



PO BOX 1326  
Pittsboro, NC 27312

268 volunteers

9,242 volunteer hours

\$3.1 million in support

755,721 pounds of food donated

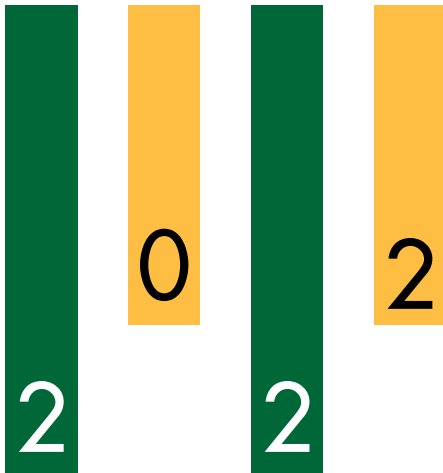
Thank you for helping us build a  
community without hunger!

CORA is a member agency of  
Chatham County United Way.

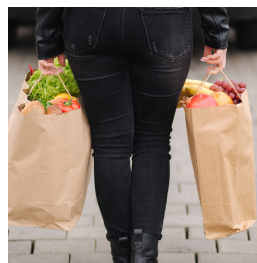


## CORA Annual Report

### IMPACT



July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022



Executive Director's Message

Eliminating Barriers to Service



The challenges of this past year were many and varied. CORA staff and volunteers worked together to turn those challenges into opportunities and met them head-on! With this energy and resolve, we look ahead to the future with the collective goal of building a community without hunger. We are looking forward to a time when CORA and other nonprofits addressing hunger will no longer be needed, where food insecurity is a term of the past, and where nobody has to worry about where their next meal will come from. To do that, we will continue to serve our neighbors in need, to eliminate barriers to healthy and nutritious food, and advocate for ending hunger.

A community without hunger will only be possible if we all work together to provide additional resources to the people who need them the most. No senior citizen should have to choose between medication and food. No parent should have to choose between buying groceries or filling their gas tank. We at CORA will continue to promote the ideals of food justice until everyone in our community has equitable access to healthy food. We will do this through programs like the Pantry, Mobile Market, SNACK!, Backpack, and our new delivery model. We will do this by allowing the people we serve to shop at the Pantry for the food they want and need. We will do this by advocating for more easily accessible food benefits for the most vulnerable in our community. Most importantly, we will accomplish this with your assistance. Your steadfast support is critical to our mission as we embark upon 2023. Together, we can help provide nutritious food to those facing food insecurity. Together, we can take the next steps toward ending food insecurity in Chatham County. Together, we can build a community without hunger!

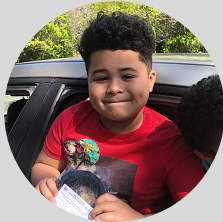
Sincerely,

Melissa Driver Beard  
Executive Director

Please visit  
[www.corafoodpantry.org](http://www.corafoodpantry.org) today to donate!



Mission - CORA provides nutritious food to community members facing food insecurity.



Vision - CORA envisions a community without hunger.

OUR APPROACH TO SERVING OUR COMMUNITY

- Remove barriers to providing healthy, nutritious, and diverse foods. We make food available to everybody who needs it, regardless of their circumstances, and we give people the option to choose what they receive whenever possible.
- Provide respectful and dignified customer service at all times. Create an environment that is friendly and inclusive.
- Prioritize and empower the people we serve. We are dedicated to making decisions based on the lived experiences of the people we assist, and we are working with the community to make this happen.
- Foster a culture of collaboration and cooperation that engages a network of community members, organizations, and partners.
- Implement evidence-based decision-making throughout the organization. We use data, family input, and feedback to help us make better decisions and use these insights to improve our programs, services, and operations.
- Maintain public trust by making efficient and compassionate use of resources entrusted to us and by remembering that achieving our mission is only possible because of the generosity of others.

# Our 2022-2025 Strategic Plan

## Guidance for the Future



# PRIORITIES



In 2021, CORA completed a three-year strategic plan, and we are happy to report that the fruits of that labor were abundant. Over three years, we grew the staff, launched the Mobile Market, increased revenue, served more people, worked to intimately understand the needs of our community on a local level, and debuted a new website, logo, and newsletter.

We're excited to share our new three-year strategic plan this summer. It results from a thorough planning process that was heavily impacted by the previous two years' events. As the Coronavirus spread, the economy faltered, and inflation rose, the demand for food assistance saw a corresponding increase. CORA responded by increasing food distribution to record levels across Chatham County. Over three years, we distributed 3.4 million meals. At the same time, our supporters – individuals, businesses, foundations, neighborhoods, and community groups – generously responded to our request for assistance. Collectively, we came together to build a community without hunger.

