

Harvest News



A publication of

Food Bank of North Alabama

Saving Millions of Pounds of Food

Nobody likes to see food wasted, especially when it could feed those in need—children, the elderly, the homeless—our community's most vulnerable.

We're taught as kids not to be wasteful—to clean our plate, turn off the lights, don't let the water run. Yet, in the United States, an estimated 133 billion pounds of food from stores, restaurants and homes go uneaten and instead are thrown away. That translates into a whopping \$161 billion wasted, tossed into landfills.

"Food waste is the single largest type of waste entering our landfills—Americans throw away up to 40 percent of their food," said U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Deputy Administrator Bob Perciasepe. All that wasted, yet many in the United States are food insecure, meaning they do not know where their next meal will come from.

The Food Bank of North Alabama partners with almost 40 grocery stores across north Alabama on a very special donation program that ensures edible food reaches the tables of families in need instead of filling overflowing landfills. Five days a week the Food Bank's trucks pick up food donations from partners including **Walmart**, Sam's Club, Target, Publix, Kroger, Redstone Commissary, Big Lots and more.

In 2013, these stores donated more than 3 million pounds of food that then went to 229 food pantries and shelters. That food helped more than 80,000 people in North Alabama.

"Getting food into the hands of those who need it is a win-win for us all," said **Brenda Reid**, media and community relations manager for **Publix Super Markets**, a food bank partner. "We get to reduce our carbon footprint and families get much needed help."

Kroger also has a company-wide program that donates to the Food Bank of North Alabama.

"It really is a great feeling knowing that people are being fed because of our Perishable Donation Partnership," said **Erin Carney Grant**, community affairs for **Kroger**. "The items donated are still great products that can no longer be sold, but are still safe and full of nourishment."

Many of the Food Bank's partners laud the program because it not only allows them to give back, but they are able to specifically help their neighbors.

"For us, it's local. Local is what makes it special for us," said **Ray Helton**, store manager of **Sam's Club** Store on National Boulevard in Huntsville. "What we donate is for the community right here. It enables us to build relationships within the community."

As a claims clerk at Sam's Club, Diane Clark helps gather these donations for the Food Bank. She sees firsthand how much the store donation program can provide. "It's much better to donate it than to send it to the landfill," she said.

"A generation ago, people in need relied on their neighbors to help them out, but
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The amount of food wasted in North America equals more than 20 pounds of food per person per month, according to the United Nations Environment Program's North America regional office.



Produce, such as these strawberries, is an expanding aspect of the store donation program.



Manager Ray Helton and B.J. Brock, who leads Sam's Club volunteer efforts, are proud of the way the store on National Boulevard in Huntsville helps the community.

Food is the single largest component of municipal solid waste going to landfills and accounts for more than 20 percent by weight.

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Partner Spotlight – Daystar Church

In 1998 a few struggling families reached out to the members of a small church in Dodge City, Alabama, for help. The response was immediate. Church members plucked their own pockets and went to the local grocery store. This simple act—neighbors helping neighbors—laid the foundation for what would become the emergency food program run by the Daystar Church in Cullman.

As the church grew, so did its emergency food program. Amy Spiegel, one of the original members of that first relief mission, organized the program into a full ministry. Along with a core of committed volunteers, the new food ministry, called The Master's Hands, took shape over the next ten years. When the church moved to its current location in Cullman and changed its name to Daystar Church, members began looking for allies to help expand the emergency food program's outreach. They contacted the Food Bank of North Alabama and learned about food relief available via the USDA. With the Food Bank's help, their ministry was able to meet a greater need, going from serving a few dozen households to their current outreach—over 300 households per month.

Adam Bavar, the current Food Ministry Director who took over for Spiegel, explains, "We've grown a lot since that first trip to the grocery store. We now



have a 10,000 square foot storage room, 35 freezers, and box truck for deliveries. It's grown so that we're even opening a second location in Hartselle. Without the Food Bank's help, we wouldn't be able to maintain this large an operation."

Despite their growth, however, the program has been able to retain the level of intimacy and solidarity with the community that inspired the original mission. "We're open to all and will serve any need," Bavar says. The personal connection that he and his team of volunteers maintain with the people they serve reminds him of the vital importance of the work. "It brings me down to earth in a second."

New Faces



We are pleased to welcome Shirley Schofield as the Food Bank's first store donation program coordinator. Her position at the Food Bank has a long title, but its goal is simple: Be a liaison between the Food Bank and our generous grocery store partners. The new position was made possible by generous support from the **Walmart Foundation** and **Feeding America**.

She will serve as a resource for the stores in the food donation program, not only by helping them manage their individual donation process, but also sharing the impact those donations have on the community. In 2013, the retail donation program brought in more than 3 million pounds of food to share with North Alabama residents in need.

Shirley was a journalist in Mississippi, Florida and California before recently returning to her native Alabama. Shirley is eager to get to know the people who make the Food Bank so successful.

"Alabama has a strong history of helping others, and I look forward to working with local retailers interested in serving their community," she said.

Saving Millions of Pounds of Food

The average American consumer wastes 50% more than Americans in the 1970s, according to the Natural Resources Defense Council.

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now it makes more sense for big stores who have a large volume of food to step in and provide aid to neighbors in need through the donation program," said **Brian Kleeman**, fresh zone merchandise supervisor at **Walmart** on Memorial Parkway in Huntsville.

An 11-year **Walmart** veteran, Kleeman tries to ensure fresh produce is included in the weekly donations to the Food Bank. "In this economy there are always people who fall through the cracks – they're in between jobs or out of work," Kleeman said. "We have produce that customers won't pay full price for, but it's still edible. Someone will benefit from it... it gets where it needs to."



