



PO BOX 1326
Pittsboro, NC 27312

You make our work possible!

275 volunteers

6,310 volunteer hours

866,000 pounds of food donated

\$3 million in support

Thank You!

CORA is a member agency of
Chatham County United Way.



FY2020/2021 |
Annual Report

Building A Community Without Hunger



Executive Director's Message

At CORA, we love a challenge! We have embraced a collaborative spirit and a "say yes" attitude. Throughout 2020-2021, CORA's board, volunteers, and staff have faced challenges and changes with humor, positivity, and a servant-leader mindset. We met an increasing need by continuing to do more, offer more, and serve more, at the Pantry, at multiple mobile markets, via the SNACK! program, and through a wide variety of outreach and partnership efforts. Included in this report you'll find real measures of the extraordinary impact CORA has made this past year. You'll also find a few personal anecdotes that not only touched our hearts but made us think about how best to move forward into a new era for CORA.



This positive attitude served us well and allowed us to recognize and take advantage of opportunities to better serve the community. I suppose it's only appropriate that those of us dedicated to service at a food pantry would become masters in the art of taking lemons and making lemonade.

We are excited about the year and the challenges that lie ahead. We know we can rely upon this community and our partners to help us address food insecurity in Chatham County in creative ways. Moving forward, CORA's service model will be more holistic in nature - including more nutritious food choices alongside nutrition education, cooking classes, gardening, and access to resources. We can't wait to explore our new ideas under one new roof!

Sincerely,

Melissa Driver Beard
Executive Director

Help us continue our important work and make a donation at corafoodpantry.org today!

A Peek Behind the Scenes 2020-2021



Due to the risk factors associated with COVID-19, CORA moved forward for much of last year without the scores of volunteers who typically, and seamlessly, manage the day-to-day functioning of the Pantry. CORA staff learned quickly just how invaluable our volunteers truly are! The community, as always, came to our aid via a new group of volunteers. CORA's new volunteers have now had the opportunity to work alongside more experienced volunteers who have been able to return to our narrow hallways and fully-stocked rooms!



For the first time in any of our memories, we had enough funding to purchase food but there was little food to be found! This was especially true for the SNACK! Program. We weren't derailed, though, and with a little ingenuity came up with some new ideas. Thankfully, Hilary Murray and Pam Somers willingly led a team of eager "personal shoppers" who shopped online and in grocery stores to gather the necessary staples and provide food for 1,144 children enrolled in CORA's SNACK! program.



By the time CORA entered July 2020, everyone was beginning to settle into a hot, sticky, fruit fly infested "new normal." CORA staff were all doing things well outside of our job descriptions such as driving the truck, packing boxes, moving food (lots of tuna!), and unloading tractor trailers. While it was difficult for those of us with a little less muscle, the cross-training experience was invaluable and helped each of us have a better understanding of how the work we do individually fits together in a way that best serves the CORA mission.

The Heart of CORA



Our volunteers play an essential role in the flow of food that comes into and out of the Pantry every day. More importantly, they are the heart of our organization. So many community members have shown up, despite the risks, and demonstrated a deep passion for our work to feed those facing hunger!

We are fortunate to work with such a diverse pool of volunteers as well. From college athletes, realtors, nurses, CPAs, dental students, farmers, retired professionals, police officers, pastors, stay at home parents, high school students, to college professors, all of our volunteers displayed courage and selfless service, allowing CORA to remain open and operational throughout 2020-2021.

Ending hunger in Chatham County is truly a collaborative effort. Last year, 275 dedicated volunteers donated their time and energy to help us fulfill our mission.

Our volunteers donated over **6,310 hours** of service in 2020/2021.

CORA welcomed **176** new volunteers 2020/2021.



"I came to CORA for assistance and went on to become a volunteer. We never know when or if struggles may fall at our doorstep. Compassion and a smile go a long way. So very thankful for the opportunity to be a part of a mission to be a helping hand in the community."



