



FOOD BANK OF
NORTH ALABAMA

FALL 2025

HARVEST NEWS



GROWING NEED, STEADFAST RESPONSE: FOOD INSECURITY REACHES ALARMING LEVELS

The number of North Alabama families facing food insecurity continues to climb, according to new data released by Feeding America.

Feeding America's Map the Meal Gap study, using the latest available data, reveals that **187,180 people—including 44,860 children—now face food insecurity** within the Food Bank of North Alabama's 11-county service area: Colbert, DeKalb, Franklin, Jackson, Lauderdale, Lawrence, Limestone, Madison, Marshall, and Morgan.

While disheartening, these numbers fuel the Food Bank's determination. **CEO Shirley Schofield** said the Food Bank is ready to meet the growing need—especially with the continued support of donors, volunteers, and community partners.

With over 187,000 neighbors in need and federal cuts looming, the Food Bank of North Alabama calls for renewed community support.

"Our donors, volunteers, partners, and public officials place their trust in us to help ensure our neighbors have the food they need to be successful, and we take that responsibility seriously," she said. "We hate to see the numbers

rise, but we also know Alabamians are incredibly generous. We trust they'll stand with us."

Alarming, the study also found that in Madison and Limestone counties, **more than 60% of food-insecure households earn too much to qualify for SNAP** but not enough to consistently afford groceries.

Now in its 15th year, Map the Meal Gap is the only study offering local-level food insecurity estimates. It underscores how far the Food Bank still has to go.

"For children, access to enough nutritious food is essential," said Melanie Hall of Feeding America. "Hunger limits potential."

In 2024, the Food Bank of North Alabama distributed **15.1 million pounds of food**, including **6.2 million pounds rescued from 100+ local grocery stores and 5.3 million pounds from federal programs**—though federal cuts will reduce that supply by 1 million pounds this year.

Schofield remains hopeful: **"When North Alabama comes together, there's nothing we can't overcome."**

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FEEDING THE SPIRIT AND THE COMMUNITY: 16 YEARS OF SERVICE AT KILLEN UMC

For 16 years, **Killen United Methodist Church** has opened its doors to the community through a monthly food pantry, offering both nourishment and compassion to families in need.

The pantry is led by Brenda Montgomery, who was inspired to start the program after her church's new minister brought experience from a previous food ministry.

With faith, persistence, and the help of the Food Bank, **one woman's calling has grown into a lifeline for Lauderdale County families.**

"It was something myself and some other ladies felt was needed in this area," she said. **"We started with just a minimum of funds—I just went around and begged for money. That was 16 years ago. It's just grown from there."**

On the **third Saturday of every month at 7:30 a.m.**, the church welcomes 50 to 75 families with the help of 20-25 volunteers. In addition to food, they offer breakfast and hospitality. If someone can't make it, they can call the church to receive help.

"We couldn't do what we do without the Food Bank of North Alabama," Montgomery said. **"Our people are so appreciative—especially now that we can provide meat."**

The pantry serves seniors on fixed incomes, people recovering from illness, and families hit hard by job loss or rising costs. And it keeps growing.

PACKING HOPE AT THE FOOD BANK

Walk into the Food Bank of North Alabama's distribution center on a weekday morning or afternoon, and visitors will be met with smiling faces, friendly teasing, a little sweat, and a lively soundtrack. This atmosphere is powered by dedicated volunteers—some of the most essential people in the Food Bank's mission to fight hunger.

According to Independent Sector, volunteer time is valued at \$30.59 per hour. But these volunteers give it freely, with no expectation of reward. Without their time and heart, this work simply wouldn't be possible.

Before food from federal and state programs, grocery stores, food drives, and individual donors can reach agency partners, it must be sorted, inspected, and organized. This process is no small task, especially after a major food drive.

"Whether working in the warehouse, answering phones at the front desk, or helping families at the FBNA Market, volunteers make it all possible," said volunteer manager Christi Garris. "There is no way we could do what we do without our dedicated volunteers."

Some call it service. Others call it joy. Here's what volunteers have said:

"The music playlist was fantastic! I also loved that we were helping to pack food for seniors."

"I appreciated the efficiency of the sorting process; it felt great to see tangible progress."

Whether they come alone or with a group, volunteers consistently describe their experience as deeply rewarding. In recent surveys, **96.5% of volunteers rated their experience as EXCELLENT**, and the remaining **3.5% rated it as GOOD**.

The Food Bank is continually working to improve the volunteer experience—even adding ways to better prepare new volunteers for their first shift. One suggestion that made staff smile: massages after lifting boxes! While the Food Bank can't quite offer that, staff love hearing ideas.

With over **187,000** North Alabamians facing food insecurity, this fight requires everyone. There is a place for all who want to help. To learn more or sign up to volunteer, visit: **foodbanknorthal.org/volunteer**.



Behind every meal is
a team of dedicated
**volunteers making it
possible.**

RETAIL RESCUE: GROCERY PARTNERSHIPS FUEL LOCAL HUNGER RELIEF

When visitors tour the Food Bank of North Alabama's new 50,000-square-foot distribution center in Huntsville, the most common response is: **"I had no idea how much you do."**

It's true. The Food Bank serves 11 counties across North Alabama with the help of 235 partner agencies, and last year alone, it distributed more than 15 million pounds of food. But where does all this food come from?

The answer: everywhere—from food drives and individual donations to government programs and retail partnerships.

Store partnerships are one of the lifelines of the Food Bank's work. The organization collaborates with grocers of all sizes to rescue discontinued items, products nearing expiration, seasonal goods, promotional inventory, and most importantly, highly perishable items like fresh produce, protein, and dairy. Food insecurity isn't just about access to calories—it's about access to quality nutrition. These donations are critical to the Food Bank's mission to nourish neighbors, and help keep good food out of landfills.

In April 2025, the Food Bank saw a **5% increase in in-store donations** compared to the same time last year, nearly all of which came from fresh produce. So far in fiscal year 2025, the organization has rescued 3.8 million pounds in retail donations—including **1.1 million pounds of produce and 900,000 pounds of meat.**



Drivers weigh food after picking up donations from a local grocery store—part of the Food Bank of North Alabama's growing food rescue efforts.

With changes in national and state programs affecting the supply chain, the Food Bank is especially grateful for these store relationships—and excited to welcome **new partners to the table.**

Food City recently expanded into the North Alabama market and is actively supporting the mission. Alongside Publix, Walmart, Target, Aldi, Trader Joe's, Kroger, Costco, Dollar General, and several local grocers, these partnerships help ensure families across the region have access to fresh, nutritious food.

Together with partners, volunteers, and supporters, **the Food Bank is not just fighting hunger—it is cultivating a healthier, stronger, more compassionate community.** Because when people are fed, lives are nourished.

Scan the QR code to learn more about the Food Bank's grocery store donation program.



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Counties served: Colbert, Cullman, DeKalb, Franklin, Jackson, Lauderdale, Lawrence, Limestone, Madison, Marshall, Morgan. The Food Bank of North Alabama is an equal opportunity provider & employer.

Your support today helps feed hungry neighbors now and creates solutions to end hunger for good. Donations can be made using the enclosed reply slip or by visiting www.foodbanknorthal.org/give.