

# The Feed!

SUMMER 2024 NEWSLETTER  
**PHILABUNDANCE**



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# From Loree's Table



**Loree D. Jones Brown**  
Chief Executive Officer

Dear Friends,

For months we've been preparing for our 40th anniversary celebration, a chance to reflect on our progress and look to the future with a renewed sense of purpose and hope. And now, it's here! This May marked the official launch of our 12-month celebration of 40 years in the community, a year full of exciting programs, events, and opportunities to continue listening to, and learning from, our communities.

In honor of this special birthday, on May 11, we kicked things off by packing 1,000 Birthday Boxes! Much like our LunchBox program, designed to address hunger among children in the summer months, our Birthday Boxes reinforce our commitment to consider the overlooked and under resourced needs of our neighbors. Each Birthday Box contains the basic supplies needed to commemorate a loved one's special day — items not often accessible to families facing hunger — an effort to honor dignity, joy, and tradition in our operations and approach to food insecurity.

Our latest initiative is just another example of how we continue to evolve as an organization. In this issue, you'll hear directly from our founder, Pamela Rainey Lawler, about how the problem she identified four decades ago still very much exists — but in many ways, it's changed. Food insecurity is compounded by a number of factors, and because of this, organizations like ours are tasked with doing more than putting food on the table. We have a greater responsibility, to “nourish lives, one meal at a time.”

As you read more about our work this year, I hope you know the vital role that you have played in our success to date. Our growth as an organization isn't just measured in pounds of food distributed and rescued. Our real impact can be seen in the health of our communities, the people we serve, and the lives we've changed—together.

Your partnership has made all the difference. Thank you for your belief in what's possible.

To all that lies ahead!

Yours in service,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Loree D. Jones Brown". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Loree D. Jones Brown  
Chief Executive Officer

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# Philabundance Celebrates 40 Years of Impact with a Birthday Bash Event

This year, Philabundance celebrates a significant milestone—40 years of dedicated service and relentless efforts to combat hunger in the Greater Philadelphia area.



To kick off this momentous anniversary, Philabundance hosted a Birthday Bash event, a special birthday party-themed day of service where volunteers built 1,000 Birthday Boxes for our neighbors experiencing food insecurity.

Each Birthday Box includes all the ingredients needed for a family to commemorate a loved one's special day — birthday cake mix, baking supplies, and candles! These are items that may not otherwise be accessible for a family facing hunger. Many families facing food insecurity often prioritize necessities such as rent and groceries over celebratory expenses. The Philabundance Birthday Box ensures that children don't miss out on celebrating a milestone, bringing joy and a sense of normalcy during tough times.

“Each box is more than just a meal; it's a gesture of hope and celebration, packed with festive items like cake mix and frosting to ensure every family can celebrate their special moments,” said Loree D. Jones Brown, CEO of Philabundance.

The event symbolizes Philabundance's commitment to not only providing food but also fostering community and celebration.

“Today's effort is a reflection of what we've built over the past four decades: a community united against hunger,” Jones Brown added. “The Birthday Boxes are a new initiative, part of Philabundance's broader strategy to integrate celebratory elements into their regular food distribution programs, acknowledging that celebrations are an essential part of life for everyone.”

As Philabundance embarks on its 40th year, the organization is gearing up for a series of events and campaigns to further engage the community and expand its impact. The ongoing commitment of volunteers and partners is vital as Philabundance continues to strive for a future where no one in the community worries about their next meal.

For those interested in supporting Philabundance's mission or participating in future events, please visit us online at [philabundance.org](https://philabundance.org) or email us at [contactus@philabundance.org](mailto:contactus@philabundance.org).

Your involvement can help sustain this momentum and make a lasting impact in the lives of many.





# Rising Hunger Requires Strong Solutions

## Local Data Reveals Soaring Food Insecurity Rates

Feeding America recently released their annual *Map the Meal Gap* study, which reveals localized data on food insecurity. *Map the Meal Gap* gives us a deeper look into food insecurity beyond the national data provided annually by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). This newly available county-level data, which shows food insecurity rates for 2022, confirms what Philabundance and our partners have been witnessing firsthand: **hunger is on the rise**. Rising cost of living, historic food inflation, and the end of pandemic-era government assistance programs that previously helped people stay afloat have contributed to the soaring food insecurity rates we see today.

The USDA Household Food Security Report, released last fall, revealed that nationally 44.2 million people, including over 13 million children, lived in food insecure households in 2022 — an increase of over 10 million people from the year prior. This is the highest national food insecurity rate since 2014, and the highest one-year increase since the 2008 Great Recession. The new local data from *Map the Meal Gap* mirrors the national trend, revealing increased food insecurity in all nine counties of Philabundance’s service area across Southeastern Pennsylvania and Southern New Jersey.