Sandee Davis first came to the Pantry in the fall of 2020 to receive food and soon after, started volunteering several times every month. When asked how she is doing, she often responds with "I'm blessed," which is a testament to the optimism and determination she carries with her each time she volunteers at CORA to help her neighbors in need.



I like to help the community because I am part of the community and many people need it. /Me gusta ayudar la comunidad por que soy parte de la comunidad y mucha comunidad que necesita.

Enrique Romero Hernandez, a valued bi-lingual volunteer, started with CORA in the fall of 2020 at our Mobile Market in Siler City. Enrique travels to CORA every day via rides from friends and family, Chatham Transit, and his trusty bike to help distribute food to families in our community. Since October 2020, he has dedicated over 450 hours as a volunteer and we are thankful for his stories, positive energy, and innovative ideas.



Volunteering at CORA has become an important part of my life. I was recently asked what I do for self-care. CORA is a big part of what I do. It is such a "feel good", satisfying feeling to know that I have helped others in need



Barbara Polk began volunteering at CORA in the fall of 2019 in various roles. She took a break from volunteering at CORA for the majority of 2020 and happily returned in the early summer of 2021. Barbara's kind heart and willingness to share ideas for our food distribution process consistently dignifies the experience for families that come to the Pantry.

Several years ago, when Jim Farrington asked the Chatham County Board of Commissioners for funding for a new building, many people perhaps thought the idea was too bold. Today, we realize these bold ideas are exactly what we need. Sometimes they turn into very real buildings! Ground was broken on the new building in February 2021 and since then it has come together quickly. The new 2,800 square foot building will serve as both a food storage warehouse and pantry and will allow us to streamline operations and more effectively provide food to those facing hunger. The relocation of the pantry will also enable CORA to repurpose our current space to include meeting, educational, and food preparation space, all of which will better serve the community.

Thank you to the Chatham County Board of Commissioners and all our donors for helping to make this amazing endeavor possible. We hope to be open later in the fall. We can't wait to share it with you!

New Pantry and Warehouse Coming Soon



SNACK! - Providing Nutritious Food to Children Over the Summer

SNACK!'s goal is to increase the accessibility of nutritious food to hungry Chatham County children during the summer. CORA accomplished this during the summer of 2020 by serving 1,144 children more than 128,000 meals between June and August. The pandemic changed the way we served the community. Despite fewer distribution sites and volunteers, CORA partnered with individuals at five key distribution sites – all chosen because of their proximity to children coping with the greatest need in the community.

Also, due to severe constraints in the food supply chain as a result of COVID-19, the food offered through the program was a bit different. Thanks to a collaboration with the Food Bank of Central and Eastern North Carolina and USDA, CORA was able to offer children participating in SNACK! substantial portions of fresh produce in addition to shelf-stable foods.

Summer 2020 definitely threw CORA some hardballs, but with the help of volunteers, community groups, and partners, and our amazing staff, SNACK! was a success! We distributed food curbside in pre-packed boxes. When all was said and done, volunteers packed over 3,800 boxes weighing more than 107,000 pounds. The challenges presented by COVID-19 just reaffirmed that CORA has tremendous and unwavering support in our community helping us adapt quickly to serve our families.



Mobile Market Expands - Meeting the Need Where It Is

"We at CORA feel that reaching the people we serve within their own communities is critically important. Localized service not only helps to build trust, but also addresses transportation issues. Transportation is an enormous barrier to service for many people who live in Chatham County, and CORA's Mobile Markets in Siler City and at Nature Trail have enabled us to remove that barrier for over many people during the past year." Melissa Driver Beard

Since launching our first Mobile Market in October of 2019, CORA has provided over 151,000 meals to families that find coming to CORA a challenge. This past spring, we expanded the Mobile Market from once to twice each month. CORA now hosts a Mobile Market in Siler City and at Nature Trail, a mobile home community in Chapel Hill. We also have plans to expand to other strategic points around the county where food insecurity is the greatest. Families receive a variety of groceries at each market, including local fresh produce, meats, dairy, bakery items, and shelf-stable grocery staples.

