

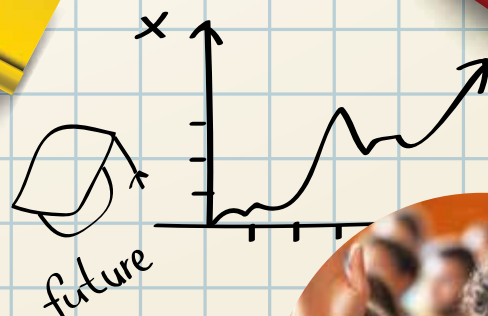
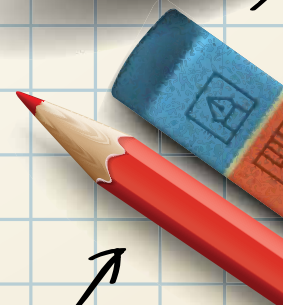
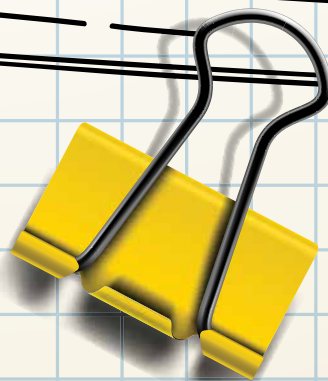
SUMMER 2024

SCHOOLING HUNGER



MARYLAND
FOOD BANK

Like





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Maryland Food Bank



Letter from PRESIDENT CARMEN DEL GUERCIO

Fighting child poverty isn't just the priority of a single administration – it is the shared aspiration of our state. This is why our legislation calls on community leaders across Maryland to come together and create comprehensive plans on how to make their neighborhoods better and do it in partnership with schools, civic centers, local elected officials, health clinics, and other key institutions. Together, we will target the places most in need of our help – and we will uplift these communities.

—GOVERNOR WES MOORE, ADDRESSING THE MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY, FEBRUARY 28, 2024

While reflecting on Governor Moore's efforts to fight child poverty, I think it's important to note that his vision and most of the Maryland Food Bank's strategic plan (MFB 3.0), keep the power in the hands and hearts of the true subject matter experts—community based organizations who use their knowledge and experience to ensure that Marylanders who need resources the most, have the easiest access to them.

And his focus on the next generation mirrors our on-going efforts to ensure school pantries are year-round community resources so that families can find help when they need it the most, during the summer. In a recent survey, 82% said they spend more on groceries (\$168/mo.) during the summer months when their children are out of school.

Additionally, **73% say it's harder to make ends** meet during the summer; and **61% of rural families** say they don't have enough money for food during the summer.

But your support allows us to continue refining already successful initiatives—like our School and Higher Ed Pantry Program (which you'll read about on pages 4-7) and Summer/Supper Clubs (see page 8).

Additionally, new efforts like sourcing highly sought-after healthier snacks and prepared meals, as well as dramatically increasing the efficiency of a program that ensures kids have enough to eat over the weekends, are going to have an even greater impact on more children and families.

As Governor Moore said so eloquently, "fighting child poverty isn't just the priority of a single administration—is the shared aspiration of our state."

In meeting and talking with so many of you over the years, I agree. As Marylanders, we have a lot of pride in our state, and care deeply about the wellbeing of each other, especially one of our most vulnerable populations, children.

Join us, and your fellow Marylanders in saying "ENOUGH! We stand united in our efforts finally break the generational cycles of child poverty and hunger."

In partnership,

CARMEN DEL GUERCIO

PRESIDENT & CEO, Maryland Food Bank



PACK TO GIVE BACK

Join us at Maryland's premier year-end volunteer event that brings

CORPORATE SPONSORS

together to assemble holiday meal boxes to help feed our neighbors in need.



mdfoodbank.org/p2gb

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 1
AT MFB HEADQUARTERS IN BALTIMORE



Contact Jessica Palumbo to get the partnership started: jpalumbo@mdfoodbank.org



MFB VOICES:

Hear from more Voices at mdfoodbank.org/voices




Melanie Perrault, Provost, Towson University, Board Member, MFB

"When I was in fifth grade, we were all sitting on the floor during an assembly, listening to someone read. All of the sudden, my teacher came weaving through the students to get to someone in the front. I'll never forget the look on the teacher's face as he came walking back with a student who had passed out. At the time, I didn't really understand. But that look was profound anger and sadness. The reason that kid passed out was because he didn't have enough food to eat. That student never came back. I don't know what happened to them, but that image has never left me."

