



# news *letter*

SPRING 2026



Planting the Seeds for a Brighter Future



# A LETTER FROM PRESIDENT & CEO

## MEG KIMMEL

Throughout childhood, the whole world is a classroom. Every day is filled with learning opportunities, chances to build a solid foundation to grow on.

Thanks to you, we are uniquely positioned to engage that natural curiosity with nutrition education that delights and amazes, because kids thrive when they have the chance to explore and access nutritious food.

For many years, the Maryland Food Bank has worked alongside educators, families, and community partners to help create these environments—places where nutritious food is accessible, familiar, and part of everyday life.

Today, our Nutrition Team creates joyful experiences for kids as young as Pre-K, fostering a meaningful, and deeper connection to food for a lifetime.

In this issue, you'll see the joy (and dirt!) on kids' faces at Moravia Park Elementary as they try some

hands-on learning—planting microgreen seeds in take-home pots—to not just see, but experience where food comes from.

Then, a visit to Sandalwood Elementary illustrates how they're helping families build familiarity and comfort with nutritious foods. At an after-school Supper Club in Annapolis you'll hear from members who enjoy nutritious meals and snacks at the Boys & Girls Club.

Next, our senior director of nutrition Kate Long shares some additional activities that help reinforce early lessons as kids move into adulthood.

Finally, you'll find out ways to support Maryland's next generation of leaders through volunteering from Yolanda Adkins, our 2026 Volunteer of the Year.

Together, we have the chance to create even more environments where healthy food is familiar, plentiful, and accessible to all Marylanders, no matter where they call home.

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## *Wolfe Street Academy's 5th Graders are Changemakers*

At Southeastern Baltimore's Wolfe Street Academy, elementary school students learn about how hunger affects their community, by helping organize and pack masa flour, canned beans, pasta, rice, and other foods into manageable bags that neighbors can carry home.

"It's important for the children to learn that we need to take care of the people that are here, no matter their personal, political, or religious beliefs," said Heidi Weiss-Beedle, Community School Coordinator.



## *A Bright Future for Farm to Food Bank*

The number of female farm producers is growing, with Maryland (38.3%) above the national average. At Farm to Food Bank partner Black Gold Farms in Dorchester County, Megan Davidson and Nicole Wickham are helping grow nutrient-dense, fresh potatoes for hungry neighbors.



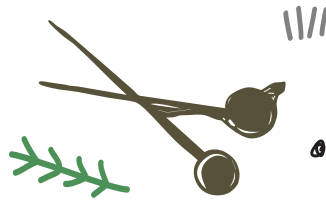
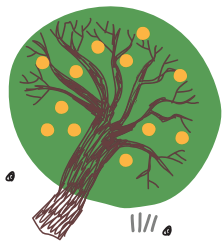
## *Young Voices are Making Food Access More Dignified for Neighbors*

In the Landsdowne area, neighbors are having a better experience at the local high school's food pantry, due to the initiative of one young woman, Melaney Fonseca.

During food distributions, Melaney helps people feel more comfortable by chatting with neighbors, checking in on how they're feeling, and answering any questions that come up about the services the pantry offers.

Learn more about these amazing supporters (and others) by visiting [mdfoodbank.org/news](https://mdfoodbank.org/news)





# Planting the Seeds for a Brighter Future



## Microgreens are Maximum Fun at Moravia Park Elementary

The earlier we can reach neighbors, the better chance they have of thriving for a lifetime.

That's why we focus on childhood nutrition education, both at the Maryland Food Bank—with our Education & Demonstration Garden—but also through community outreach, where we bring the garden (and fun!) to local schools.

Recently, MFB's Nutrition Specialist Ashlie Church visited community partner Moravia Park Elementary's Judy Center, a place where families access nutritious food and vital resources like Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) support, deepening community connections.

Everything Ashlie brings—from the seeds, pots, and soil, to play produce, coloring sheets, and high energy—is free to the schools due to your kind support.

Throughout five energetic sessions, several kids were elated to offer their perspectives on nutrition education, gardening, healthy foods, and more.

"I think you should grow lemons, corn, and onions at the food bank!"

Other kids added their voices to the chorus, shouting "apple trees," "oranges," "carrots," and a cornucopia of other fruits and veggies.

When asked why it was important to eat broccoli, a young girl named Royalty flexed her arm and through a big grin proclaimed, "so you can become STRONG!"



## PLAYING WITH FOOD IS SERIOUSLY IMPORTANT

Through hands-on activities, Ashlie helps curious kids find answers to three important questions:

- ? Where does food come from**  
Planting microgreen seeds in a take-home pot
- ? What choices do I have**  
Sorting foam produce either by color or into fruits and vegetables
- ? How much of these foods should I be eating**  
Coloring "My Plate" sheets



And when kids are engaged this deeply, they are more likely to make better choices, whether at the table, or when visiting a school pantry with their family.

### Sandalwood Elementary is Supporting Healthy Choices

For just over four years now, community partner Sandalwood Elementary has been making it easier for Essex neighbors to not only find food (by making it convenient to pick up at a central, familiar location) but make healthier choices through thoughtful ordering, pantry presentation, and nutrition education.

Pantry Coordinator Sharon Ament explained that there are no easily accessible grocery stores nearby and finds the Maryland Food Bank to be a reliable source of quality food.

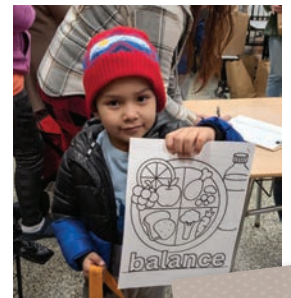
"I log into the food bank's menu multiple times because I notice on different days of the week, new things pop up, like meats, and especially chicken, which is most popular with our families, so I can order food that people want, and is good for them."