Many thanks to all the dedicated volunteers who help make these markets possible!

**301,244 Pounds of
Fresh Produce Served**



**508 New
Families
Served**

**1.2 Million Meals
Distributed**



**100% of
Requests
Filled**

**1,178,326 Pounds of
Food Provided**



Kindness Shown In-Kind

Many community groups, businesses, churches, restaurants, farmers, and individuals gave food and grocery products to help more than 60,300 people in fiscal year 2021. On behalf of the families and individuals who benefited from this support, CORA expresses its sincerest thanks! Listed below are a few of the people and organizations that are making a real difference in the lives of others and are committed partners in building a community without hunger.

- Lil Rooster Farm is located on 20 acres in Pittsboro and grows six varieties of local greens, including, but not limited to, Green Butter, Red Oak Leaf, and Lolla Rosa. These beautiful greens are grown in hydroponic greenhouses and provide year-round produce to the families we serve. We are so grateful for Lil Rooster Farm's belief that addressing hunger requires a community to come together to help those in need. Lil Rooster Farm donates 10% of the lettuce they grow, and CORA received 1,455 pounds of greens this past year. **"Sharing our fresh produce is a small way we can help address hunger in Chatham County."** – Jim Rigney, Owner, Lil Rooster Farm
- Robin Hood's Kitchen is a new organization in our community working to create a sustainable food culture. Local farmers, chefs, and businesses come together to produce delicious, ready-to-eat meals from local, freshly sourced vegetables for people facing food insecurity. Thanks to weekly deliveries from Robin Hood's Kitchen, CORA has been able to provide 2,300 more meals for our families – all made from healthy ingredients. Between January and June, CORA has received 2,834 pounds of healthy meals, including frittatas, soup, rice bowls, succotash, and muffins.
- PORCH volunteers collect food and cash donations through monthly neighborhood food drives. These donations enable CORA to distribute food to at-risk families in our community. PORCH Chatham is one chapter of many across the United States and represents 21 neighborhoods. In FY2021, PORCH collected over 107,000 pounds of food and \$107,000 to support our work. **"PORCH Communities is so appreciative for our partnership with CORA. It is the perfect embodiment of neighbors coming together to help those in their communities that need help. For over 10 years, PORCH and CORA have worked together, and the partnership has grown from one neighborhood in the early years to 21 neighborhoods coming together to collect and deliver to CORA. As PORCH Community continues to grow across the US, our CORA pantry partnership model has become the benchmark for successful community hunger relief partnerships."** Christine Cotton, Founder/Board Chair, PORCH Communities
- Friends of CORA Garden is a community garden located in Pittsboro at the home of long-time CORA volunteer, Carol Newnam. In March of 2013, a group of volunteers organized to form the garden to help provide locally sourced, nutritious produce to those facing hunger. The garden has been growing strong ever since. This past year, the garden produced over 1,133 pounds of produce for our families, including green beans, squash, cucumbers, and beautiful wildflowers.



Sharing the Experience

At CORA, we know the number of pounds of food we distribute is important, however, we believe the overall impact we have on the lives of the people we serve is more important. CORA is actively creating a community space where our neighbors in need will be empowered to move beyond the challenges they are encountering, by encouraging and equipping them with much-needed resources.



"What CORA means to me, is that you are feeding and giving hope to people who don't have food. I am very thankful that CORA has been a big help in my life. Thank you for all you do."

Yolanda, Siler City



"CORA is a true lifeline! After my hours were cut back at work, I was struggling with my bills. With CORA helping provide food each month, my paycheck now goes a lot further."

Ted, Goldston



"It has been a challenging few months, and I am thankful for CORA's support. With furloughs, layoffs, and many generations under one roof we needed some extra help. Thank you for the food, big smiles, and friendly help."

Sally, Pittsboro



Our Mission

We are dedicated to acquiring and distributing food to Chatham County residents who have a need for community support to keep themselves and their families fed, creating a community without hunger.

Our Vision

A community without hunger.

