

# Your Impact



## A Story of Giving Back

Erika Chambers was confident that with careful budgeting she could support her family when she separated from the father of her three children in spring 2020.

Then the pandemic hit.

During the shutdown, the single mother worked from her home in Palmer, Alaska, and attended college full-time. She was employed as a program manager for an early education facility, but the center occasionally closed in response to positive COVID-19 cases.

In addition, her children's schools closed. Between work obligations and class assignments, she helped her oldest son with virtual learning and her middle child with virtual preschool while keeping her youngest entertained.

Unpredictable expenses and short-term layoffs took a toll on the family's finances. Nothing made Erika feel more vulnerable than to open her cupboard and find it empty.

"Food insecurity was worse when my kids didn't get breakfast, lunch and a snack at school," she says. "Those things didn't fit into my budget at all."

Her middle child's preschool teacher suggested she visit a food pantry in her neighborhood.

That made all the difference.

"I went from wondering how I was going to piece together dinner to a fully stocked fridge and pantry," she says.

At first, Erika was ashamed that she couldn't provide food for her children with-

out help. To give back as much as she could, she and her two older children volunteered at the food pantry once a week.

"All of 2020 was a reality check for me," she says. "We lived comfortably until we didn't. No family should be in a situation where they can't eat."

While working with families at the early childhood center, Erika realized that her family was also eligible for SNAP benefits. Food assistance allows her to purchase foods that her kids can safely eat. One child has a gluten intolerance; another is allergic to corn.

"I can pick foods I know my kids will eat and are good for them," she says. The food assistance allows her to put her paycheck toward other bills like rent, utilities, gas and tuition.

Erika expects to earn her bachelor's degree within the next year. It's been a rough year, but she hopes that her children have learned that support is available when it's needed – and that tough times will not last forever.

"Now if my kids say they're hungry, it doesn't make me feel bad. I know I have food to feed them. It just means I lost track of time," she says.



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## New Warehouse Home to Serve the Next Generation

THANK YOU!



Our new energy-efficient 12,000 square-foot freezer/cooler.

It has been a thrill this summer to watch the transformation of our new 80,000-square-foot warehouse on Viking Drive in Anchorage into an incredible asset to serve Alaska.

I've been even more thrilled – and inspired – by the generosity of Alaskans. You gave so that your neighbors hit hard by the pandemic could put meals on the table for their families. At the same time individuals, businesses, and foundations looked toward the future and gave to help us complete our capital campaign. Thank you, many times over!

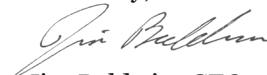
Our warehouse on Spar Avenue served our mission well for the past 25 years. It even had some fun features like an attached railroad boxcar acting as a freezer. Our new warehouse gives us the capacity to fulfill our mandate to serve all of Alaska, along with our partner distribution organizations in Fairbanks, Kenai, and Juneau.

Our new home has an energy-efficient 12,000-square-foot freezer/cooler, so we can accept and

distribute more food. It has a clean room where volunteers can sort and re-pack food donations and a much improved “shopping” area for our partner food pantries and meal programs. We have the capacity and resilience to respond to food emergencies close to home or in small rural communities. Our logistics manager has dedicated space for preparing shipments to rural partners, and our great warehouse staff will have enough room to operate much more efficiently.

Your support makes it possible to fulfill our mission to always be there to respond, to help, whenever Alaskans can't count on their next meal. We step forward now into the future, with confidence and hope, to serve the next generation of Alaskans so no child, senior, or family goes hungry. ***Will you join us?***

Gratefully,

  
Jim Baldwin, CEO

**We look forward to celebrating our new facility with a grand opening in spring 2022.**

*With your support, we have reason to celebrate!*



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## Advocacy Spotlight: Child Nutrition

During the pandemic we saw an unprecedented need for food assistance. But we also saw historic investments in programs that combat child hunger. We applaud the work of Senator Murkowski, Senator Sullivan, and Congressman Young to ensure struggling families had adequate nutritional resources during the pandemic, including access to universal school meals, Pandemic-EBT, expanded SNAP benefits, remote WIC services, and more.

Alaskan families with children were hit especially hard by the pandemic, and federal nutrition programs continue to provide vital support to those struggling to put food on the table. However, families will face a steep cliff when these temporary flexibilities expire, likely long before communities have fully recovered from the devastating impacts of the pandemic.

The upcoming Child Nutrition Reauthorization provides a critical opportunity to build on these successes and support children and families as they recover from the health, educational, and economic impacts of the pandemic.

