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# Food first

*Inspiring Hope, Feeding Families*



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## A NOTE FROM KAREN

*Dear Friends,*

**"I'm sorry. It's not much..."**



How many times have we heard that from our donors who walk in the door carrying their donations of food or money? We see the look of disappointment on their faces that tells us they wanted to do so much more.

At Virginia Peninsula Foodbank, we appreciate our donors large and small. Once it leaves the Foodbank, that lone can of chili or fruit is no longer a small donation – it is a meal to someone. That ten dollar bill will provide 40 meals to someone, maybe even someone you know. **All of these donations of food and funds add up to be a big help to struggling families in our community. Thank you.**

The first half of our fiscal year has come and gone. Through the generosity of our food donors, including our retail and other corporate partners and those small community food drives mentioned above, we received over 5.8 million pounds of grocery products. During this same timeframe, we and our partner agencies distributed over 6 million pounds of grocery products – the equivalent of 5 million meals - more than any other comparable months in our history.

**So what do these numbers tell us?** They tell us that although the economy seems to be improving for many, there is still a significant number of children, families, and seniors that need our services. The numbers also tell us that if the demand continues to outpace the supply of donated products, we will need to depend more on purchased food in the future.

Thankfully, as we struggle to meet the demand for more food, and as we strive to improve the nutritional value of the food we distribute, we have partners in our community that support our mission. Bank of America has designated the Virginia Peninsula Foodbank as its regional 2014 Neighborhood Builder. With the funds received through this award, the Foodbank will be able to expand our mobile pantry program and take more fresh fruits and vegetables into the neighborhoods where help is needed. Additionally, the Williamsburg Health Foundation is supporting this effort to improve the nutritional value of foods through a grant to also purchase fresh fruits and vegetables.

With the help of so many partners in the community, large and small, we will truly be able to minimize hunger and promote nutrition across the Greater Peninsula.

*Karen L. Joyner*

Karen L. Joyner  
Chief Executive Officer



## BJ's Charitable Foundation helps increase food storage capacity for local agencies

The Virginia Peninsula Foodbank was one of 30 food banks to be awarded a \$21,000 grant from BJ's Charitable Foundation in celebration of the BJ's Wholesale Club's 30th anniversary. The Virginia Peninsula Foodbank utilized the award to purchase much needed refrigerators, freezers, and coolers for partner agencies to assist in their storage needs. This allows for the increase of fresh fruits and vegetables and other perishable food to be distributed to hungry families in our community.

"We were thrilled to have been awarded one of the 30th anniversary grants by BJ's Charitable Foundation," said Michele Benson-Howell, Chief Development Officer. "Because of this grant, we were able to work with our local partners to help them obtain equipment and refrigeration and ensure that food makes it into the hands of more neighbors in need across the Greater Peninsula."

While some partner agencies often have adequate space and storage, our smaller partner organizations and charities often have limited equipment abilities. This hinders their ability to serve the community. By providing anti-hunger partners like food pantries, shelters and meal programs with the necessary equipment, they can transport and store a larger amount of perishable items and thus distribute more food to local families struggling with food insecurity.

"BJ's Wholesale Club is proud to reach our 30-year milestone and share our enthusiasm by expanding our role in the fight against hunger," said Dawn Albright, General Manager of the BJ's Wholesale Club in Hampton. "Supporting the Virginia Peninsula Foodbank and their local agencies' need for capacity building will ensure that perishable food can reach the people who need it most in our own backyard."



## Legal Food Frenzy

The 9th Annual Statewide Legal Food Frenzy sponsored by the Virginia Bar Association Young Lawyers Division, the Federation of Virginia Food Banks, and the Office of the Attorney General will take place March 30 through April 10, 2015. This statewide competition benefits the seven Virginia foodbanks and is a way for the lawyers and their staff to raise food and funds to help those in their community who silently struggle with hunger.

For the first time in eight years, the Virginia Peninsula Foodbank had a winner. William & Mary Law School took home the Attorney General's Cup in the Law School Category and we are hoping for more participants and winners this year from our community. We would like to thank our past participants Kaufman & Canoles; LeClairRyan; Jones, Blechman, Woltz & Kelly; Legal Aid Society of Eastern Virginia; Higginbottom Law; Patten, Wornom, Hatten & Diamonstein; Williams Mullen; Gillette Law Group; Schempf & Ware; Kristina Beavers; Quadros & Associates; Tarley Robinson; and the Newport News Public Defenders Office and Criminal Courts.

*For more information on how you can make a difference and get involved in the food frenzy, please contact Donna Tighe at 757.596.7188.*



Food and fund drives are vital to the success of the Foodbank's mission. The Foodbank is grateful for each and every one of our hunger relief advocates. If you are ready to create your own project to help minimize hunger in our local community, please call us at 757-596-7188.

## Mayflower Marathon 2014 – Over 180,000 Meals Provided for Residents Across the Greater Peninsula

For 57 ½ hours, from Friday, November 21, to Sunday, November 23, the 18th Annual 106.9 The Fox and FM99 Mayflower Marathon Food and Fund Drive brought in donations at the Peninsula Town Center at Coliseum Central in Hampton, collecting enough food and money to provide over 180,000 meals to families across the Greater Peninsula.

The turkeys and canned goods donated were distributed on the Monday following the event so that the food reached families by the holidays. With the increase in numbers of those seeking help from the Virginia Peninsula Foodbank during the holiday season, the Mayflower Marathon event helps meet the need and ensures a meal is on the table for many families. This year's drive collected more than 500 turkeys that provided a true holiday meal for those who are struggling with hunger.

"We were so pleased with the turnout at this year's Mayflower Marathon. The donations come at a critical time right before the holidays, and we are thankful for the generosity shown by our community," said Michele Benson-Howell, Chief Development Officer for the Virginia Peninsula Foodbank. "It just shows the power of what we can do when we all come together to fight hunger."