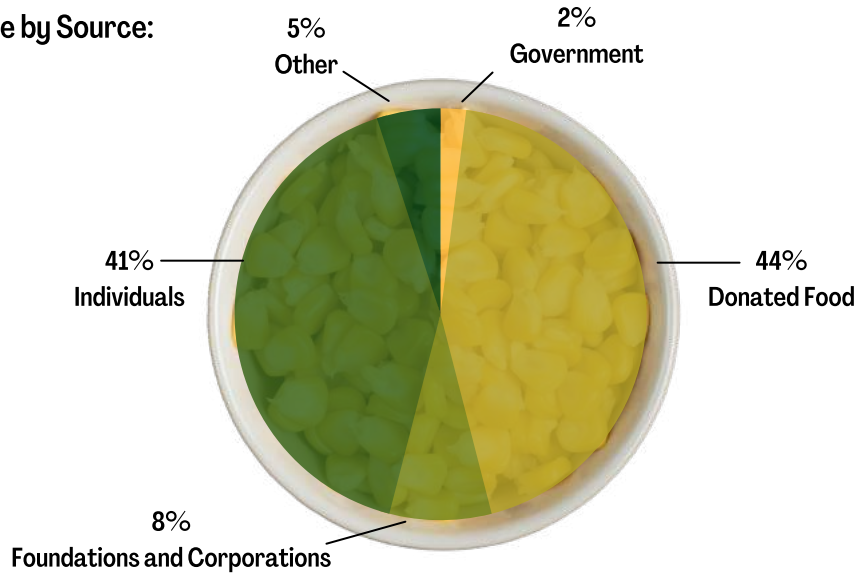
Our Values

We embrace a culture where all individuals are treated with respect and equality, and we are committed to safeguarding their dignity and self-esteem by continuously taking actions that demonstrate sincere care, concern, and support. We operate by following strong ethical and moral standards to ensure that CORA's mission is achieved with fairness, compassion, and effectiveness.

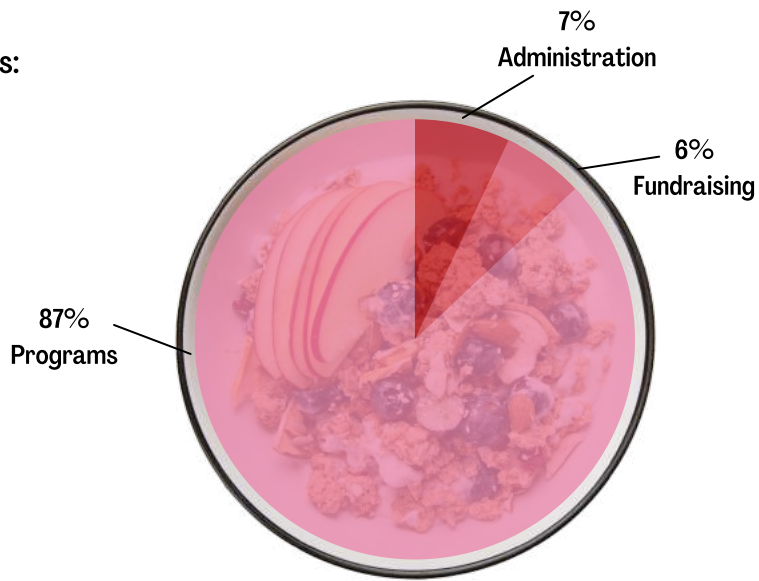
2020-2021 Financial Snapshot

Thanks to the extraordinary generosity of the entire community, we were able to meet the tremendous need over the past year and close our fiscal year in very good financial health. In FY2021, we secured \$3.2 million in support. CORA is excited for the projects on the horizon and will continue to work fervently to build a community without hunger in Chatham County.

Income by Source:



Expenses:



Become a CORA Sustainer

Want to make your donation go a little further? As a monthly donor, you can ensure that when someone needs support, CORA can provide it. Sustaining members provide CORA with a much-needed dependable stream of income that we use to support our programs and build a community without hunger. Visit corafoodpantry.org to make a gift today.

