



Fall 2025

# FEEDING *the* HUNGRY

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## Letter from the CEO

Living in an agricultural state like Arkansas, it is easy to take access to fresh fruits and vegetables for granted. As a child, I remember my family growing a huge garden every summer. Tomatoes, green beans, okra, corn, and peppers are just some of the items I remember having in our garden. We enjoyed fresh food all summer, and we canned vegetables and filled the freezer with things from the garden for the winter months. I'm only slightly joking when I say that I was nearly an adult when I first had canned green beans from the grocery store. But even in my younger days, I realized that not everyone had land on which their families could grow gardens.

Then came the day that I was living on my own and doing my own grocery shopping. I was no stranger to grocery shopping, but it was different when I was spending my own money. The truth is, eating healthy fresh fruits and vegetables from the grocery store is more expensive than buying ultra-processed foods.

That's why the Food Bank of Northeast Arkansas made the commitment more than a decade ago to increase our distribution of fresh produce. In 2024, 25 percent of the food we distributed was fresh fruits and vegetables, and we want to continue to improve access to healthy food for families throughout Northeast Arkansas. In this newsletter, we will highlight one of the many important partnerships we have with the agricultural community that helps us with our mission of providing food to people in need. I hope it inspires you to find a way to join that mission in whatever way you can.



With Gratitude,

*Christie Jordan*

Christie Jordan





PO Box 2246  
Jonesboro, AR 72402  
(870) 932-3663  
[FoodBankofNEA.org](http://FoodBankofNEA.org)

## Staff Directory

Laura Anderson, *Agency Relations Coordinator*  
Terry Austin, *Development Officer- Grants & Media*  
Marty Black, *Warehouse Associate & Truck Driver*  
Laura Dunivan, *Agency Relations Coordinator*  
Jeff Fielder, *Compliance & Facilities Manager*  
Angela Finley, *Development Assistant*  
Ethan Frazier, *Warehouse Manager*  
Allan Garner, *Director of Operations*  
Jennifer Hannah, *Chief Program Officer*  
Rebecca Hendrix, *Chief Development Officer*  
Chrissy Holbrook, *Development Officer*  
Elizabeth Johnson, *Donor Engagement Coordinator*  
Christie Jordan, *Chief Executive Officer*  
Bonnie Mamula, *Office Manager*  
Lauren Mick, *Administrative Assistant*  
Scarlett Mullins, *Service Insights Coordinator*  
Natalie Neal, *USDA Coordinator*  
Gary Phillips, *Food Sourcing Coordinator*  
Adam Stanage, *Warehouse Associate*  
LaToya Wallace, *Agency Relations Coordinator: Child and Senior Programs*  
Mark Ward, *Warehouse Associate & Truck Driver*

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## Friends Hear Corn's Call

In old movies, cornfields are always calling all sorts of people for all sorts of tasks. This summer, one Greene County farmer's five acres drew a crowd for a purpose both noble and needed: to put fresh produce on the tables of neighbors facing food insecurity.

Marmaduke farmer Cliff Carter planted corn on those acres, and he and his employees tended it until it was ready to be harvested by a team of volunteers over three hot July days. For Carter, the effort wasn't a charitable addition to his everyday work — it was part and parcel of it.



Giving of their time and energy in a hot and humid environment, volunteers work to harvest corn.



Food Bank of Northeast Arkansas team members (from left) Rebecca Hendrix, Chrissy Holbrook, Terry Austin, and Christie Jordan.

"As a farmer, you want to help feed the hungry," Carter said. "It's not just a job to us, it's a calling."

That cornfield calling, the desire to provide food for neighbors and families, resulted in a harvest of 50,000 pounds of sweet corn — fresh produce that went from field to food bank to families in need, in a matter of hours.

Carter worked with Rebecca Hendrix, Chief Development Officer at the Food Bank of Northeast Arkansas, to make the sweet corn project a reality. Logistically, it was a big lift — figuratively and literally. Carter monitored the corn's growth and provided estimates on when it would be ready for harvest. Hendrix coordinated the food bank's side of the effort.

"My job was simple: keep asking Cliff when the corn would be ready, and make sure we had an army of volunteers ready to pick when it was," Hendrix said. Despite the heat and humidity typical of an Arkansas summer, 112 volunteers of all ages turned out during the three-day harvest. All told, they picked an estimated 90,000 ears of corn. (That's an average of 803 ears picked by each volunteer!)

As it turned out, that Marmaduke cornfield's calling was heard by all sorts of people — just like in the movies.



Volunteers work their way down the cornrows. All told, 90,000 ears of corn were harvested by 112 volunteers.



## Giving Back by Giving Time

Camela Kellim always felt a slight tug at her conscience every month when she stopped by the Senior BEES Center in Paragould to pick up a box of food. Even though Kellim met all of the criteria to receive the food — provided by the United States Department of Agriculture and distributed through the Food Bank of Northeast Arkansas and the Senior BEES — she found it difficult to be on the receiving end of the distribution.