Our new plan is divided into five strategic priority areas, representing the core areas of our focus and investment. Each outcome is designed to serve our program participants best, and our overall success will be achieved by delivering results in close collaboration with our partners across Chatham.

### Geographically Expand

- Reduce gaps in food access across the county will enable CORA to assist more individuals facing food insecurity.

### Build Capacity

- Source, develop, and manage resources to increase our ability to reach more individuals facing food insecurity and improve how we receive, store, and distribute food.

### Expand Programs

- Expand and improve services to ensure that people facing hunger in our community have reliable access to abundant and nutritious food.

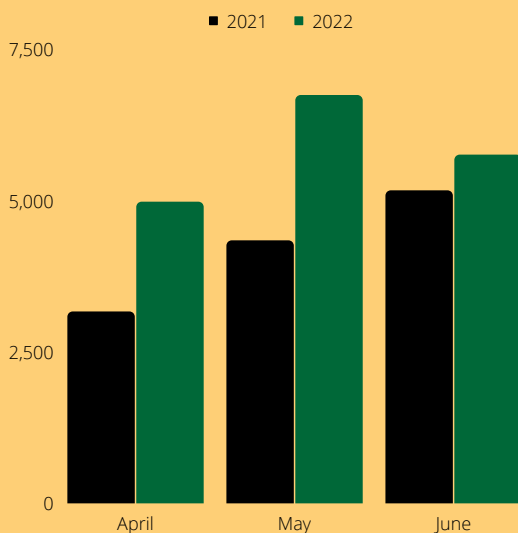
### Diversify Leadership

- Boost diversity within our organization to allow CORA to strengthen its effectiveness by introducing new viewpoints via life experiences that enrich programs, widen the organization's reach, and engage new partners.

### Increase Revenue

- Cultivate donors and provide meaningful and inventive ways to attract and retain supporters to help us meet strategic priorities to build a community without hunger.

## Meeting the Changing Needs of our Community



In the last quarter of fiscal year 2022, CORA served 38% more people than in 2021.

Over the past year, CORA experienced many ups and downs as it worked to alleviate food insecurity in Chatham County. Over the summer, with the effects of the pandemic still present, we continued to assist more people each month. We served 19% more individuals in July and August of 2021 than in July and August of 2020.

In the fall and winter months, many families got back on their feet and used our services less often. In December, we served 24% fewer people than in December 2020. We were relieved to see numbers slowly approaching the benchmarks established before Covid-19 impacted our community.

Today, as household expenses soar, families are experiencing food insecurity in alarming numbers, and the lines at CORA are growing longer once again. Over the past year, inflation has surged to over 8%, with food, housing, and gasoline prices rising the fastest. Many families, especially those with children, cannot make ends meet each month because inflation is surpassing pay growth. Currently, we are experiencing a 38% increase in need over last year.

The true strength of our community lies in our ability to come together and care for each other, especially in times of need and uncertainty. At CORA, we are in awe of this community's unwavering dedication to the compassionate care of others. We are also poised to continue to grow and meet the ever-changing needs of those facing hunger across Chatham County.



# Thank You to Our Amazing Volunteers!

Volunteers are at the heart of CORA and are essential to carrying out our mission in a kind, professional, and efficient manner. Last year, 268 volunteers generously contributed 9,242 hours of their time – equivalent to 5 full-time staff. Individuals gave their time and talents to help with food recovery, sorting and stocking, food distribution, home delivery, and administrative tasks.



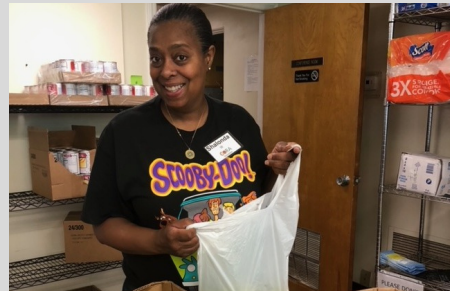
Since 2017, Garrett Tripp and Perry Womble have dedicated their time and energy to serving the community together at the Pantry weekly. You can usually find them in the sorting room, greeting everyone with a smile and a story to share. We are grateful for their positive attitudes and willingness to jump into any task.

