



Volunteer Handbook

“It’s easy to love folks. Don’t judge them. Don’t preach at them. Just feed them” - Dick Larson

Organization Overview

Feeding Avery Families is a dedicated nonprofit food pantry focused on addressing food insecurity in Avery County, North Carolina. Founded in 2006 through a group of local volunteers, we are dedicated to eliminating hunger by providing **supplemental** food assistance to those in need. We are part of the MANNA Food Bank and Feeding America Network. We also partner with local farmers and grocery stores to provide fresh produce, dairy products, eggs, and prepared meals.

Food insecurity is a chronic problem in Avery County and the surrounding area. Before Hurricane Helene, approximately 3,000 (17%) of Avery County residents experienced some degree of uncertainty about their next meal. This includes almost 1,000 children.

Feeding Avery Families serves an average of 500-700 households per month. We distribute food in four ways: drive-thru pick-up, in-person shopping, mobile distributions/deliveries, and school backpacks. We distribute backpacks weekly to school-aged children with 6 meals and 4 snacks. We also anticipate an increase in neighbor needs due to our struggling local economy.

Volunteers are pivotal in the success of FAF. Each year, volunteers serve nearly 45,000 hours through our organization helping those in need of food assistance. This handbook serves as a guide for volunteers working in our pantry. It contains useful information based on best practices that will assist you in your role at FAF.

Feeding Avery Families relies greatly on the food industry, the state and federal government, local farmers, food drives, as well as corporate and individual donors, for sourcing the food that is then passed into the hands of our Avery County neighbors. A majority of the food FAF receives is donated. This food is sorted and prepped by many volunteers, and then distributed to hundreds of families in need. As the need in our region continues to grow, so has the amount of food that goes through our warehouse and to the tables of the people who need it most.

We hope you will enjoy your time with us. Our goal is to make your experience enjoyable and meaningful.

Thank you for joining our team!

Mission Statement

It is the mission of Feeding Avery Families to provide supplemental food and nutritional assistance to hungry people in need in Avery County, North Carolina, and to contribute to their improved health, wherever possible.

Vision Statement

We envision a community where no one goes hungry, and everyone has access to fresh, healthy food.

Board of Directors

- Laura Russell, Board Chair
- David Soyars, Board Secretary
- Larry Good, Board Treasurer
- McNair Turnow, Board Member
- Cathy Fields, Board Member
- Rev. Michael McKee, Board Member
- Joe Zemanek, Board Member
- Jimmy Ennis, Board Member
- Tammy Woodie, Board Member
- John Brabson, Board Member
- Kate Gavenus, Board Member
- Scott Mathis, Board Member
- Marty Martin, Board Member

Staff

Bonnie Clark, Executive Director
director@feedingaveryfamilies.org

Vanessa B. Phillips, Program Manager
vanessap@feedingaveryfamilies.org

Cindy Reed, Office Manager
office@feedingaveryfamilies.org

Kevin Duvalt, Warehouse Associate/Delivery Driver
kevind@feedingaveryfamilies.org

THE NEED

Prior to Hurricane Helene in 2024, about 1 in 5 people in WNC --including children-- did not have access to 3 square meals a day. This is significantly higher than the national average. Nationwide, 1 in 9 people and 1 in 6 children struggle with hunger.

Lay-offs at work, unexpected car maintenance or an accident on the job can suddenly force a family to choose between buying food and other basic necessities such as housing or healthcare.

One bad month can be enough to plunge a household into food insecurity - but some people, including children and seniors, may be at a greater risk of hunger than others.

The USDA defines food insecurity as limited or uncertain access to enough food for all members of a household to live an active, healthy lifestyle. WNC has higher rates of food insecurity than the national average due to 4 main factors that contribute to local and regional poverty: low wages, lack of affordable housing, poor public transportation, as well as the high cost of childcare.

Hunger and health are deeply connected and can be life-altering. When people don't have enough food or have to choose inexpensive foods with low-nutritional value, it can seriously impact their health. And once the cycle of poor diet and poor health begins, it can be a hard cycle to break.

Healthy bodies and minds require nutritious meals at every age, which is why FAF is taking great strides to provide more nutritiously dense foods and fresh produce.