While she orders fresh produce from the food bank, a partnership between the school and nearby Richardson Farms in White Marsh means even more healthy fruits and veggies.

At the start of distribution events, Sharon and her staff offer nutritional guidance (from MFB and the Community College of Baltimore County) so that neighbors can make informed choices when they select foods from the site's pantry, which is organized by food type.

During a March 5 pantry event, one mother shared her feelings on the resources available at Sandalwood:

"The price of food is so expensive, so the school helps a lot of people with things like fresh vegetables. All of this at the Sandalwood pantry makes people here so happy—like my son, who loves the coloring sheet and putting food in our bags."



Since 1993, Giant Food has supported our School Pantry Program, so kids have increased opportunities in a comfortable setting. Sandalwood Elementary is one of 170+ school pantries statewide.

**And nutrition education doesn't end when school does...**





**LAST YEAR,  
66 Supper Club partners  
shared 85,091 meals  
with members!**



### Supper Clubs Set the Table for a Healthy Lifestyle

The opportunity to interact with kids in the comfortable setting of their school and provide them with the education and resources to develop a healthy relationship with food is something we both take seriously and cherish.

But what happens when the school bell rings, and kids don't have access to nutrition workshops or school pantries? Supper Clubs!

Designed to offer tasty, nutritious meals prepared by MFB's FoodWorks Meals Program, Supper Clubs mean kids in after-school programs can practice making healthy choices that fuel activities such as tutoring, arts and crafts, and sports.

**"When my husband had to go back to in-office work, and we were having trouble finding aftercare, this place saved us,"** said Katie C., whose daughter is a Supper Club member at the Boys & Girls Club, Severn Center in Anne Arundel County.

Katie shared one memorable recollection. "This one day, she had a chicken curry salad, and it looked delicious—and I feel good knowing that the meals are nutritious!"

And her daughter was quick to chime in with her fondness for "green peppers and strawberries as big as my head!"

Tyrnita Moore, the director of operations for the Boys & Girls Club of Annapolis & Anne Arundel County, is proud of the work the Club has done to respond to the needs of the community.

"What's changing is the community engagement—we have really focused on building strong partnerships with those in the community that serve youth in various areas," she said. "It's allowed us to form a partnership with the Maryland Food Bank, it's allowed us to open our own food pantry, and it's allowed us to connect in the community on a whole new level," Tyrnita continued.

*Maryland ranks in the Top 10 most expensive states for childcare, averaging nearly \$1,500/mo., according to the United Way of Central Maryland*



# Early Childhood Nutrition Education Pays off Later in Life

A Q&A with MFB's Senior Director of Nutrition Kate Long



**Q.** What are your responsibilities at the Maryland Food Bank?

**A.** I focus on increasing the nutritional value of the foods our partners distribute and promoting healthy eating.

**Q.** Why is it important to help kids develop healthy eating habits at an early age?

**A.** Habit is exactly what nutrition education is all about. Bad habits are tough to break, so the more practice kids have at making good food choices, the more likely they are to continue with the good habits throughout their lives.

**Q.** With so many kids glued to screens today, how do you engage them?

**A.** With MFB's Education and Demonstration Garden (thank you Medifast!) we're not just telling them where food comes from, we can actually show them. When you get into a garden, veggies **actually**

*become fun!* And the excitement on kids' faces when they pull up the carrot and say 'Oh, this is where it really comes from,' is all the data we need to know it's the right thing to do.

**Q.** How do you work with kids who aren't able to come to the Garden, or when it is out of season?

**A.** Our Nutrition Education Workshops (pg. 4) bring the fun and interactive nature of the Garden right into school and other community organizations. Kids can still get their hands dirty and have that 'aha!' moment going even though they're not at our Garden.

**Q.** What are some other ways that you help support kids at this critical time in their lives?

**A.** To help assess food quality, we use the Supporting Wellness at Pantries (SWAP) system to rank foods as either green (choose

often), yellow (choose occasionally) or red (choose rarely) based on their nutritional value. And we encourage school pantry partners to have students help classify foods, further reinforcing the message.

**Q.** How has Nutrition Education changed over time?

**A.** While there is always going to be new data, and new ways of talking about nutrition, it really comes down to making good choices, and that's what we want kids to understand at the earliest age possible.





# HELPING YOUNGER NEIGHBORS MOTIVATES VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR YOLANDA ADKINS

At the Maryland Food Bank, volunteers play a key role in our ability to feed neighbors of all ages.

And while there are many volunteering opportunities available, there are certain activities that directly support efforts to feed our youngest neighbors, and 2026 Volunteer of the Year Yolanda Adkins relishes those shifts in particular:

"I love volunteering in the kitchen because we're directly packing meals for kids in after-school programs, and I can see a clear link between my efforts and children getting fed."

Over the past seven years, Yolanda has also happily answered phones at the front desk, and worked in the warehouse, but feels that her work preparing the garden was especially impactful.

"I enjoy gardening, so I value being able to help in the Maryland Food Bank's garden, where kids learn about the journey of nutritious food from garden to table," Yolanda said.

She suggests the "come out and try it" approach in various areas in Halethorpe, or even at the Salisbury, or Hagerstown Branches.

"Strength or specific skills aren't necessary—training is provided, and tasks are matched to your comfort level. Even a few hours make a tangible difference!"

Yolanda is inviting you to find your personal passion for volunteering by visiting [mdfoodbank.org/volunteer](https://mdfoodbank.org/volunteer)



To support our mission of feeding people, strengthening communities, and ending hunger for more Marylanders, please visit [mdfoodbank.org/donate](https://mdfoodbank.org/donate)

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