"My favorite part about volunteering is learning about different kinds of foods we've never seen before - it's educational!" - Perry



For over a year, Bob Goetze has supported CORA's efforts to build a community without hunger in various ways. Whether he is leading food distribution, assisting with IT needs, or searching for tools to fix broken carts, Bob is an expert problem solver and always sees an issue through to its completion.

"My late wife, Mary's favorite way to support food security was through CORA! I honor her memory by donating my time and talent to CORA. I really enjoy working with the volunteers and staff here at CORA. Thank you all for allowing me to work with you." - Bob



Shalonda Wells has lifted spirits at the Pantry every week since August 2020. Her clever graphic t-shirts and lively stories cultivate an atmosphere of light-heartedness and joy within the walls of the Pantry. She is constantly seeking ways to take an extra step of care and concern for the people we serve and is willing to help with any task necessary to support others.

"Volunteering is wonderful - the teamwork, the people, everyone is awesome. It's like a family." - Shalonda

## NOURISHING BODIES AND HEARTS WITH HEALTHY AND FAMILIAR FOODS

Research shows that access to nutritious food is the key to a healthy community, where children do well in school, families thrive, and seniors do not face the stress of choosing between food and other necessities. At CORA, we are committed to providing access to healthy food through all of our programs.

This year we have established a new partnership with Bibi's Produce in New Hill. We purchase fresh produce for distribution each week and have distributed cabbage, onions, carrots, potatoes, apples, and bananas. In addition, we are buying healthy proteins for our families, including milk, eggs, chicken, and pork.

CORA will create a space in the new building that empowers community members to employ healthy eating strategies in our new choice shopping pantry. We will use SWAP (Supporting Wellness at Pantries), a stoplight nutrition ranking system designed to help promote healthy food choices and rank foods based on saturated fat, sodium, and sugar. The SWAP system ranks foods into green (choose frequently), yellow (choose sometimes), and red (choose rarely). In addition, volunteers will be trained to educate community members to make intelligent choices through nutrition classes, food demonstrations, healthy samples, and one-on-one conversations.

We have also begun working with families to learn more about their comfort foods and how they prepare them. When most of us think of a home-cooked meal, the image that comes to mind is one of a familiar recipe made with certain ingredients that nourish both the body and the heart. To provide more meals that satisfy in this way, we are surveying families to learn what foods they want to see on the shelves. Some of the more popular items include cooking oil, maseca, meat, cheese, produce, sugar, and spices.

We are grateful for our ongoing conversations with families; at CORA, we passionately believe that client dignity comes from client choice.



# TOGETHER WE ARE BUILDING A COMMUNITY WITHOUT HUNGER

**Kiwanis Pittsboro** is ever-present at CORA by providing volunteers for the Mobile Market in Siler City, hosting a SNACK! distribution site, delivering weekly Panera donations, and making financial donations to support our work.



Breaking bread at CORA is much tastier thanks to our partnership with **Great Harvest Bread Company**. From whole wheat to anadama, their weekly donations totaled over 1,000 pounds of scratch-made bread to the Pantry this past year.

CORA received its first grant from the **NC GlaxoSmithKline Foundation** through their Ribbon of Hope program. They awarded CORA \$25,000 to expand our Mobile Market and to help us meet the need where it is in Chatham County.

**The United Way** envisions a community where all residents can access the necessary resources to thrive. We are thankful for their continued partnership in our work and appreciate their \$40,000 donation for the Pantry and SNACK!

The **Galloway Ridge Charitable Fund** awarded \$65,000 in community grants to 13 Chatham County organizations in 2022. CORA is a grateful recipient of \$7,000 to help us feed families across the county.



**Screech Owl Greenhouses** began donating to CORA in 2020. This year, Screech has donated over 1,500 pounds of fresh, hydroponically-grown produce to the Pantry. In addition, we now also purchase a variety of vegetables for our families.

**Chatham Mills** has partnered with CORA for many years and is a champion of our work in the community. Through their Round Up program, we received \$1,419 in donations. We also received over 1,900 pounds of donated food.



Through their Children's and Women's ministry, **Mt. Carmel Baptist Church** has shown a firm commitment to helping their neighbors in need through donations, food drives, and special projects for families.

**Women of Fearington** works to serve the needs of women and children in Chatham County via their grant program. Since 2011, CORA has received \$48,600 in funds supporting SNACK!

**PORCH neighborhoods** collect food each month to donate to CORA. This year, 26 neighborhoods donated over 100,000 pounds of food and raised more than \$76,000!

We are thankful for our partnerships with the **Pittsboro and Fearington Village Farmers' Markets**. Vendors from the markets donate produce for families, and market shoppers donate to CORA so that we can buy local produce for our families.