PARTNERSHIPS

MANNA FOOD BANK - MANNA Foodbank is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization serving 16 counties across WNC. MANNA is an accredited member of Feeding America and accounts for 60% of our food source.

LOWES FOODS OF BANNER ELK - Lowes Foods collects food donations for Feeding Avery Families from their customers all year round through their "Friends Feeding Friends" campaigns. In addition, Lowes dairy department employees save the cartons that milk is delivered in for use by Feeding Avery Families for food distribution.

FOOD LION OF BANNER ELK - Approximately 4 times each week, Feeding Avery Volunteers pick up food donated by Food Lion through their "Food Lion Feeds" program. A typical donation includes deli, dairy, bread and desserts.

WAMY COMMUNITY GARDEN - Provide FAF with beautiful and fresh produce during the summer months to help feed our community neighbors.

TRACTOR FOOD & FARMS - Tractor Food & Farms is able to provide FAF with fresh produce twice a month during the summer months through the FARMSHare Program, a USDA funded grant.

BLUE RIDGE WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE - BRWIA is able to provide FAF with fresh produce weekly during the summer months through the FARMSHare program, a USDA funded grant.

ADDITIONAL PARTNERSHIPS - Many churches, organizations, businesses and foundations support FAF through donations, fundraising and food drives.

OUR PROGRAMS

FOOD ACCESS

Food access is at the heart of Feeding Avery Families' mission to end hunger in Avery County, and we focus on several high-need areas in order to support access to healthy, balanced food that gives families a chance to thrive.

FOOD DISTRIBUTION

The Food Distribution program is the central focus of FAF's day-to-day operations.

- Onsite Distribution - Neighbors receive supplemental food assistance with a wide variety of non-perishable products, meat, produce, bread, dairy, dessert and a selection of household and personal items. Individual Shopping and Drive -Thru options are available twice per month per family
- Seasonal Distributions - FAF offers additional food distributions from May through November to serve the needs of agricultural workers and increased accessibility to working families
- Mobile Deliveries - our mobile pantry distributions are designed to reach residents living in rural and underserved areas who lack transportation and cannot access our on-site distribution. These are organized in partnership with local individuals or organizations who have connections to the community. We directly distribute shelf stable foods, perishables, fresh produce, and assorted groceries
- Hispanic Outreach - Latinos experience hunger 2.5 times more than non-Hispanic white communities. Feeding Avery Families is committed to helping all our neighbors in need.
- MANNA Packs for Kids - Many kids in our service area rely on free school meals during the academic year, and face being hungry on weekends and while school is out of session. Our MANNA Packs program is committed to ensure that our community's children facing hunger not only have enough to eat, but also have the opportunity to thrive
- Snacks for Classrooms & Student Programs - FAF supports all schools within the county with additional snacks throughout the academic year and summer programs alike 4H and YMCA Summer Camp. Many teachers pay for snacks out of their own pockets in order to provide snacks for students who are unable or forget to bring their snacks from home. We want to relieve this burden from our teachers and help provide classroom snacks.
- The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) - a federal program that helps supplement the diets of people with low income by providing them with emergency food assistance at no cost. USDA provides 100% American-grown USDA Foods and administrative funds to states to operate TEFAP.

ABOUT THE VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

There are many different reasons why people volunteer. Some are in the middle of their careers and desire to bring a new dimension to their lives and others are retired and choose to give their time and share their wealth of experience.

Everyone connected with Feeding Avery Families works together as a team to provide a positive place for neighbors and program participants. The needs of our neighbors and program participants are a priority for all who work here. Together, we all can make a difference.

FAF Volunteers:

- Are at least 18 years old (anyone under 18yo can volunteer with a parent/guardian)
- Attend an orientation
- Sign an Agreement Form verifying that they understand procedures and what is expected of them

CLASSIFICATIONS

The term volunteer refers to any individual who, by choice and without monetary reward, contributes time and service in one or more program areas on a recurring basis to assist FAF in accomplishing its mission.

- Registered Volunteers: Those individuals who have completed orientation and have been assigned a specific reoccurring responsibility
- Registered-For-Credit Volunteers: Those individuals who are from another agency to whom FAF is accountable, for volunteer performance and time (such as court-mandated volunteers, workfare volunteers, students or interns, club service.)
- Unregistered volunteers: Those volunteers who participate only briefly for a one-time event or in a special circumstance.
- Paid staff: Regular, paid employees of Feeding Avery Families who help FAF accomplish its mission.