There has never been a more important time to strengthen our nation's child nutrition programs. We know Congress is exploring a number of vehicles, including Child Nutrition Reauthorization, to deal with the impacts of the pandemic on vulnerable families and children. We support the follow-

ing broad priorities for the child nutrition programs serving Alaskans:

- Establish free healthy school meals for all children. Through waivers and flexibilities, schools offered free meals to all students during the pandemic. We see universal school meals as a key policy in making significant inroads towards solving child hunger in our state.
- Expand and streamline summer and afterschool meal programs, making it easier for sponsoring organizations to run both programs.
- Allow summer meals providers to feed kids using community-specific, alternative approaches instead of one-size-fits-all methods, including Summer EBT and other non-congregate options.
- Extend WIC eligibility to a child's sixth birthday, and to two years for postpartum women.
- Bolster childcare meal programs by allowing a third meal for children in full-day care.

Want to help us advocate for priorities like strong child nutrition programs? Sign up for our advocacy alerts at <https://foodbankofalaska.org/get-involved/advocate/> or by contacting Kate Paskievitch, Advocacy Coordinator at [kpaskievitch@foodbankofalaska.org](mailto:kpaskievitch@foodbankofalaska.org).

## Our Work is a Reflection of Those Who Support Us

"I began volunteering with Food Bank of Alaska to help my community, meet other people, and do good, hard work in the process. Soon I found myself not wanting to miss a single shift," says Darrick Howard, one of Food Bank of Alaska's most dedicated volunteers. Darrick has volunteered over 80 hours in the past year, mainly at the Emergency Food Distributions that were set up as a response to the pandemic.

Food Bank of Alaska could not have operated the event without volunteers like Darrick. In total, hundreds of volunteers distributed over 36,000 food boxes to families in Anchorage and the Mat-Su Valley.

"I wasn't going to miss an opportunity where I could listen to clients' stories and help them feel supported. They were always so kind and thankful for what I was doing, but many of them didn't know how they made my days better too." The clients inspired Darrick to do more. "Honestly, I was only doing the simple act of bringing food boxes to people's cars. But I can't tell you how many people acknowledged that those food boxes were their lifeline. It was truly all they had to eat for the whole week. If we needed to stay late or help in the freezing winter nights, then so be it."

Darrick is no stranger to connecting with others through community engagement. He has worked as a writing tutor

for the UAA Writing Center while finishing his degree in history, served as President for the Phi Alpha Theta Honor Society, and even mentored several freshman students through the Seawolf Mentor Program.

He says that his time with Food Bank of Alaska "broke the ice" and made him want to get involved in other ways. The Emergency Food Distribution ended in May 2021, but Darrick has continued to volunteer at our weekly food reclamation event.

"We get so caught up in our own worlds, sometimes we forget how many people need help. I realized, especially during the pandemic, that I could do a lot more. There's so many people in need, and there's so many volunteer opportunities" said Darrick. He encourages others to identify the causes they care about and find ways to get involved, even if it's for an hour a week.

"The more time we take in respecting, appreciating, and understanding everyone's story of who they are, and how they came to be where they are, the more we realize the true impact we are making."





## FOOD BANK of ALASKA

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## September is Hunger Action Month!

Food shouldn't be an impossible choice!  
This September we ask you to join us  
with actions that help end hunger.

# 14<sup>th</sup>

**Day  
of  
Caring**

A day to volunteer  
and give back to  
the community,  
hosted by the  
United Way.

# 17<sup>th</sup>

**Hunger  
Action  
Day**

A day when  
collective efforts  
across the country  
are focused for  
greater impact.

Visit [FoodBankofAlaska.org](http://FoodBankofAlaska.org) to learn  
more about these and other activities  
throughout September.

## Meal Programs that Make an Impact

Thank'you for the  
Kids bags I Love  
The kids bag's Thank you



Many children and young adults do not have access to lunch when school is not in session. Food Bank of Alaska has been a sponsor of the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) since 2003. SFSP is a federal program that ensures children do not go hungry in the summer months. This program alone serves over 1,500 meals a day and continues to grow each year. Our program is providing free nutritious lunch and/or dinner meals for children in 24 rural communities this summer.

This fall, we plan to work with school districts across the state to expand the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).

CACFP is a federal program that provides reimbursements for nutritious meals and snacks to eligible children and adults who are enrolled for care at participating childcare centers, day care homes, and adult day care centers. CACFP also provides reimbursements for meals served to children and youth participating in afterschool care programs, children residing in emergency shelters, and adults over the age of 60 or living with a disability and enrolled in day care facilities. CACFP contributes to the wellness, healthy growth, and development of young children and adults each day for more than 4.2 million children and 138,00 adults.