Many thanks to **Duke Health** for their \$10,000 Building Healthy Communities Goodwill grant assisting our Mobile Market!

## COMING FALL 2022....

The wait has been long, and our patience tested, but we are happy to announce that the new building will open this fall. Thanks to Chatham County and the entire community for supporting this project that will enable us to address food and nutrition insecurity more efficiently and effectively in our community.







At CORA, we feel that reaching the people we serve within their own communities is critically important. Localized service builds trust, new partnerships, and addresses transportation challenges. CORA is committed to addressing hunger and food insecurity at the local level while establishing new partnerships across Chatham County to ensure everyone has access to safe and nutritious food.

### Feeding Children

Since 2009, SNACK!'s has increased the accessibility of nutritious food to hungry Chatham County children during the summer. In summer 2021, we served 1,106 children with more than 136,000 meals. The pandemic continued to affect how we served the community. We had ten distribution sites across the county and supplied food curbside in prepacked boxes. With the help of many volunteers, we loaded cars with 3,239 shelf-stable food boxes and 3,700 produce boxes, weighing in at 153,024 pounds.

### Equitable Access

CORA's Mobile Market also provides nutritious food to neighbors facing food insecurity in Chatham County. This program helps us reach those in need of food far beyond the boundaries of our Pantry location in Pittsboro. Approximately 75% of those we serve do not live in or near Pittsboro, and lower-income areas in western Chatham County are home to several food deserts. Similar to the Pantry, families stay in their cars, and prepacked groceries are placed in their vehicles. There are various options, including fresh produce, meats, dairy, bakery items, and shelf-stable staples. We host a Mobile Market in Siler City and Nature Trail in Chapel Hill each month. Over the past year, we have served 9,700 individuals over 200,000 meals.

### Expansion

We are excited to announce we recently opened a satellite pantry in Siler City in partnership with Love Chatham. Love Chatham is a non-profit organization established to serve and love those in our community suffering from homelessness and hunger. We are working closely with their leadership team to ensure they have the tools, food, and support needed to permanently expand CORA's services into Siler City. CORA in Siler City is open on the first and third Saturday each month from 10 am - 1 pm at Freedom Family Church at 421 N. Holly Avenue.

### Serving Seniors

This spring, CORA also launched our delivery program for low-income seniors on fixed incomes who may struggle with housing, health care, and other costs. Often, seniors are homebound or lack transportation. This program delivers federal CSFP boxes and additional nutritious groceries, including high-protein items, canned soups, pasta, cereal, eggs, bread, and produce, to seniors monthly.





# OUR COMMUNITY: SUE'S STORY

*Hunger can be experienced differently depending upon a family's unique circumstances. Hunger isn't always a dire situation in which families have nothing to eat, but instead can often be seen in the subtle choices a family must make.*

Before the impact of COVID-19, Sue worked in corporate travel for thirty years. Due to the economic fallout from the pandemic, she—like millions of people across the country—was laid off. Having recently moved to Pittsboro and having more time on her hands, Sue explored ways to become connected to her new community. Ultimately, she found a place of belonging at Chatham Community Church, where she was introduced to CORA through their service and mission work. In summer 2020, Sue volunteered for our SNACK! program and dedicated many hot and sweaty afternoons packing boxes of food for hungry children. Following the summer, Sue also dedicated many volunteer hours at the Pantry sorting food donations and packing bags for families.



In September 2020, Sue received word that her position had been permanently eliminated. Sue and her husband fared okay and cut back on spending like many in their shoes during the pandemic. However, slowly the stress and reality of their situation sank in. They didn't qualify for public assistance, and their limited incomes were not stretching as far as they needed. Even while working various part-time jobs, they realized they needed some help putting food on the table. "At first, the thought of asking for help was overwhelming, but CORA is such a welcoming place that my reservations quickly dissolved." Sue recently shared, "We just love what you all stand for. There is no judgment, and you aim to lift people up rather than knocking them down."

Like many who visit CORA, Sue found a sense of community along with the help she needed. Nutritious food, community connection, and unconditional support amid a devastating time of unemployment and uncertainty. Today, she is back working full-time in the travel industry and looks forward to volunteering again soon. "I hope that telling my story of being on both sides of CORA might help someone in Chatham County who might be hesitant, as I was, to ask for help. Be assured that every person you encounter at CORA is compassionate, positive, and there to help."

## WHAT OUR NEIGHBORS ARE SAYING

Hunger is a cruel companion, affecting individuals of all ages and backgrounds without discrimination. Anyone can find themselves needing food assistance during their lifetime, and CORA will be there to answer the challenge of food insecurity and build a community without hunger.