VOLUNTEER PROCEDURES

ORIENTATION

All new volunteers will receive a general orientation to FAF and a department orientation of a sufficient duration that enables the fulfillment of their role. During the general orientation, the Volunteer Coordinator will review the facility and Volunteer Handbook. During the department orientation, the Volunteer Coordinator will review the volunteer's role and responsibilities, service expectations, and other pertinent topics to the placement of the volunteer. At the conclusion of the orientation, the volunteer will sign a form verifying that they understand procedures and what is expected of them.

RECORDING HOURS

Volunteers will sign in for shifts to document their time serving FAF. FAF will track volunteer hours both individually and collectively and provide data in our year end report.

RECOGNITION

Outstanding Volunteer service will be formally recognized on an annual basis. Informal recognition of volunteers will also take place year-round, in a variety of ways.

SUPERVISION

All concerns, problems, criticisms, and suggestions should be brought to the immediate supervisor. Volunteers should feel free to express themselves. Volunteers often offer a fresh perspective, so your suggestions are welcomed. If you are troubled by something, it is best to address the situation at the onset. Resolving concerns as early as possible avoids stressful situations and hurt feelings. Please feel free to express your concerns.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Information regarding FAF neighbors, paid staff, and volunteers, both verbal and written, is often privileged and confidential. Personal information is not to be released without the written consent of the individual involved. Because of the very serious implications that a breach of confidentiality could have, one condition of voluntarism is to maintain this confidentiality.

CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

All volunteers are responsible for maintaining a broad and inclusive environment. Volunteers are free to exercise their full liberties as citizens, including the right to express their personal convictions on social, economic, religious, and political issues. Volunteers must not give the impression that their views and positions taken by them are those of either FAF or their co-workers. Volunteers, however, should not attempt to change the views of others, engage in arguments or heated discussions to defend their views or disparage the views held by other groups or individuals.

PARKING

FAF does not assume any liability for loss or damages your car may sustain while parked in the parking lot. Volunteers are asked to park in spaces furthest away from the building (closest to trailer park) or offsite allowing our clients to utilize the parking spaces nearest to the client entrance and exit doors.

DRESS CODE

FAF welcomes and involves people of all ages from diverse cultures and backgrounds. FAF volunteers are expected to model good personal hygiene at all times in their roles as public representatives of FAF's mission to promote well-rounded healthy lifestyles. Individual expression in grooming and dress, when offensive to others, is inappropriate for FAF volunteers while on duty or on the FAF premises. As public acceptance of different fashions changes, these guidelines may be modified from time to time, but FAF shall always opt for the more conservative approach if any question exists. All volunteers are expected to follow these guidelines for appropriate dress while representing FAF.

Please wear:

- Shoes that are closed in front and suitable for the weather conditions
- Casual or athletic pants, shorts and shirts
- Clothes appropriate for the weather that allow you to move and work with ease

Please do not wear:

- Sandals or flip flops (no open-toed shoes)
- Low cut or mesh shirts, tube or skinny strap tops, or pajamas
- Earbuds or headphones (safety purposes)

DRUG FREE, SMOKE FREE WORKPLACE

FAF desires to maintain a drug-free and smoke-free workplace. The possession, use, or distribution of illegal drugs and/or alcohol or use of tobacco is prohibited within our workplace environment. All volunteers are prohibited from entering the workplace under the influence of illegal substances and/or alcohol. All volunteers, staff, and consultants are required to inform appropriate supervisors of policy violations. Persons violating this policy will be subjected to disciplinary action which may result in dismissal.

HOLIDAYS

The following holidays are observed by FAF: New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Eve Day and Christmas Day

In the event that any of the above holidays fall on a Saturday or Sunday, FAF shall, at its discretion, grant a different day as a holiday.

INJURIES

All injuries or accidents to the volunteer or others must be reported to the Volunteer Coordinator/Program Manager or Executive Director at once or as soon as it is safe to do so.

MEDIA RELATIONS

Written or verbal statements for publications regarding FAF shall be released only by staff. Incoming media calls or visits should be automatically transferred to the FAF Executive Director. It is important to recognize that each volunteer plays a vital role in protecting FAF's image. All inquiries about FAF should be accepted graciously. Every attempt should be made to seek accurate answers and forward them to the inquiring party.

