The mission of the Capital Area Food Bank is to help our neighbors thrive by creating more equitable access to food and opportunity through community partnerships.
Dear friends:

The start of the past year carried with it the promise of a true return to pre-pandemic “normalcy,” or at least to a stable “new normal.” And for many of us, that promise was fulfilled, with far fewer COVID-related disruptions occurring in work, school, and daily life, and signs of health emerging in the economy. In May, the pandemic emergency was officially brought to an end.

Accordingly, the CAFB’s team was hopeful for a corresponding decline in need and food distribution. Once again, however, general economic indicators didn’t tell the whole story.

The lingering impacts of COVID on employment, the rollback of pandemic-era benefits like higher amounts for SNAP (formerly food stamps), and the continued impacts of inflation have all contributed to sustained, high levels of hunger and food insecurity in our area, and indeed, across the country. The data in this past year’s CAFB Hunger Report confirmed what our team and partners had already been seeing on the ground: regional levels of food insecurity remained virtually unchanged over the prior year, with fully one third of our neighbors uncertain at some point where their next meal would come from.

Once again, this community’s support enabled the food bank to respond. In 2023, the CAFB distributed the food for nearly 61 million nutritious, culturally relevant meals—well above what we had projected at the outset of the year.

Even in the face of unexpectedly high levels of demand, our team worked to ensure that the food we provide—and the ways we distribute it—are responsive to the diverse ages, cultures, and health concerns of the people we serve. This commitment to centering our work on our clients was, for instance, the driver behind the expansion of our school pantries—which operate in grammar, middle, and high schools—to 11 new locations this year. It also led us to expand our range of culturally familiar foods.

Given the importance of produce to the health and wellness of our clients, we also maintained our emphasis on providing fruits and vegetables, which made up 47% of our inventory, as well as high quality protein and dairy. And thanks to funding from multiple grants, we were able to significantly grow our relationships with small local minority farmers this year to source many of those items, enabling the CAFB to use its scale and buying power to contribute to greater equity within our regional food ecosystem.

Creating greater equity has also been the aim of the continued development and expansion of our “Food Plus” programming, which pairs food with other partner-provided services. Within our “Food Plus Education” initiatives, for example, we doubled our number of university

“Collectively, this incredible group has done what none of us could achieve alone: created hope, opportunity, and a brighter future for thousands of our neighbors.”

RADHA MUTHIAH, CAFB PRESIDENT & CEO
partners this year to a total of six. These institutions are providing food that can help hundreds of students in their journeys to achieve academic success, paving the way for greater economic mobility in the future.

And working with the Consortium of Universities of the Washington Metropolitan Area, we also hosted the second annual Regional College Hunger Conference, which brought together leaders from institutions of higher education across the area to explore solutions to campus hunger.

In our “Food Plus Health” work, we continued to provide nutritious, medically tailored groceries to children and their families through our onsite “food pharmacy” at Children’s National, which has doubled the number of patients served since its launch. And with our program partners there, we laid the groundwork for the upcoming launch of a significant research study, which will examine the impacts that home delivery of medically tailored groceries has on children with type I and type II diabetes. The study will ultimately contribute to the national body of research that explores nutrition’s essential role in health and health care, further propelling the movement to recognize food as a form of medicine.

As we have distributed the good food our clients need today, we have also collaborated with other advocates across the region to advance important policy and budget initiatives. Notably, this included working with coalition partners CASH Campaign of Maryland, Maryland Hunger Solutions, CASA, and others to pass the Family Prosperity Act. This expanded the state-level Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) in Maryland and permanently established and expanded a state-level Child Tax Credit (CTC) that had been put in place temporarily during the pandemic. These changes will boost the income for thousands of low-wage earners in our region, providing critical resources for families in need.

Across every lane of our work, one thing remains extraordinarily clear: our ability to fulfill our mission is only possible because of the partnership and support of our community. This includes the network of hundreds of nonprofit organizations with whom we distribute food, and the grocers and growers who provide it; an ever-widening group of institutional partners like hospitals and colleges with whom we’re piloting innovative programs; the economic and regional development groups that have created space at their tables to consider important issues affecting our clients; and the many advocacy groups working together to create policy change. And critically, it includes each of our generous donors and volunteers.