Some donors prefer to give smaller monthly donations over a longer period of time, rather than a single lump sum. Not only can this be easier for personal budgeting, but it also allows you to contribute more to CORA than you may have thought possible. For example, a gift of \$10 per month might be easier to manage than a one-time gift of \$100—and over the course of a year, you have increased your overall donation to CORA by 20%.



Reaching More People Together

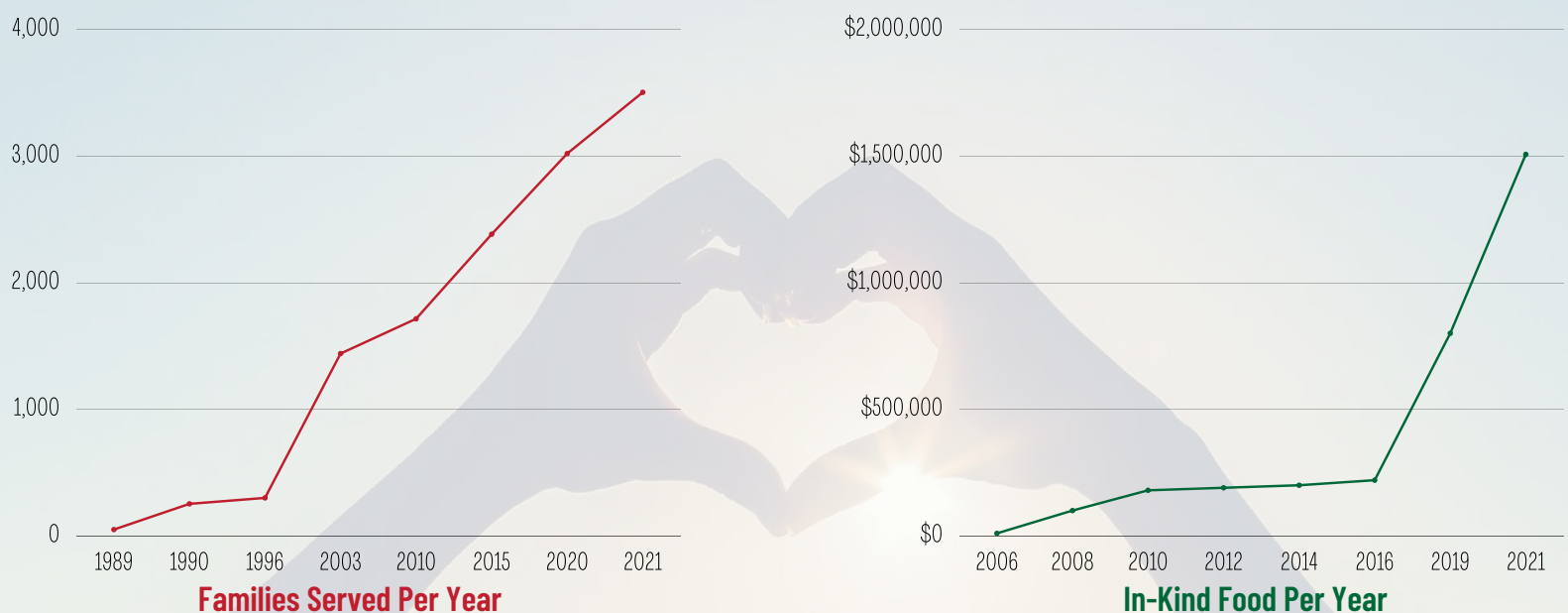


Thanks to partners like you, we were able to serve **1.2 million meals** in Chatham County's vulnerable communities. Over the years, we have strategically expanded our reach and engaged more community allies than ever. Collaborations exist with Chatham Trades, Chatham Habitat for Humanity, The Salvation Army, Chatham County Council on Aging, Piedmont Health, Chatham Hospital, Freedom Family Church, Chatham County Department of Social Services, Siler City Police Department, Nature Trail Mobile Home Park, Chatham County Health Department, and Chatham County Schools, just to mention a few.