"It's such a tangible connection that even if I only have 5 bucks that I can give, this memory reminds me that the food bank is a darn good place to put that money."

TEACHING HUNGER A LESSON



1 IN 3 MARYLAND
CHILDREN FACE
HUNGER ON
ANY GIVEN DAY,
AND THAT IS
AN IRRATIONAL
NUMBER...

The next time you are at your grandchild's basketball game, take a closer look: two or three of those budding athletes may be battling an unseen defender—hunger.

The fact that Maryland continues to be one of the wealthiest states in the country makes it all the more unacceptable that some kids continue to encounter challenges their teammates will not.


So, how do we level the playing field? Partnerships, Pantries, and Proactivity.

Not long after Anne Miller founded MFB (the first food bank on the east coast) in 1979, another Maryland institution, Giant Food, saw an opportunity to provide some new resources for residents of the Old Line state,

beginning a partnership that has grown, flourished, and continues to help Maryland's children and families statewide today.

"Through our partnership with the Maryland Food Bank, we've been able to engage with families and our communities at a really important developmental stage, not only to provide nutritious food and nutrition education to young people, but to also provide regular volunteer opportunities for our associates that want to engage in the mission," said Dyani Hanrahan, Vice President of Marketing and Community Relations, Giant Food; Board Member, Maryland Food Bank.

With the support of Giant Food we're able to extend that partnership into local communities, meeting families where so much of their time is invested already—school.



In FY23, your support of partnerships between MFB and local schools made it possible for neighbors to access almost **2.5 million meals** from nearly **190 School Pantries**. And with a high average meal cost in Maryland—as much as **\$4.86 in Baltimore City**—you can easily see how School Pantries can positively affect families' budgets.

In previous newsletters, you've read about our efforts to hone this program into something even more impactful, and we're continuing that work. Maryland's statewide Community Schools Program provides an excellent partnership opportunity to increase access to nutritious foods, while opening pathways out of hunger for more families. And we're already seeing the needle move in central Maryland...


COMMUNITY SCHOOLS OFFER NEIGHBORS VALUABLE TOOLS

In 2022, when Rachel Valsing came to West Baltimore's Johnnycake Elementary School, the first thing she did was a needs assessment to find out how to best serve as its first-ever Community School Facilitator.

"What came up as a real need in our community was increased access to healthy foods. We had been providing some supplemental weekend meals through a smaller partnership, but in listening sessions, it became clear that food was a much bigger issue than we thought, so I reached out to the Maryland Food Bank," said Rachel.

Using language similar to MFB 3.0, our strategic plan, the State of Maryland describes the Community Schools initiative as *"leveraging the power of the collective allows community schools to provide resources to students and families where they need them the most—neighborhoods that have been historically underfunded and underserved. Community schools provide a wide array of wraparound services that enhance students' ability to be successful."*

Extending their reach even further, food distribution events rotate among nearby schools in other underfunded and underserved communities, including Edmondson Heights, where Lisa P. recently visited the pantry.



WHY AM I HERE? WELL, I WAS RECENTLY LAID OFF FROM MY JOB AT DOLLAR TREE, AND I CAN'T GET UNEMPLOYMENT BECAUSE I WASN'T WORKING THERE LONG ENOUGH. SO, THIS OFFERING AT MY GRANDCHILDREN'S SCHOOL IS PERFECT. I WAS ABLE TO GET THIS CATFISH, SOUP, AND APPLESAUCE THAT THEY JUST LOVE!" —LISA P.

The Rite Aid Helps Chart a United Way



Echoing MFB's own strategic plan, the Rite Aid Healthy Futures program is "dedicated to supporting communities through equitable access to the things they need most. Teaming with local organizations, we seek systemic change that will uplift all of us, together. Because when our neighbors thrive, so do we."