That's not an unfamiliar feeling to many neighbors throughout Northeast Arkansas. Accepting food, even when it meets a legitimate need, can create friction with the recipient's sense of independence and ability to make ends meet. Some also worry that they could be taking something that should go to someone in greater need.

So when Kellim heard that volunteer harvesters were needed to pick five acres of sweet corn for the Food Bank of Northeast Arkansas, she was, well, all ears.

"It's a wonderful feeling to give back to your community instead of just taking," Kellim said. "I'm giving a little bit of time to give back to the community and to the food bank."



Camela Kellim volunteered all three days of the harvesting effort for the sweet corn project.

Kellim, a senior citizen living in Greene County, gave more than "a little bit of time." She arrived at 7:00 each morning of the three-day harvest effort, and she picked corn under the sweltering July sun each day until her fellow laborers cajoled her into taking a break.

"I like helping people," she said, sipping a bottle of water in the shade of a fieldside tent. "And it helps me, too. At my age, there isn't a whole lot you can do to help, so I want to do whatever I can."

## Couple Practices Creative Kindness

The summer of 2025 was hot enough to introduce the term "corn sweat" into the common parlance. One didn't have to stand in a cornfield to know it was hot, and fortunately for neighbors in Northeast Arkansas, one didn't have to venture into the stalks to help with the Food Bank of Northeast Arkansas' corn harvest project.

Bill and Vikki Harrison, friends of the Food Bank of Northeast Arkansas, leveraged the benefits of a flexible philanthropy vehicle to help make that corn accessible to food-insecure neighbors in the region.



Bill and Vikki Harrison used their donor-advised fund to make a \$5,000 gift for our corn harvest project. The Harrisons are pictured at left, along with Food Bank of Northeast Arkansas CEO Christie Jordan and Chief Development Officer Rebecca Hendrix

The Harrisons used their donor-advised fund through the Arkansas Community Foundation to make a charitable gift in support of the corn harvest. Their generous donation helped with logistics and volunteer support over the three days of the effort and represented a creative way to make an immediate impact.

"We fund special projects that grab our fancy," Bill said. "When we saw the 'corn picking' project, it fit in this category: a one-time project involving a lot of community folks meeting a real need."

For the Harrisons, being involved is a lifelong practice. They've supported communities and causes dear to them throughout their marriage and careers. Since moving to Jonesboro in 2009, the Harrisons have invested their energy and money in projects for several local nonprofit organizations, schools, and universities.

A donor-advised fund is maintained by a nonprofit sponsoring organization. The donor receives a tax deduction in the year a gift is made to the fund, and then can advise the organization regarding distribution of fund balances to charitable causes.

"I think of it as a philanthropy savings account," Bill said. "(It) lets us give money for tax purposes whenever we want to and then make gifts to charities when we find a need we want to fund."

In other words, it helps the Harrisons as they look to help others — a creative way to be generous when it can have significant impact.



## Employee Profile – Allan Garner

**Q What brought you to the Food Bank of Northeast Arkansas?**

**A** I was working for Yarnell's Ice Cream as a route driver/salesperson when it went out of business in 2011. I had been out of work for a couple of weeks, and someone mentioned to my wife about a warehouse manager position coming open at the Food Bank of Northeast Arkansas. So, I applied. And here we are almost 15 years later.

**Q What is your favorite part of the job?**

**A** Seeing the difference that the Food Bank of Northeast Arkansas can make in the communities we serve. Some of the camaraderie that we have with our neighbors at our mobile distributions. It makes coming to work fun most days.

**Q What is your least favorite part of the job?**

**A** While this is difficult for me to answer, I would say that produce distribution can be somewhat difficult at times. The sheer quantity and perishability make it very challenging.

**Q What has impacted you most since you started working at the Food Bank?**

**A** Well, besides the pickup truck that ran me over while on my motorcycle coming to work on March 27, it would have to be disaster relief. To see some of the devastation in our communities and the losses some folks have suffered firsthand, not just on television — it hits different.



**Q If you could have dinner with anyone, who would they be and why?**

**A Sister Rosetta Tharp** – The influence she had across multiple genres of music. Known as the “Godmother of Rock and Roll.” Rock & Roll Hall of Fame inductee from Cotton Plant, Ark.

**B.B. King** – One of my favorite guitarists with ties to Arkansas. “Lucille,” B.B.’s guitar, was born in Twist, Ark.

**Andy Griffith** – He just seemed like a guy that had it together. The characters he played were just based on his own personality like he wasn’t even acting at all.

**Tammy Garner** – My wife. We very seldom eat dinner at a restaurant. We mostly enjoy sitting in the garage or on the back porch drinking coffee and playing with our three Corgis.



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of Northeast Arkansas

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