Collectively, this incredible group has done what none of us could achieve alone: created hope, opportunity, and a brighter future for thousands of our neighbors. We are grateful for the enormous impact that you have helped to make in 2023, and look forward to all that we will do together for people throughout our region in the year to come.

With my deepest thanks,

Radha Muthiah
The State of Hunger in Our Region

The end of the pandemic did not mark the end of staggering levels of food insecurity across the Greater Washington region.

One in three residents—32%—did not know where their next meal was coming from at some point during the previous year, according to our 2023 Hunger Report. That’s essentially unchanged from the number of respondents who experienced food insecurity in the 2022 survey.

KEY FACTORS BEHIND HIGH FOOD-INSECURITY RATE:

- The pandemic’s ongoing economic upheaval, with too many of our neighbors still not back to full employment;
- Soaring rates of inflation, which increased the cost of food and many other expenses;
- And the retraction of expanded government assistance programs that were intended to blunt the pandemic’s negative effects.

The rollback of expanded SNAP benefits in February meant more than 300,000 of our neighbors lost the ability to buy a week’s worth of meals. After those pandemic-era benefits expired, our partner organizations reported increases in the number of clients coming through their doors.

By the end of 2023, our data showed the need in our region was remaining high: food distributions during the fall were 30% higher than our original targets.
Amid still-elevated demand for food assistance, our team worked to ensure that the food we provide—and the ways we distribute it—are responsive to the diverse ages, cultures, and health concerns of the people we serve.
60.9 MILLION

nutritious meals distributed in 2023.

BY THE NUMBERS:
2023 Food Distribution

100% increase in the number of meals distributed when compared to our food distribution before the pandemic.

TYPES OF FOOD DISTRIBUTED:

14% of food distributed was protein (meat, poultry, fish, and plant-based sources).

88% of food met CAFB’s wellness criteria: It was lower in salt and sugar, and higher in fiber.

47% of food distributed was fruits and vegetables.

28% of foods distributed (in addition to produce) were culturally familiar options—items that are familiar to people from a wide swath of countries and cultures.
SOURCES OF FOOD DISTRIBUTED:

- **28.7 MILLION** meals worth of food were purchased by CAFB.
- **22 MILLION** meals worth of food were donated.
- **10.3 MILLION** meals worth of food were procured through government programs.
- **2.9 MILLION** meals worth of food were purchased from local farms.

FOOD DISTRIBUTED ACROSS OUR REGION:

- **11.1 MILLION** meals in the District of Columbia
- **18.6 MILLION** meals in the Northern Virginia
- **31.3 MILLION** meals in Maryland
On a typical day, there were roughly 3 million meals worth of food stored in our warehouses in DC, Maryland, and Virginia!
FROM LOCAL FARMS
TO LOCAL TABLES

During 2023, CAFB expanded our relationships with local farmers, thanks to funding from the Local Farm Purchasing Assistance Cooperative Agreement (LFPA), a grant program that allows us to support Maryland farms as we supply healthy produce for our neighbors.

Those new partnerships included buying a range of fresh produce from Beauty Blooms, a Montgomery County farm started by Nia Nyamweya.

Nia came to farming after holding a series of roles in community organizing and philanthropy. Feeling burnt out, she decided to attend a workshop from a mini farm in DC—and she fell in love. “I love the self-determination of farming and I love being outside,” Nia says.

Nia immersed herself in beginner farming programs, and eventually expanded Beauty Blooms to the 10 acres of land she currently cultivates.

The crops growing on her farm—tomatoes, snap peas, swiss chard, and more—are heading to neighbors in need across the region, through her partnerships with the Capital Area Food Bank and other nonprofits.

By the end of the year, the food bank received 8,500 pounds of food from Beauty Blooms—or roughly 7,100 meals worth of locally-grown ingredients!

Farmers markets are among the best places to find customers, but buyers there can be inconsistent from week to week when it comes to how much and what they are buying.

Because of this, her partnership with the food bank has been a “game changer,” Nia says. By working with the food bank, Beauty Blooms has a “steady” and “reliable” buyer, so she can focus on growing high-quality, nutrient-packed produce.

“I love the self determination of farming.”