At another Community School located just five miles east of Edmonson Heights, The Excel Academy is collaborating with multiple partners to help vulnerable families living in the historically underresourced Poppleton neighborhood, where the only grocery store that was within walking distance recently closed.

"Just like families are able to do more with their budgets due to the food and resources students access at school, support from The United Way, Rite Aid Healthy Futures, and the Maryland Food Bank allows us to extend our reach, and bring in more food, or help alleviate other issues," said Tony Jarrett, Community School Coordinator, The Excel Academy.



“

STUDENTS CAN JUST COME
HERE, AND THEY WILL FIND A
COMMUNITY THAT CARES—AND
HONESTLY THERE'S NO JUDGMENT—
ANYBODY'S WELCOME HERE AT
THE CORNER OF CARE.”

—BRANDO BANDA-PEREZ, CLASS OF 2026

MFB's Regional Program Directors are constantly innovating, seeking ways to improve the efficiency and impact of our partner network, which can help more Marylanders thrive. And the shared goals of removing barriers to success and providing wraparound services that address root causes makes partnering with Community Schools a natural, strategic fit.

This intentional work is allowing more students to graduate from food insecurity, with fewer having to drag that unwanted baggage to college. But until that rate is 100%, we'll continue expanding partnerships with Maryland's higher education institutions.

CHESAPEAKE COLLEGE'S CORNER OF CARE IS LIBERATING STUDENTS

If a family can send a child to college, they must be well off enough to afford the basic necessities, right? **Wrong.**

In reality, college students tend to experience food insecurity at much higher rates than the general public.

In Maryland, **1 in 3 adults is food insecure**, but **college students are 3 to 4 times more likely** to not know where their next meal is coming from, and

79.2% students at four Historically Black College and Universities reported some level of food insecurity.

Serving attendees from five rural counties, Wye Mills' Chesapeake College is addressing their students' needs through the Corner of Care—a holistic approach that begins with food but seeks to address some of the root causes that derail their education journeys.

Started in the mid 2010's, the Corner of Care has evolved from a literal corner in a closet, to a larger, discreet space that Director of Student Engagement and Development Cheyenne Roache says students now call “The Kitchen, because it's not only a place to get food, but you'll notice people just hanging out talking about classes and sharing resources—we try to make it a place that is welcoming to anyone who needs it.”

“A lot of times, I get stuck in traffic, and don't have time for a real breakfast, so being able to come to the Corner of Care and grab a protein bar makes a real difference in my day,” said Ronnie, a second-year business major.

Information and connections to resources abound in the Corner of Care, showing students how to apply for gas cards or bus tickets to alleviate some of the transportation challenges, as well as clothing, toiletries, hygiene products, and food safety tips.

“WORKING MORE CLOSELY WITH THE FOOD BANK HAS ALLOWED US TO OFFER HEALTHIER FOODS,” SAID CHRISTY KEPPEL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, WEEKEND BACKPACKS. “NOW, 70% OF THE CONTENTS ARE GREEN AND YELLOW SWAP ITEMS—SIMPLE THINGS LIKE BROWN RICE INSTEAD OF WHITE RICE—AND FAMILIES REALLY APPRECIATE THAT.”



“We have several hundred people coming through here each month—nurses that have to get the clinicals, parents that are running back and forth to work and school, and just your everyday students—we try to have something for everyone,” said Cheyenne.

But ensuring that all students—from Kindergarten to college—have access to healthy food at school is not enough. Because just like hunger doesn’t magically end after one’s senior year, it also doesn’t vanish on weekends or over the summer.

SHOULDERING THE LOAD

Since 2015, the Weekend Backpacks program has been helping Baltimore City students and families bridge that often-difficult time between Friday afternoon dismissal and the Monday morning tardy bell, when kids lose access to school meals.

For years, the organization supported about 600 students, but due to an expanded partnership with the Maryland Food Bank, and funding from food bank

friends at the Baltimore Ravens Foundation, Mariner Finance, and others, Weekend Backpacks is a lean, mean, hunger-fighting machine offering access to more 1,800 students at 50 schools.

“Being able to bring the 40 years of experience and expertise of the Maryland Food Bank to help Weekend Backpacks streamline and now support triple the number of neighbors is precisely what the food bank is about in 2024,” said Rebecca Mann, MFB’s Regional Program Director.