PERSONAL BELONGINGS

FAF cannot be responsible for the loss of personal funds or belongings, nor is it covered by insurance for such loss. Therefore, it is the responsibility of each volunteer to adequately safeguard personal belongings. Volunteer lockers are available to store personal belongings.

WORKING CONDITIONS

The physical working conditions at FAF must comply with legal requirements of safety and sanitation. It is the responsibility of all volunteer staff to immediately report and correct, if possible, hazards which may come to their attention.

TELEPHONE AND INTERNET USAGE

Good business practice dictates that our office telephones be restricted to the business of the organization. It is the policy of FAF not to disclose any personal information, including telephone numbers or addresses of paid staff, volunteer staff, or registered neighbors. Internet usage is limited to conducting FAF business during volunteer service hours.

TRANSPORTATION

FAF seeks to safeguard its volunteers. **Volunteers may not drive FAF vehicles without approval.** When driving a company vehicle is an essential or partial function of their role, FAF will conduct an initial and then annual motor vehicle record check. FAF will review motor vehicle records and make a determination as to drivers' status to operate a FAF-owned vehicle and what vehicles a volunteer may drive according to their endorsements. FAF liability insurance policy does not protect volunteer staff driving their own cars. When driving a personal car, the volunteer has responsibility for liability in case of an accident or injury. Volunteers should review insurance coverage with their insurance agent. FAF assumes that volunteers must drive carefully and comply with all traffic laws and ordinances. FAF will not be responsible for paying fines.

HARRASMENT FREE WORK ENVIRONMENT

FAF will not tolerate the harassment of any staff member, volunteer, neighbor, guest, or program participant relating to race, ethnicity, sex, religion, national origin, age, or disability. Harassment includes but is not limited to, slurs, jokes, or other verbal, graphic, or physical conduct relating to an individual's race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, or disability. FAF will not tolerate any unwelcome sexual advances or the creation of a hostile work environment, request for sexual favors, or any other conduct of a sexual nature by a female or a male.

BEHAVIOR GUIDELINES

- Introduce yourself
- Treat members with respect and dignity
- Be dependable
- Keep your promises
- Leave your personal problems at home
- Pass along any neighbor concerns which you feel need further attention to your immediate supervisor. Balance this with confidentiality. Do not repeat what they have told you in confidence.
- Do not take pictures of neighbors with your camera or cell phone. Do not post pictures of members on any social media sites.

VOLUNTEERS UNDER 18

Children between the ages of 5-17 years old are welcome to volunteer with a parent or adult chaperone and must be registered for the event that they plan to attend.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

Anytime FAF has a delay or is closed due to inclement weather, we will send an email to everyone that is signed up for updates. If you do not receive an email and are unsure whether or not we will be open, you can call FAF's phone number (828-783-8506), check social media or our website which will provide up-to-date information. If we are still open and you are uncomfortable driving the roads given the current condition, we encourage you to stay home and cancel your shift. Your safety is of the utmost importance and we want to make sure you are making the decision you have the most confidence in.

VOLUNTEER DRIVERS

Volunteers are required to observe all traffic laws. If failure to comply results in fines or other penalty, these are the responsibility of the staff member concerned and must be reported to the Executive Director. Smoking is not permitted in the FAF vehicle. Pets are not permitted in the FAF vehicle. Excluding an emergency, drivers other than FAF staff or approved volunteers are not permitted to drive the FAF vehicle. Volunteer drivers must supply a copy of their valid driver's license first to be submitted to our insurance carrier.

Fuel

The FAF vehicle uses unleaded fuel, and it is expected to be kept more than a quarter full at all times. In the event the fuel is running low, the volunteer is asked to use his own card and the purchase will be reimbursed upon presentation of the receipt.

Passengers

Providing transport for passengers not associated with the organization's business is prohibited. Volunteers should also refuse to provide transport to persons who are intoxicated, under the influence of a prohibited substance, or wanting transport to a location not identified in the volunteer's work-related itinerary.

