300 community organizations** and our direct delivery programs that serve children and seniors.



Our new **SNRS program** improved food variety and produce options and helped reduce food waste.



Volunteers tallied up **13,342 service hours**. This included skills-based assistance with our SNAP Navigators, providing invaluable support in assisting our neighbors apply for benefits.

## INNOVATIONS IN OPERATIONS

The numbers above not only tell the story of the Food Bank, but they emphasize the importance of our Operations team. From how many millions of pounds of food leave our warehouse to the multiple places from which we procure that food, Operations is the backbone of the work that we do here.

Last year was a big year, with near-pandemic levels of neighbors seeking assistance. With the need that great, we must be great too.

In 2023, Operations became even more efficient. Thanks to innovations in processes, gathering items for our community partners now takes about half the time. Inventory now takes one morning instead of two full days. And two rescue farms in the area began taking our food trash, allowing us to give our perishable waste to (we're sure) very-pleased animals.

Learn more about our incredible Operations team and their advancements over the past year in our recent blog piece: [foodbanksj.org/blog](https://foodbanksj.org/blog).

# MLK DAY OF SERVICE

Thank you to everyone who supported our MLK Day of Service. It was a chilly one, but we are so grateful for those who volunteered, dropped off food items, or donated online to help Stuff the Truck.

The Food Bank of South Jersey relies on thousands of individuals, like you, who are dedicated to helping others in our community. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, "Everybody can be great, because anybody can serve." Thank you to all who help serve our communities throughout the year. Together, we can change hunger in South Jersey!



## GETTING INVOLVED WITH FBSJ – VIRTUAL FOOD DRIVES

There are many ways to join the journey to change hunger in South Jersey. We are always appreciative when you donate your time or resources through volunteering or monetary contributions.

One way to bring those two areas together is to start your own Virtual Food Drive. Engage your organization, colleagues, and friends to join the effort and raise funds to support FBSJ's mission.

Virtual Food Drive captain Jacob Lazinger from Cherry Hill has had a big impact. Since 2020, Jacob has raised more than \$26,000 – the equivalent of almost 80,000 meals!

### **"Knowing that we are able to make a sizeable impact in our community is really the true benefit"**

"For the fourth straight year, I had the privilege of captaining a team in the Food Fight Virtual Food Drive, and the experience was truly inspiring. Nothing made me happier than seeing how generous my friends, family, and co-workers were to help those in need," Jacob said. "The fundraising page was easy to set up and the campaign was spread easily via social media, text messages, and email. Each year we have eclipsed the total donations from the prior year. Knowing that we are able to make a sizable impact in our community is really the true benefit of setting up our annual food drive."

Visit [foodbanksj.org/virtualfooddrive](https://foodbanksj.org/virtualfooddrive) to learn more about leading your own.



**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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