Sam's Club claims clerk Diane Clark is one of many store employees ensuring items are donated to the Food Bank of North Alabama instead of thrown away.

The amount donated from all the Food Bank's partners is impressive.

"I have been astounded by the dedication to giving our grocery store partners exhibit on a daily basis," said Shirley Schofield, the Food Bank's new store donation program coordinator. "I'm excited to work with these companies that enthusiastically give back to their communities. Every bit that they give helps someone in North Alabama and lessens what we send to area landfills. It is a win-win."



High-quality food items, such as lamb, go to those in need through the store donation program.

If the U.S. wasted 5 percent less food it would be enough to feed 4 million more people, according to A-Z solutions.

In some estimates, 1.18 pounds of food per person each day were available, but went unused. That equals about \$1.43 per person per day.



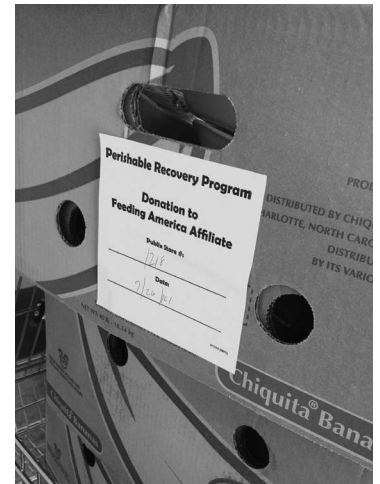
Tanya Goodman, who works in the bakery at the Kroger store on Oakwood Avenue in Huntsville, gathers items for donation.



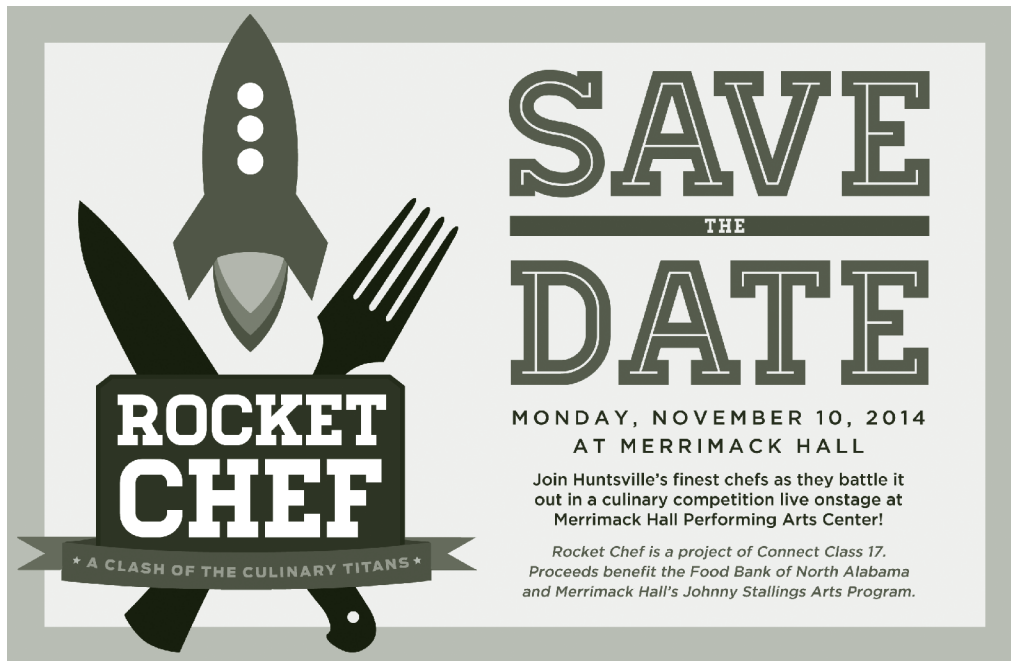
Without a store donation program, this lettuce would be placed in the garbage or compost.



Food Bank staff member LeBeau Foster loads some of the items donated during a recent morning pickup.



Items prepared for donation are clearly marked and separate from the rest of the store's items.



The Rocket Chef Event is based, in part, on popular and contemporary food television challenges, and is intended to showcase local chefs, from a diverse range of backgrounds and experiences, and their ability to cook, in a time-pressured environment, using “mystery” ingredients. All of this will take place on a stage in front of a live audience of nearly 300 people and four well respected culinary judges!

Tickets will be sold in advance with the proceeds benefitting the Food Bank of North Alabama and Merrimack Hall’s Johnny Stallings Arts Program. Limited tickets will be available to a special reception, where food enthusiastic individuals will have the opportunity to sample cuisine from each chef’s restaurant.

At the Rocket Chef event, in between the various rounds of the cooking competition, attendees will have an opportunity to learn more about food-related issues facing the local community, the work and mission of the Food Bank of North Alabama and Merrimack Hall, as well as ways in which individuals can donate and otherwise get involved in the fight to end hunger.

Tickets will go on sale in September and will be available for purchase through the Merrimack Hall box office.

Rocket Chef is a project of Leadership Huntsville/ Madison County Connect Class 17. Group members Lauren Battle, Aaron Caradonna, Michael Conrad, Kyla Kelly, and Clarissa McClain are very passionate about this project and are committed to making Rocket Chef a successful event.



From left to right, it's Aaron Caradonna, Clarissa McClain, Kyla Kelly, Mike Conrad and Lauren Battle.

SPECIAL RECOGNITION DONATIONS

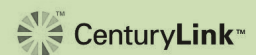
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