Who is the 1 in 8?

Learn more about Susan and her family on page 3.

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A MESSAGE
from the President & CEO

“If you find it in your heart to care for somebody else, you will have succeeded.”

— Maya Angelou

With the particularly tumultuous political season, it was possible to have lost sight of the problems we face right here in Southwest Virginia. Too many of our friends and neighbors—more than 154,000 people, nearly a third of which are children—are struggling with the painful reality of not having enough to eat.

This means that 1 in 8 Southwest Virginians are food insecure, that 1 in 8 people come to the table with empty stomachs and leave still needing more. I’ve been working to engage our political leaders in forward-looking solutions to the hunger crisis before the election, and I will only increase my efforts now. In the meantime, we must do what we can to help those in need.

The upcoming holiday season is one of great generosity and goodwill. As we look for ways to express the spirit of the holidays, we should remember Maya Angelou’s words above: “If you find it in your heart to care for somebody else, you will have succeeded.”

Inside this newsletter, you'll find stories of people who have been the “1 in 8”—people who have lost their way, families pushed to the brink. One thing that strikes me is how their dedication to helping others ultimately helped them overcome their own difficulties.

No matter your situation this holiday season, I encourage you to find a way to care for others. Share your time. Donate to organizations that fight for causes you support. If we keep a love for others in our hearts, we shall all succeed.

Feeding America Southwest Virginia Welcomes New Board Member: Shane Estep
Food Distribution Specialist, K-VA-T Food Stores, Inc.

Shane Estep joined the Food City team in 1992, accepting a position as a courtesy clerk/stocker in Pikeville, Kentucky while attending college. What began as a part-time job quickly grew into the makings of an extraordinary career.

Throughout his tenure with K-VA-T Food Stores, Inc., Estep has served in a number of positions, including Assistant Store Manager of multiple Food City locations in Eastern Kentucky, Corporate Trainer, Human Resources Specialist for the Food City Distribution Center, and Human Resources Specialist for the Tri-City Division. In August 2016, he was promoted to his current position within the operations management team for the Food City Distribution Center.

Estep is active within the community, serving on the The Janie Hammit Memorial, Inc., Board of Directors and the Johnson City disABILITY Resource Center Advisory Board. He attended the University of Pikeville, graduating with a bachelor’s degree in education, with a focus in Political Science.

Estep currently resides in Abingdon with his wife, Selena. They are the proud parents of Cade, Jasmine and Kinlee.
It’s hard to imagine that 1-in-8 people in Southwest Virginia are at risk of going hungry. “Most people equate it with a homeless person,” says Susan Johnson, a volunteer at God’s Grace Food Pantry in Marion, Va., “but in actuality, it’s not that. A lot of people that go hungry are the people struggling to pay their bills who have to choose between food and medicine, or food and heat.”

Susan, her husband, and their daughter know this from personal experience. A cold winter in a poorly insulated rental house pushed the Johnsons’ electric bill to over $600 a month. “We thought it might have been a mistake,” she says. But even with blankets hung over the doorways and windows covered in plastic, their baseboard heaters could not keep the house or her family warm. “It was a really, really rough winter.”

At the time, Susan was working at Walmart, her husband holding two jobs at Food City and Mid-Mountain food; they couldn’t qualify for SNAP benefits, and yet they didn’t have enough money to both pay their bills and buy the food they needed. They went on a payment plan for their utilities and turned to God’s Grace to supplement their family’s food. Without that assistance, Susan says, “we couldn’t have survived.”

For many families like the Johnsons, the unexpected, even a simple change in the season, can be enough to bring on a crisis. “A lot of people in Southwest Virginia live paycheck-to-paycheck,” Susan says. “They don’t have savings accounts. They don’t have money put away for emergencies. They cash their check on Friday and pay their bills. If something unexpected happens, that money has to come out of wherever else it’s been budgeted.”

And this is why God’s Grace Food Pantry and FASWVA’s other partner feeding programs play such an important role in our communities—to help our friends and neighbors. Now, Susan and her husband volunteer every week, collecting food for the Partner Pick-Up Program. Why?

“I want to give back what was given to me.”

You too can give back and help families facing challenges.