# Maria's Story

Maria, a mother of three and grandmother to four, never thought she would find herself sleeping on her couch, with a perfectly good bed just feet away in her bedroom. This is the case though, as she has found herself becoming the primary caregiver for her four grandchildren. Their mother, a military vet, is unable to care for her children because she is unable to find work after her medical retirement from the Army. Maria can't afford to move into a larger home, so she shares her two bedroom apartment with her four grandchildren, one boy in the spare room and three girls sharing what used to be Maria's bedroom.

Maria remains cheerful and upbeat about her life and the unexpected turn of events. She says she is grateful to have her grandchildren in her life, even if it means she has to care for them full time. Maria is unable to work because an hourly position would force her to put the younger children in day care, which is costly.

Her SNAP benefits were cut last year, as they were across the nation, and she has turned to her local food pantry to help her provide more nutritious options for her family. She tells me that if it weren't for the church food pantry, she wouldn't be able to provide eggs, milk or healthy proteins such as chicken

and peanut butter to her grandchildren. Maria is grateful for the fresh fruits and vegetables that she and her youngest granddaughter tote up the three flights of stairs each week. The young girls look forward to their visits to the food pantry each week because the ladies who work there usually set aside an extra cookie or other sweet treat for them.

Maria hopes that with time, her daughter will be able to get back on her feet and be able to care for her children. In the meantime, and with the help of her local food pantry, she will continue to care for them, because as she says,

**“It is truly a blessing to have so much good in life with so much bad going on in the world.”**



Each day almost 74,000 people in our communities face hunger, including 18,800 children. Please consider partnering with the Foodbank to help your neighbors in need.

## Grant News

We offer our sincere gratitude to the following companies and/or organizations for their commitment to the Foodbank and the many programs we operate in order to bring much needed, nutritious food to those who may otherwise go without.

- Daily Press Holiday Fund – Food Distribution Program
- Ferguson Enterprises – Food Distribution and BackPack Programs
- Wells Fargo – Backpack Program
- Bank of America – Kids Cafe/Culinary Training Program
- Mars Foundation – Food Distribution Program
- Walmart – Food Distribution Program
- First United Methodist Church – Culinary Training Program
- Williamsburg Health Foundation – Mobile Food Pantry Fresh Food Distribution
- Food Lion Charitable Foundation – Backpack Program
- Feeding America/BJ's Charitable Foundation – Agency Capacity
- Peninsula Community Foundation – Culinary Training Program

# Children Receive Nutritious Meals

## Thanks to the

Virginia Peninsula Foodbank



# Culinary Training Program

Our Kids Cafe Program closed the calendar year by providing almost 5,000 nutritious, hot meals weekly to children at risk of hunger. Since the beginning of the school year, the Kids Cafe expanded from 25 to 27 sites to support the ever increasing identified need to help these children. We must provide them the nutrition they need to be healthy and learn so they can become educated, productive adults. While last year was a banner year for what we were able to accomplish within the community, we know that we must do more.

The Foodbank is capable of meeting this expanded need only through the generous donations of individuals and groups and through the use of the Virginia Peninsula Foodbank Culinary Training Program. The Culinary Training Program provides 12 weeks of free training to economically disadvantaged adults who want to build new job skills. They learn while preparing Kids Cafe meals.

This last Culinary Training Program class was very special. The class graduated on December 4th, but the entire class volunteered to prepare meals for an additional two weeks to ensure the Kids Cafe children would receive nutritious meals until school recessed for the holidays.

These graduates were not paid for their time or transportation throughout their 12 weeks of training or two extra weeks of volunteering. Many of the students depend on public transportation and must walk the ½ mile to the Foodbank from the nearest bus stop, or they had to find rides from friends or family. Four of the eight graduates had perfect attendance during the 12-week program. All of the students passed their ServSafe Managers Examination and are now certified in the Commonwealth of Virginia to manage food service operations or open their own food service businesses.



While at the Foodbank, this group of remarkable people produced approximately 64,000 meals over 14 weeks to feed hungry children. How is that for dedication and caring? Their generosity of time and work exemplifies the spirit of the Foodbank. It is another example of how those with the least will often give the most.

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## Bank of America



We are honored to have been chosen for the 2014 Bank of America Neighborhood Builder Award.

More to come in our next newsletter!

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Thank you to our Donors  
and Volunteers for all of  
your support during the  
Holiday Season!



# SAVE THE DATE

March 30 – April 10, 2015  
Legal Food Frenzy

March 15, 2015  
Newport News One City  
Marathon

May 9, 2015  
National Association of Letter  
Carriers Stamp Out Hunger  
Food Drive

May 23, 2015  
Chick-fil-A 10K/5K

# 2015 TASTEFULLY YOURS

## Premier Food Tasting Event

Featuring Craft Beers and Wines

Thursday, April 2<sup>nd</sup> 6 - 9:30 p.m.

Hampton Roads Convention Center



### CONTACT US

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2401 Aluminum Avenue  
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757-596-7188  
[www.hrfoodbank.org](http://www.hrfoodbank.org)



### SOCIAL MEDIA



<http://www.facebook.com/VAPenFoodbank>



<http://twitter.com/hrfoodbank>

### MISSION

The mission of the Virginia Peninsula Foodbank is to distribute food effectively through collaborative efforts that minimize hunger, promote nutrition and encourage self-reliance through education.

### VISION

To inspire hope by leading the effort for a hunger-free and properly nourished community.

### SERVICE AREA

The Foodbank encompasses the following cities and counties:

Hampton, Newport News, Gloucester, Mathews, Williamsburg, Poquoson, Surry, James City, and York.