Work Travel

Volunteers must ensure that the vehicle and safety equipment are in good working order prior to commencing road travel required as a part of their work duties. Volunteers must ensure the tires, including the spare tire and tire-changing equipment, are serviceable and that oil, water and fuel levels are sufficient prior to travelling.

Vehicle Defects

Any vehicle with operational faults must be reported to the Executive Director to enable defects to be repaired.

Damage or Loss of Vehicles

In the event of an accident or loss of a vehicle the driver will comply with all legal and insurance requirements. The driver should immediately obtain particulars of the other parties involved; notify law enforcement of the accident; and inform the Executive Director. The Executive Director will ensure that appropriate action is taken to enable the insurance claim to be processed or the vehicle to be repaired.

Personal Vehicle

There will be no reimbursement for any costs related to using a personal vehicle while volunteering.

WAREHOUSE SAFETY

Attire and Cleanliness

- Closed-toeshoes are required - absolutely no exceptions
- Dress is expected to be comfortable, functional, and appropriate
- No headphones, earbuds, or Bluetooth devices while in the warehouse
- Volunteers must wash their hands before their shift, after any trips to the restroom, and after their breaks to ensure good sanitation practices

Be Aware of Your Surroundings

- Check for warehouse equipment in motion (beeping, flashing lights, horns, etc.)
- Do not text and walk
- Volunteers should stay off of the warehouse floor while staff members are setting up or resetting projects, particularly while forklift equipment is in use
- No running in the warehouse
- Floors are extremely slick when wet

Pallets / Pallet Jack's

- Only authorized, trained volunteers may operate manual pallet jackets
- Pallets are to be laid flat - never to be leaned against wall on their sides
- Immediately store unused pallets on designated stacks
- Do not walk on top of pallets

Tripping Hazards

- Keep floor clear of debris - please pickup bits of wood, plastic wrap, cardboard, etc. to minimize tripping hazards
- Store unused pallets on designated stacks

Lifting Techniques

- Face your load and keep objects close to your body
- Use your legs, not your back
- Ask for help from a fellow volunteer if you are unable to lift something

Boxcutter Safety

- Cut away from your body
- Retract blade when not in use
- Change out dull blades
- Put spent blades in the yellow blade container - DO NOT put them in the trash cans

Glass Breakage

- Notify a FAF staff right away,

Accidents

- Any person who received an injury, or was involved in any type of accident or property damage must report it to the appropriate FAF staff or supervisor immediately
- An incident report form will need to be filled out



Volunteer Agreement

This agreement outlines the expectations, responsibilities, and commitments of volunteers serving at Feeding Avery Families Food Pantry.

Volunteer Responsibilities:

- Treat all clients, staff, and fellow volunteers with respect and dignity.
- Maintain confidentiality of all client information.
- Arrive on time for scheduled shifts and notify staff in advance if I cannot attend.
- Follow all safety and hygiene protocols.
- Wear appropriate clothing and closed-toe shoes.
- Refrain from using alcohol, drugs, or engaging in disruptive behavior while volunteering.
- Attend orientation and trainings

I have read, understand and agree to the above Feeding Avery Families Food Pantry agreement.

_____	_____	_____
Volunteer's Signature	Print Name	Date

_____	_____
If under 18, signature of parent or legal guardian is required	Date

_____	_____
Print Name	Relationship



Volunteer Waiver

1. As a volunteer of Feeding Avery Families Food Pantry, I hereby agree to hold harmless and waive any and all claims or causes of action against FAF arising out of any cause whatsoever, including but not limited to claims arising out of negligence or intentional conduct of its volunteers or agents.
2. I attest that I am physically fit and prepared to perform the tasks assigned to me as a FAF volunteer. (Let us know if you have a disability and we will try to find an appropriate task for you)
3. I further agree to use my personal insurance as the primary provider in the event of injury due to my work as a volunteer for FAF.
4. I shall not operate a personal vehicle for volunteer activities unless I have a valid Driver's License and upon approval from staff.
5. Feeding Avery Families is not responsible for loss or damage to volunteer's personal property.
6. I also grant Feeding Avery Families Food Pantry full permission to use photographs of me for publicity and promotional purposes.

I have read, understand and agree to the above Feeding Avery Families Food Pantry policy and waiver.

Volunteer's Signature

Print Name

Date

If under 18, signature of parent or legal guardian is required

Date

Print Name

Relationship