And while the program’s output has increased, the increased nutritional quality of the food and accompanying nutrition education (like recipes and menu tips) should lead to better outcomes.

Taking a 24 hours-a-day, 7 days-a-week approach is a central part of our efforts to feed children. We’re fortunate to partner with organizations like Weekend Backpacks that address this vulnerable “out of school” time. But what about evenings and summers? How do we care for kids then? 🍌

A decorative banner featuring several books standing upright. The books have titles like 'Tales and Fables', 'NATIONAL ATLAS', 'Encyclopedia', and 'SPANISH'. A cupcake is also part of the decoration. The banner is orange and has a string of colorful triangular flags hanging from the top right.

Out of School

A decorative banner featuring several books standing upright. The books have titles like 'SPANISH', 'SPANISH', and 'SPANISH'. A house icon and a stack of books are also part of the decoration. The banner is orange and has a string of colorful triangular flags hanging from the top right.

Doesn't Mean

Out of LUCK!



Hosted by established community organizations where children feel comfortable and safe, our Summer and Supper Clubs ensure that kids can be kids in the late afternoons during the school year and over the summer.

Led by Chef Marcia Spencer, professional chefs in our Charles T. Bauer Community Kitchen use local produce and other healthy ingredients to provide tasty breakfasts, lunches, dinners, and snacks to club attendees.

"While we are required to use the USDA guidelines to make sure each child receives a grain, a protein, a vegetable, a fruit, and milk, we talk to the kids to find out what they really like, so the food will actually be eaten," said Chef Marcia. "We do family-style meals to foster engagement, so kids use their social skills and build community," she continued.



Currently, more than 50 sites, primarily in Baltimore, Anne Arundel & Howard Counties, and Baltimore City host Summer and/or Supper Clubs, **providing nearly 700,000 meals.**

In Western Maryland, the Boys & Girls Club of Allegheny County welcomes more than 40 kids to Supper Clubs in an average week.

"I know just from our experience, food insecurity here in our area is at an all-time high. And it's not just people that aren't working or people that aren't trying. It's everyone. It's working moms and dads that are just having trouble putting food on the table. So for their kids to be here and their supper is taken care of, it's a huge relief for parents," said Rachel Stewart, the program aid at the Boys & Girls Club.

And when school lets out, their capacity will be limited for Summer Club attendees.

"With our current level of staffing and also transportation needs—the children really benefit from field trips and such—30 is a comfortable, and manageable number for us," said Karen Wells, office manager.

And like we're hearing from other partners, Wells has seen changes in the support from the Maryland Food Bank recently.

"It's great that they've started sending us food that Rachel can heat up and cook get creative with - and she's really good about doing that. We have more freedom to cater to what the kids will like, so that they're still getting the nutritious meals and we have less waste," said Karen.

Rachel recalled one particularly successful meal.

"Last week they sent us vegetables and chicken, so I went to the store, got cream of chicken soup and biscuit mix and made chicken pot pie out of it - and the kids got excited about it!"

And even with the opportunity to eat meals and receive snacks, some families need even more.

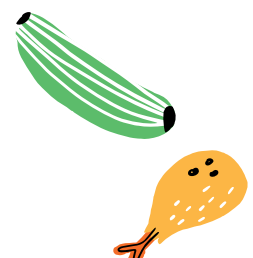
Rachel shared one poignant recollection of a third grader, who would constantly approach her at the end of a Club session.

"Is there anything left over that you can send home with me? Stuff that I can cook because my mom doesn't."

In addition to supporting their nutritional needs, Summer and Supper Clubs offer academic, athletic, and activity support to offer a complete experience to kids.

"We've always had educational programs where they get homework help and various sports to play, but we've recently started implementing some music days with a singing company going and a bucket band, which has been very popular," said Karen.

It's humbling to see kids flourishing in our existing Summer and Supper Club locations, and we're excited to expand this program so more Maryland families can find the relief they need.





Healthy Snacks & Meals

Everyone appreciates the ability to simply “grab and go” during busy times—a snack on the way to a Saturday morning soccer game, or a ready-to-eat meal on a busy Wednesday evening.