Visit our website at www.faswva.org/donate to learn more about how you can help provide a family with a bridge to stability.
These People Are My Family

Getting by with a little help from some friends

Maria Kestner has an infectious smile and is quick to dispense hugs to everyone at Feeding America Southwest Virginia in Abingdon, where she volunteers. “These people are my family,” she says. Her FASWVA family helped her through a very challenging experience – the Washington County Drug Court program.

Drugs had been a part of Kestner’s life since she was a teenager. At almost two years clean, she doesn’t like to venture back to the past much, but she says going to jail and entering the drug court program “saved” her. The Drug Court program lasts one to two years and participants are required to undergo intensive substance abuse treatment and equally intensive probation supervision and monitoring.

As part of the program, Kestner was assigned to spend 20 hours each week volunteering in FASWVA’s Harvest Home Community kitchen. She was nervous at first, often asking if she was doing things right. But she learned quickly and discovered that giving out meals through the kitchen gave her a special sense of joy. “It’s different,” she says, “seeing how happy people are to get meals – I love it.”

During her volunteer service, Kestner developed close friendships with other kitchen volunteers and FASWVA staff, giving her a crucial emotional support system. “It really helped, because drug court was so hard at the beginning,” she says. “I didn’t think I was going to make it.”

But she did make it. On September 23, 2016, Maria Kestner graduated from the Washington County Drug Court program. Staff from FASWVA attended her graduation ceremony, as did Virginia Delegates Israel O’Quinn and Todd Pillion, who presented her with certificates from the Legislature of Virginia.

Drug Court is behind her, now, but she continues to volunteer in the Harvest Home Community Kitchen whenever she can. Of her continuing volunteerism she says simply, “I’m happy when I’m here.”

FASWVA partner program Ecumenical Faith in Action (EFIA) had been considering making a few updates to its food pantry space for some time when they learned they’d be getting a big helping hand from the Food Lion Feeds Great Pantry Makeover program in September, 2016.

EFIA went from being able to replace their ceiling and lights and doing a bit of painting to getting new glass-front coolers, new display shelving and shopping carts as well.

“Both our volunteers and clients love the new space,” says Larry Bays, Executive Director of EFIA. “We haven’t heard anything negative at all.” EFIA also made the jump from distributing food to their clients in the form of a pre-packed boxes to a “client choice” system, which allows visitors to select the food they want, more like a conventional grocery store.

“We’re so thankful for the food bank and Food Lion. This has been a great blessing for us.”

— Larry Bays, Executive Director, Ecumenical Faith in Action

In addition to providing materials for the makeover, Food Lion also sent the muscle needed to make it all come together. Mangers and associates from the Gate City, Johnson City, Mountain City and Marion Food Lion stores spent the day assembling coolers, building and stocking shelves and offering their expert opinions on setup and flow inside the newly redesigned space.

“That has really helped us as we get into the holiday season,” says Bays. “We expect to serve more than 1,000 people this month.”

“This project has been a great blessing for us.”
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The “Art” of Feeding
CanstructionSWVA Returns to Roanoke

The colossal canned food sculpture competition CanstructionSWVA returned to Roanoke’s Taubman Museum of Art in November, featuring six amazing teams who constructed six AMAZING can sculptures in an all-out 12-hour build and wowed the judges.

These beautiful, creative sculptures brought more than 16,000 cans of food to Feeding America Southwest Virginia just in time for the holiday season.

Spectrum Design - “A Shot Against Hunger”
Winner: Structural Ingenuity

SFCS, Inc. - “The BIG Engine That CAN!”
Winner: Best Meal

AECOM - “Chew Chew Express”
Winner: Honorable Mention

Roanoke County Schools (Burton Center for Arts and Technology - “Hats Off to Willy Wonka!”
Winner: “Best Use of Labels” & “Jurors’ Favorite”

Thanks to our sponsors:

Roanoke City Schools (Forest Park Academy) - “FPA CAN Do It!”

Virginia Tech Myers-Lawson School of Construction - “Demolishing Hunger”

Special thanks to Taubman Museum of Art

Thanks to our sponsors:

Kroger
Ardagh Group
WSLS 10
Norfolk Southern
BNC Bank
AIA Blue Ridge | Boxley | The Newbern Foundation | Oak Hall Cap & Gown
We can do that.