"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!"

"Thank you so much - now I can finally sleep tonight."

"Don't ever stop doing what you're doing. It brightens my day to come to the Pantry."

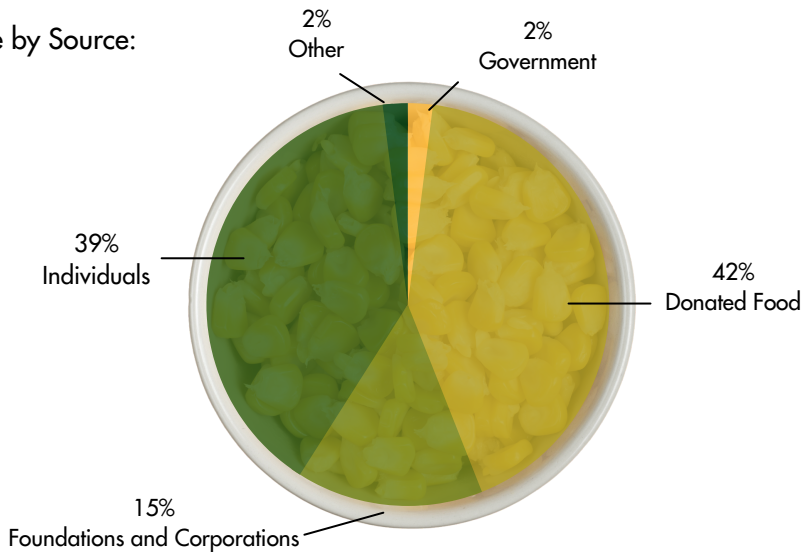
"CORA means so much to me. The friendly faces let me know I will get the help that I need the moment I walk through the door. Thank to your help, I have been able to feed my family and keep my cabinets from staying empty."

# 2021-2022 Financial Snapshot

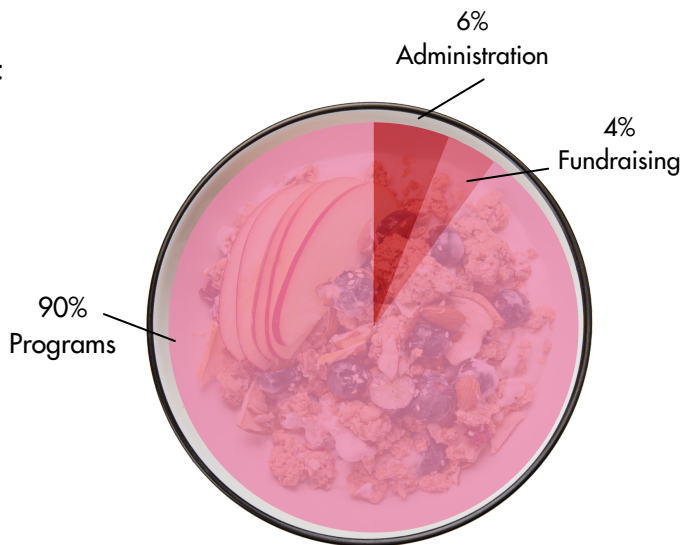


Thanks to the extraordinary generosity of the entire community, we were able to meet the great need over the past year and close our fiscal year in excellent financial health. In FY2022, we secured \$3.1 million in support. CORA is excited about the future and will continue to work passionately to ensure all those facing hunger have access to the food they need.

Income by Source:



Expenses:



# OUR IMPACT IN 2022

Look at what we accomplished together.

900 New Families Served



1.1 Million Meals Distributed



316,026 Pounds of Fresh Produce Served



1,323,152 Pounds of Food Provided



## Stay Connected With Us!



## 2021-2022 Board of Directors

- John Tarascio, President
- Cindi Ebert, Vice President
- Greg German, Treasurer
- Wendy Bellard, Secretary
- Carolina Avary
- Pamela Barker
- Bobbie Morel
- Patricia Parker
- Wilma Shroeder
- Linda S. Todd
- Mike Wagner

## Staff

- Melissa Driver Beard, Executive Director
- Rebecca Hankins, Development & Communications Director
- Kristine Ashwood, Operations Manager
- Mackie Hunter, Pantry Manager
- Meredith Katibah, Community Support Manager
- Peggy Overton, Data Manager
- Travus Viera, Transportation & Warehouse Supervisor
- Reggie Blue, Inventory & Logistics Specialist
- Riley Ward, 2022 SNACK! Coordinator