NIA NYAMWEYA,
BEAUTY BLOOMS

7,100 meals worth of fresh produce flowed from Nia’s farm to the food bank and our neighbors’ tables!
WORKING TOGETHER TO REACH NORTHERN VIRGINIANS

The Haymarket Regional Food Pantry, which has partnered with CAFB since 2010, started in a closet. Over two decades, it has grown to serve tens of thousands of people in Northern Virginia each year.

In 2005, two churches in Prince William County decided to partner and work to address food insecurity in their community. Together, representatives from the St. Paul’s Episcopalian Church and St. Catherine Drexel Catholic Church formed the Haymarket Regional Food Pantry.

They started serving food from a closet in the Haymarket Town Hall building. As Northern Virginia grew in population, so did the need for the pantry’s work. They moved into larger and larger facilities until early 2020, when the current 5,400 square-foot facility opened.

They would need every inch of that space. Demand had been decreasing since 2014, but when the pandemic began, the need for food assistance soared.

When expanded pandemic-era SNAP benefits ended in March, Haymarket saw a new spike in need. During the month after those benefits ended, the pantry reported a 90% increase in new families seeking assistance, and the team added 55 new weekly appointments.

“To me, there is nothing worse than the thought of a kid going to school hungry,” says Eileen Smith, the pantry’s executive director.

In 2023, we were proud to supply Haymarket’s team with the food to distribute 205,000 meals to the community!
BY THE NUMBERS:
Direct Distribution Programs

While most of the food we provide reaches our neighbors through our network of partners, sometimes it’s most efficient to distribute food to kids, seniors, and families directly where they live and learn.

Learn about the programs we offer across the region:

FOR KIDS AND FAMILIES:

92 FAMILY MARKETS
Hosted in schools throughout the region, Family Markets offer no-cost food for kids and families in a convenient market-like setting, including:

5 Early Childhood Family Markets
Focused on families with children enrolled in Head Start centers, these new sites provide produce that is high in essential nutrients needed for young children.

64 JOYFUL FOOD MARKETS
Operated in partnership with the organization Martha’s Table, this program provides free food for families through school- and community-center-based markets in DC’s Wards 7 and 8.

36 SUMMER MEALS LOCATIONS
The Summer Meals program provides the nutritious meals kids need to continue growing and learning when school meals are unavailable.

48 AFTER SCHOOL MEAL SITES
Through the federal Child and Adult Care Food Program, kids receive hearty snacks or evening meals at a variety of afterschool programs throughout the area.
RETAIL ACCESS:

FOR SENIORS:

68 SENIOR BROWN BAG SITES
The Senior Bag Program provides monthly, senior-specific bags of healthy groceries to people over 55.

100 MY GROCERIES TO GO AND GROCERY PLUS SITES
Though the federal Community Supplemental Food Program, income-eligible seniors over 60 living in DC, as well as Montgomery and Prince George’s counties in Maryland, receive nutritious groceries each month.

FOR EVERYONE:

87 MOBILE MARKETS
These monthly no-cost pop-up markets bring food directly into neighborhoods where it’s needed.

4 COMMUNITY MARKETPLACES
Community Marketplaces are inspired by farmers markets and are located in high food-insecurity areas across our region. For no cost, visitors can select fruits, vegetables, and other grocery items.

2 CURBSIDE GROCERY TRUCKS
Clients in areas with very few grocery stores also are seeking options for purchasing nutritious food. These mobile grocery trucks operating in DC’s Ward 8 and Maryland’s Prince George’s County offer a new kind of neighborhood retail option, where people can buy produce, protein, and other grocery staples at affordable prices.
CAFB’s summer meals program—including our mobile meals bus—provided more than 56,000 meals and snacks to children in 2023!
SUPPORTING STUDENTS AND FAMILIES THROUGH SCHOOL PANTRIES

At Cresthaven Elementary School this fall, Ramona Johnson could be spotted wearing a huge, bright-orange pumpkin costume. The eye-catching outfit was one of the many creative strategies employed by our School Pantry partners to make families feel comfortable accessing food assistance.

The pantry at Cresthaven, located in Silver Spring, MD, is among 58 School Pantries that the Capital Area Food Bank has opened across our region, including 11 new sites in 2023. Designed to be a consistent and convenient space for families to access food, School Pantries are located within the school building and provide a variety of shelf-stable food items for the school community.