And while there are lots of convenient options, most ready-to-eat snacks and meals are not healthy. These items tend to be packed with preservatives, have high levels of sodium and/or added sugar, and tend to fall into the **red** (or choose rarely) category of the Supporting Wellness At Pantries (SWAP) food assessment system.

And while MFB’s Nutritionist Kate Long is proud of the positive changes she’s helped bring to the food bank’s overall menu—in FY23, 68% of food offerings were SWAP **green** (choose often)—she knows how important these specific types of foods are to families.

“People want convenient foods that are healthy, but what is on the market a lot of times is much more expensive, and people make trade-offs,” Kate said. “The same thing is true for food banks, but with an added layer of challenge—finding healthy food that is affordable, and available consistently.”

And just like when we’re assessing any other MFB initiative, we wanted to hear from the true subject matter experts—our neighbors who will be eating the snacks and meals.



"If you don't like these
veggie chips, then you must
not have taste buds!"

Benedict M., 2nd grader,
The Empowerment Academy

Into, and Out of the Mouths of Babies

Throughout May, at several schools, kids had the opportunity to take the tastiest of tests to help guide our acquisition choices, so that food-insecure Marylanders have better choices while shopping local pantries.

Each child had the chance to rate the look, smell, and taste of one savory crunchy snack (Terra or PopChips), one sweet crunchy (Annie's Bunny Grahams), four bars (different flavors of Lara Bars), and four flavors of shelf-stable yogurt, all while playing guessing games about the snack's ingredients.

"This vanilla yogurt tastes JUST LIKE ICE CREAM!!!"

- Omar O., 3rd Grader, Millbrook Elementary

The More You Know

With a menu full of neighbor-guided, healthier meals and snacks, we want to make it as easy as possible for busy families to choose them when visiting partners.

"We're not just sending these products to food pantries aimlessly, we're offering our expertise and real guidance on how to make neighbors aware of the new products—through communication and display—and ask our partners to continue soliciting that all-important feedback from neighbors," said Kate.

And at the end of the day, we want to know that neighbors actually like these healthier options, so local pantry coordinators will know to order them and keep in stock.

Do you like this food? Circle the number.

	1	2	3	4	5
Look	1	2	3	4	5
Smell	1	2	3	4	5
Taste	1	2	3	4	5
Texture/Consistency	1	2	3	4	5
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5



MFB Donors Bill & Cathy S. at a taste test



"I feel strongly that we need to make sure that when school ends, children still have access to food – whether it's breakfasts, lunches, dinners, or these snacks. The thought of kids NOT having that is really what made me get in my car and come support this event."

- Bill Siciliano, MFB Donor





Bunny or Not Bunny? Graham is the Question

So what does this process actually look like? Well, let's take the example of graham crackers.

Graham crackers can fall into the SWAP **red** or **yellow** categories—depending on the sugar content of the brand chosen. So while we want to offer the healthiest options, we have to ensure neighbors have the same confidence that familiar products will be available when visiting a pantry as they would a grocery store.

That's why Annie's Bunny Graham's were part of our school taste tests, and why our sourcing team is such an important part of this initiative—they have the relationships and expertise with providers to help realize this important goal.

"Our existing relationships are great, and help us acquire lots of nutritious foods for our neighbors, but we're always looking for new connections to food manufacturers and providers, especially those who have product that meet our needs for healthier snacks and prepared meals," said Andrew Miller, Sourcing Director, MFB.

Statistics 101

And to help determine the long-term vision for this initiative, our research team, led by Daniel Sturm, reviews the ordering patterns of participating partners to see what adjustments we need to make to spur wider-spread participation throughout the network.

"Early analysis is showing that the more nutrition education information our partners have, the more likely they are to both order these healthier options and help neighbors become more aware of the benefits of choosing them."

— Daniel Sturm, Vice President, Learning, Measurement & Evaluation



Most Likely to Succeed



No Added Sugar

Cutest Couple



Lower Sodium & Higher Protein



Most Likely to be President.

Kids who eat healthier

Star Student



To support our mission of feeding people, strengthening communities, and ending hunger for more Marylanders, please visit mdfoodbank.org/donate

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