- CORA is currently partnering with the Freedom Family Church to ensure they have groceries to give to those facing food insecurity in Siler City on Saturdays. We are also working with both Freedom Family Church and the Salvation Army to provide food and basic hygiene supplies to the homeless population - currently serving about 50 individuals each month in the area facing hunger and homelessness.
- Recently, we provided the Siler City Police Department with bags of groceries in a joint effort to accomplish several goals: provide those in need with food and provide local officers with an easy way to do something positive for those they serve. ***"As a public safety organization, the opportunity to expand our services in our community is beneficial."*** ***Mike Wagner, Siler City Chief of Police.***
- Over the past year, CORA has collaborated with Chatham Transit, the Chatham County Council on Aging, and Piedmont Health to ensure CSFP "senior" boxes, full of a variety of food staples, reached our mutual clients via home delivery.
- Chatham Trades has helped tremendously with SNACK! this spring by packing boxes of nutritious food to be distributed to children facing hunger, as well as managing delivery. Chatham Trades has also generously offered food storage space in their warehouse when our own building could no longer house CORA's inventory. ***"Chatham Trades' partnership with CORA provides adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities with employment and training. Packaging and delivering the SNACK program offers many levels of training as well as helping to meet the needs of the community."*** ***Shawn Poe, Executive Director, Chatham Trades, "CORA rocks!"***

Rising to the Challenge

Thanks to the support of our entire community we have been able to meet the increased need of the families we serve. In 2021, we fulfilled each and every request for food assistance.



Innovative Solutions: Building Bridges to Food Equity

- Our communities' most food-insecure residents often resort to eating less nutritious foods to stretch their dollars. To help tackle this issue, CORA is launching SWAP (Supporting Wellness at Pantries), which focuses on bolstering our offerings of nutrient-rich and empowers community members to employ healthy eating strategies. SWAP uses a stoplight nutrition ranking system designed to help promote healthy food choices and ranks foods based on saturated fat, sodium, and sugar. The SWAP system ranks foods into green (choose frequently), yellow (choose sometimes), and red (choose rarely). SWAP is based on the most recent Dietary Guidelines, and the MyPlate Daily Checklist, to rank foods based on saturated fat, sodium, and sugar.
- CORA is excited to get back to choice shopping. In the new building, the Pantry will be set up like a grocery store, allowing community members to choose the food that best matches their preferences and needs. CORA believes when families choose their own food, it creates an atmosphere of dignity and builds a sense of community between staff, volunteers, and those we serve. There will be no limits on the amount of food for which community members shop. Shoppers will simply be asked to take only what they need and to be considerate of their fellow neighbors in need. We will continue to offer pre-packed groceries, in a grab-and-go system, for those who may not have enough time to shop. We also hope to launch an online app that will enable guests to choose groceries online or through an app for pick up in the Pantry.
- As CORA focuses on bolstering our offerings of nutrient-rich foods, we will work more closely with local farmers to provide fresh produce and local protein. Building our local food economy means supporting grassroots farmers who contribute to improved food access and food security. Soon, we plan to offer micro-loans to local food entrepreneurs whose business goals complement CORA's mission and values.
- At CORA we believe information is powerful. Upon the completion of the new building, we plan to focus on providing additional resources to our families. Transportation is a limiting factor in Chatham County and helping a neighbor maximize their time is very important, when families come to CORA to shop, we also connect them to the services they need. Each month, CORA hopes to offer a wide range of programming aimed at helping individuals build capacity to change their lives. Examples include nutrition classes, cooking classes, and maybe even gardening classes.



"I'm looking forward to leading the CORA team out of pandemic-mode and onward toward new strategic priorities in 2022! The Board and Staff have had several brainstorming sessions. We're excited about planning for shopping and guest services in our new building, playing a role in micro-financing activities as they relate to local farmers, developing a more community-friendly, holistic view of nutrition and food service, and expanding both shopping services (to include grab-and-go and an app) and mobile markets!"

Melissa Driver Beard, Executive Director



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