Three longtime volunteers making a difference at FASWVA

At Feeding America Southwest Virginia, if it has been built, dug, painted or fixed since 2006, chances are, there are three men to thank.

Bruce Mitchell, Jim Seddon and Harry VanGuilder are three longtime volunteers who spend their retirements making a difference.

They bring expertise from their business and industry careers to the food bank including technology, marketing and manufacturing knowledge. As such, they're often called on for building projects, research and problem solving. Why spend their well-deserved retirement doing so much work?

Mitchell puts it simply: “Volunteering at the food bank is fun.”

“Even if you’re doing some manual labor, it’s not ‘work’, it’s not drudgery,” he says. “It’s something that we enjoy.”

They started their volunteer experiences the way most FASWVA visitors do, but when their talent for building projects was discovered, their volunteerism reached new heights.

“It was kind of organic,” says VanGuilder. “A little project would come up and Jim or Bruce would say ‘we can do that’ and it just kind of grew from there.”

They all agree that the sheer fun of working together is part of what keeps them coming back, but they’re also glad for a chance to use their skills to help others -- in and out of the food bank.

“Us being able to do something or build something that makes the food bank run better, that’s the neatest part for me,” says Mitchell.

All three men also give back as food bank donors, taking advantage of opportunities such as online monthly giving and IRA charitable rollover.

“I give through my IRA because it helps with my taxes,” says Seddon. “It’s a win for me and a win for the food bank.”

As regular volunteers and donors, Mitchell, Seddon and VanGuilder are examples of just how much a little time and a “we can do that” attitude can make a difference at your local food bank.

2016 Craftsmen’s Fall Classic

Thanks to everyone who visited and donated during the 2016 Craftsmen’s Fall Classic at the Berglund Center. With your support, we collected 22,408 pounds of food and $1,872.31.

Because of you, more than 19,500 meals will reach those facing hunger in our community.

Thank you!
Food Drives
Wondering where to give to those in need this holiday season? Many of our partners and friends are hosting food drives throughout Southwest Virginia.

Through December 21 -- Kroger, WSLS10, and Freedom First are teaming up to raise food for Southwest Virginians facing hunger this holiday season. Donate at your local Kroger and place items in the Feeding America Southwest Virginia donation bins located in the front of the store. Participating Kroger stores include those in Abingdon, Bristol, Clifton Forge, Rocky Mount, Daleville, Hardy, Roanoke, Vinton, Salem, Blacksburg and Christiansburg.

Additional giving opportunities in the Abingdon area this holiday season include non-perishable food drives begin conducted by our friends at WCYB-TV and Empire Ford, Utility Trailer Manufacturing Company, Girl Scouts Unit 619 and the office of State Farm Agent Jamea Blevins.

WSLS10 Cares Grocery Dash
Wednesday, December 14
Two teams will race through the Bonsack Kroger to see who can snag the most groceries for needy families and make it to the finish line first!

Eight local families in need will receive these holiday groceries plus a turkey to round out their holiday meals.

Join us to find out which of your favorite WSLS10 personalities is fastest on their feet!

Why not join in the giving by hosting your very own food or fund drive? Learn more about how you can help this holiday season by visiting www.holidaysfromtheheart.org

YES, I want to help feed the hungry in Southwest Virginia!

I want to help Feeding America Southwest Virginia feed the hungry in Southwest Virginia and continue to expand programming in the region. Enclosed is my gift of:

☐ $25   ☐ $100   ☐ $250   ☐ $_____

☐ My and/or my spouse’s company will match this gift   ☐ The matching gift form is enclosed.

Thank you!

Card Type  ☐ VISA  ☐ MC  ☐ AMEX  ☐ DISC
Card Number ___________________________
Exp. Date ___________ Gift Amount $ _________
Name (as it appears on card) ________________________________
Billing Address (if different from mailing) ________________________________
Phone ___________ Email ________________________________

☐ I would like to become a Friend of the Food Bank by automatically donating $ _________ each month using the credit card above.

To become a Friend of the Food Bank please include the CVC (3-digit code) from the back of your credit card here: _________

Please make checks payable to: Feeding America Southwest Virginia | 1025 Electric Rd. Salem, VA 24153 | Give online at www.faswva.org/donate