School Pantries are intended to reach a particularly vulnerable population: households with kids are 60% more likely to struggle to access enough nutritious food than households without kids, according to our 2023 Hunger Report.

Teachers and school administrators see this need too. Karina Dos Santos, the community school liaison at Viers Mill Elementary School, also located in Silver Spring, said this fall that families were clamoring for details about when the pantry would reopen. “You have no idea how many text messages I get,” Dos Santos said, “how many times I’m approached and asked” when the pantry is returning.

Most of the pantries’ operating hours overlap with either pick-up or drop-off times for students, so busy families don’t need to make an additional stop to access food.

Our School Pantry partners also work to reduce the stigma that can accompany seeking food assistance. Many choose to brand their pantries as “markets,” highlighting the choice offered for selecting which groceries to take home. Most importantly, staffers and volunteers work hard to treat every client with kindness and respect.

“Everyone deserves basic human rights, and food is basically a human right.”

RAMONA JOHNSON
CHERYL’S STORY: CHOOSING BETWEEN FOOD AND MEDICINE

A former telephone switchboard operator, Cheryl worked all of her life. Then an illness forced her into early retirement.

“I always worked so I never thought I would have to go to a food bank,” she says. “And then I did.”

Seniors in our region face some of the highest rates of food insecurity in the country. For Cheryl and too many others, that can mean tough choices on whether they can afford necessary medications or nutritious food.

That’s why our programs for seniors are so vital. Each month, the food bank reaches more than 10,000 seniors like Cheryl through our Groceries Plus, My Groceries to Go and Senior Brown Bag programs. The groceries delivered each month help ensure Cheryl doesn’t have to choose between the medication she needs to manage her blood pressure and healthy, delicious meals.

“Without the support of the food bank? I mean, come on, I don’t know what I’d do,” Cheryl says. “That’s how much a part of my life it is. … I don’t know what I would do without it.”

Cheryl’s story was part of the “Hunger is Here” public service announcement campaign launched by the food bank during Hunger Action Month, highlighting the experiences of our neighbors facing food insecurity. Learn more by going to HungerIsHere.org.
BRIGHTER FUTURES TOMORROW

As we distribute the food our clients need today, the food bank also is working to create greater opportunity, advance equity, and empower our clients through partnerships with health care providers and colleges, as well as through advocating for policies that can enable more of our neighbors to thrive.
Our Food+ Pilot Programs

To address the root causes of hunger and inequity in our region, the food bank is piloting innovative approaches for pairing food with other critical services, such as health care, skills development and education.

By expanding beyond our traditional food provider network, we can meet people where they are and provide them with food to help address their most pressing concerns.

FOOD + HEALTH

Integrating food into health care to promote disease prevention and management, resulting in healthier outcomes at every stage of life.

CHILDREN’S NATIONAL ONSITE FOOD PHARMACY IN DIABETES CLINIC
Food insecure children diagnosed with pre-diabetes, type 1 diabetes, or type 2 diabetes receive groceries at the time of their medical appointments and dietetic visits. A research study on food delivery directly to patients’ homes is being finalized.

FOOD FOR HEALTH WITH POTOMAC HEALTH FOUNDATION
Over six months, patients with diet related illnesses receive monthly food boxes with shelf-stable items and fresh produce, along with health education materials.

FOOD + SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Using food as an enabler for workforce development program attendance and completion by removing the burden of food costs.

YEAR UP PARTNERSHIP
Students enrolled in a one-year, intensive training and internship program have access to healthy groceries and snacks via an onsite food pantry.

FOOD + EDUCATION

Bundling food and other support services for students to help improve academic outcomes and long term financial stability.

ON-CAMPUS PANTRIES
One approach for increasing access to healthy foods is to offer convenient locations on campus where students can pick up free groceries after class, instead of needing to make additional stops on their way home.

GROCERY STORE GIFT CARDS
Gift cards to local grocery stores help ensure students can access the range of nutritious foods they need to thrive. Through this program, students receive gift cards every other week via email, with the amount based on their household size.

HOME GROCERY DELIVERY
Another pilot program provides boxes of fresh produce and shelf-stable groceries delivered directly to a student’s home. Through a partnership with DoorDash, the grocery boxes are delivered every other week during the semester.

HOT MEAL CREDITS
To make it easier for students to access meals while they’re on campus, we also work with colleges on a program that provides funds directly in students’ meal accounts for use at campus dining locations.
EMPOWERING PATIENTS TO MANAGE THEIR HEALTH THROUGH FOOD

For Iman, a patient at the diabetes clinic at Children’s National Hospital, our on-site food pharmacy has offered access to the nutritious foods she needs to manage her prediabetes and her college classwork. “It took a weight off my shoulders,” she says.

Finding the right mix of fresh fruits and vegetables can be difficult in a high-cost area like the greater Washington region, and Iman said there have been times where it was extremely hard to get the food she needs to support her health.

Now she’s able to visit the food pharmacy every two weeks and bring home 30 to 40 pounds of fresh produce and shelf-stable groceries. The offerings also include options like almond milk, which Iman, who is vegan, has appreciated.

Having reliable access to nutritious foods that are tailored to support individuals with diabetes and prediabetes has helped her to lose weight and to feel confident that she can keep her blood sugar under control.

“I feel like I can manage my diabetes,” Iman says.

Since launching two years ago, the food pharmacy at Children’s National has become a popular option for patients like Iman. Dietitians at the clinic say families increasingly have chosen to schedule their appointment at the main hospital rather than at satellite locations so they can access the groceries provided there.
INCREASING FOOD ACCESS ON CAMPUS

For too many college students, hunger can make it difficult to successfully pursue the diploma that can lead to a brighter future. But at schools across our region, the Capital Area Food Bank is partnering with campus leaders to offer students the support that can help them achieve their full potential.

Since beginning this work, we have established food-assistance pilot programs at six campuses: Northern Virginia Community College, Prince George’s Community College, Montgomery College, Bowie State University, George Mason University, and the University of the District of Columbia. Our partnerships with the latter three schools launched this fall.

These programs are tailored to each campus: at Montgomery College, for example, we’ve partnered with their administration to identify students with financial need, who then receive gift cards to local grocery stores every other week. This program offers students flexibility to choose the foods they need, in a setting that reduces potential stigma around seeking assistance.

Dr. Carmen Poston-Farmer Travis, director of student affairs at Montgomery College, says the food bank’s support has been a “game changer… the consistency has been incredible.”

Food assistance is a key part of a students’ toolkit for success—and that’s been clear in the survey data collected from students taking part in these initiatives. More than 90% of the participants in the grocery gift card program at Montgomery College say the program increased their access to nutritious food and reduced their financial burden. And 71% say they were able to work fewer hours due to the program.

Through partnerships like these, we’re building a coordinated approach to addressing hunger across our region’s campuses, which will ultimately support greater achievement in the classroom and beyond for our area’s students.
At our second annual Regional College Hunger Conference, students shared how access to nutritious food has fueled their academic success.
Hunger Report 2023

Our commitment to data-driven work includes our Hunger Report, which has become a trusted source of information that is relied upon by regional lawmakers, policy groups, media outlets, our partners, and others to inform important conversations about food insecurity in our region.

The 2023 report was the fourth annual Hunger Report, and for the second year, it was created using data gathered in partnership with NORC at the University of Chicago, one of the largest and most trusted independent social research organizations in the United States.

A general population survey of nearly 5,300 Greater Washington area residents, the report detailed a stunning scale of food insecurity and inequity across our region: 1 in 3 people had trouble accessing enough to eat during the last year.

That data makes unavoidably clear that while the economic picture has improved for some in our area over the last year, those improvements have not been felt equally.

MAJOR DRIVERS OF FOOD INSECURITY AMONG RESIDENTS OF OUR REGION:

- The pandemic’s ongoing economic upheaval
- The rollback of expanded government assistance programs intended to blunt the pandemic’s negative effects
- Soaring rates of inflation

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1 IN 3 people had trouble accessing enough to eat during the last year.

50% Nearly half of food-insecure individuals are experiencing at least one diet-related health condition.

76% of those who are food insecure are working.

1 IN 5 households earning $120,000 are food insecure.
FROM HUNGER REPORT 2023: Food insecure vs. food secure populations

**Race**
- **Food Insecure**: 44% Black, 27% Hispanic, 11% Other, 18% White
- **Food Secure**: 22% Black, 11% Hispanic, 16% Other, 50% White

**Health**
- **Food Insecure**: 29% Have chronic health conditions that limit daily activities
- **Food Secure**: 13% Have chronic health conditions that limit daily activities

**Children**
- **Food Insecure**: 42% Have children in household
- **Food Secure**: 26% Have children in household

**Income**
- **Food Insecure**:
  - 82% Low income ($0-$83k)
  - 12% Middle income ($83k-$164k)
  - 5% High income (Over $164k)
- **Food Secure**:
  - 35% Low income ($0-$83k)
  - 28% Middle income ($83k-$164k)
  - 37% High income (Over $164k)

**Education**
- **Food Insecure**:
  - 25% College degree or higher
  - 26% Some college
  - 38% High school or equivalent
  - 10% Less than high school
- **Food Secure**:
  - 65% College degree or higher
  - 19% Some college
  - 14% High school or equivalent
  - 2% Less than high school

**Employment**
- **Food Insecure**: 76% Employed
- **Food Secure**: 73% Employed
LEARNING ABOUT FOOD, FROM GARDEN TO PLATE

On a brisk fall afternoon, the food bank’s Urban Demonstration Garden is filled with middle schoolers and curiosity. Students from Center City PCS are on a field trip to our garden, where they will learn how fresh vegetables get from the ground to their plates.

This field trip is the seventh of the year. In the words of Avery Cross, our Food Growing Education Specialist, these trips are designed to “start building a relationship between the students and produce. To help them love healthy food and understand where it comes from.”

And it works too. “I don’t like kale,” one student said, “but this salad changed my mind.”

Avery kicks off every school visit with an introduction to the food bank and to the practice of urban gardening. Her message to students: there are many ways to garden, and it can be an excellent source of healthy food.

For students, the visit is a chance to get hands-on with plants and gardening. An herb identification game teaches that different plants smell and look different, and how to distinguish different herbs. Harvesting food from the garden is a favorite part of the visit for many students.

And what do you do after harvesting veggies? Eat them! During this visit, students prepared a kale salad, mostly using ingredients that had just been harvested.

At the end of every field trip, we distribute a survey asking the students what they learned and how they enjoyed the field trip. Six in 10 said they were likely to seek out the food they explored on the field trip!
In June, CAFB’s board of directors adopted a nutrition policy that reinforces our commitment to sourcing and distributing foods that support wellness.
ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE

After 10 months of learning about hunger in our region, developing their advocacy skills, and working to harness the power of their lived experiences, the third class of our Client Leadership Council (CLC) graduated during the summer!

The Client Leadership Council is a 10-month advocacy training program, during which clients learn how to share their stories to shape public policy and food bank programming.

The latest cohort was busy throughout the year, testifying at legislative hearings on the importance of programs like the Earned Income Tax Credit, and lobbying on Capitol Hill for strengthening SNAP in the next Farm Bill. They also shared their personal stories in media interviews, including after the expanded pandemic-era SNAP benefits ended.

These graduates are making a difference in their community by pushing for changes that can improve the lives of those facing food insecurity.
The graduation ceremony for our third Client Leadership Council cohort, held at THEARC Theater in Southeast DC, also served as a reunion for CLC alums.
14,000
VOLUNTEERS
GAVE NEARLY
40,000
SERVICE HOURS
in 2023 to keep food flowing to our community!

Volunteers helped the food bank in ways that ranged from packing boxes to working in our Urban Demonstration Garden. Among our special visitors this year were Stacy Dean, deputy undersecretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and ambassadors from the Planters Nutmobile!
Financials

Capital Area Food Bank was audited for Fiscal Year 2023 by RSM US LLP. A copy of our most recent audited financial statements is available on our website, or upon request.
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Across the River

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Community Advocate

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SAS

Sarah Tucker-Ray
McKinsey & Company
(Beginning 6/23)

GENERAL COUNSEL
Shaked Hoter
DLA Piper
THANK YOU!

Your vital support provides the food our neighbors need today and creates pathways towards brighter futures tomorrow.

HOW TO HELP

Click the icons below to:

- Give funds
- Give food
- Volunteer

JOIN US ONLINE

Click the icons to connect online.

capitalareafoodbank.org

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