Throughout the Philabundance service area, **over 600,000 people were food insecure** in 2022 (up from just under 500,000 the year prior) — a sharp 25% increase. Our overall food insecurity rate rose to **10.8% (1 in 9 people)**, up from 8.7% (1 in 11 people) in 2021. While food insecurity increased in every demographic, children as well as people of color were disproportionately affected. 17.1% of children (1 in 6) in our service area were food insecure, up from 12.6% (1 in 8) the year prior. Child food insecurity is particularly alarming in Philadelphia, where 1 in 3 children faced hunger. Across our service area, Black and Hispanic people were food insecure at more than 3x the rate of White people, with 1 in 4 Black people and 1 in 4 Hispanic people experiencing food insecurity, compared to 1 in 12 White people.

Additionally, *Map the Meal Gap* found that around 50% of food insecure people are not eligible for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the nation’s largest and most effective program in the fight to end hunger, because they earn above the income limit. This highlights the importance of food banks to help fill this growing gap, as we may be the only resource for people in this situation. We know that food insecurity would be much worse without a robust charitable food network, and Philabundance has continued to step up to serve our neighbors in need amid record high demand.

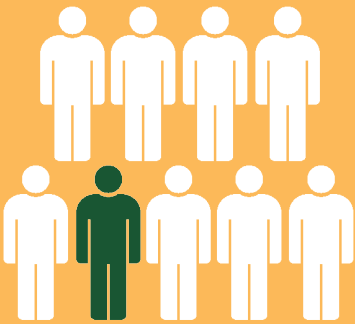
This sobering increase in food insecurity underscores the critical role of food banks like Philabundance, as well as the necessity of strong government investments in anti-hunger programs and policies. In 2021, food insecurity reached a historic low as a direct result of pandemic-relief efforts and substantial federal investments in the social safety net. Many of these

# 10.8%

OF PEOPLE IN  
OUR REGION FACE  
FOOD INSECURITY

# 600,000

NEIGHBORS IN NEED



1 in 9 people



1 in 6 children

## RACIAL DISPARITIES



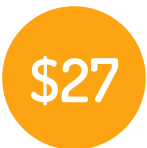
PEOPLE OF COLOR ARE THREE TIMES MORE LIKELY TO BE FOOD INSECURE

## BENEFIT ACCESS



OF FOOD INSECURE INDIVIDUALS ARE ABOVE THE INCOME LIMIT FOR SNAP

## BUDGET SHORTFALL



THE AVERAGE FOOD INSECURE PERSON NEEDS AN EXTRA \$27 PER WEEK TO MEET THEIR BASIC FOOD NEEDS

government supports that existed in 2021 ended in 2022, like the highly effective Expanded Child Tax Credit. The loss of critical pandemic-era interventions coupled with rising costs of living have fully erased the prior gains and contributed to the drastic rise in hunger we see today. We fear hunger will rise again in next year's 2023 data, reflecting the devastating end of additional supports like SNAP Emergency Allotments.

Looking at the new food insecurity data, one thing is clear: hunger is a policy choice. There is no excuse for anyone in this country to go hungry when solutions exist. Our communities are facing a hunger crisis, and food banks alone cannot fill the gap and meet the need. We need strong government policies and programs to work hand-in-hand with food banks to ensure everyone has the food they need to thrive.

Right now, Congress has a key opportunity to invest in federal nutrition programs that help millions of families keep food on the table and ease the strain on the charitable food network. That's because the Farm Bill – a comprehensive piece of legislation that governs most federal food and farming programs – is up for reauthorization. *Map the Meal Gap's* stark findings reinforce the need to protect and strengthen critical programs like SNAP, The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) through the Farm Bill. Join Philabundance in calling on Congress to pass a strong bipartisan Farm Bill that supports food banks and the people we serve.

Visit [philabundance.org/farm-bill/](https://philabundance.org/farm-bill/) to learn more and take action.

“We now have to choose between bills and food even more than before. Prices are rising and we can't keep up. We shouldn't have to decide if we can eat or have heat, buy groceries or pay the rent.”

— Philabundance Community Member

COUNTY	2021 Overall Food Insecurity	2022 Overall Food Insecurity	2021 Child Food Insecurity	2022 Child Food Insecurity
<b>PENNSYLVANIA</b>				
Bucks	6.2%	8.8%	5.2%	9.3%
Chester	5.4%	8.1%	3.5%	7.5%
Delaware	7.5%	9.7%	11.9%	16.6%
Montgomery	6.0%	8.6%	5.6%	9.7%
Philadelphia	13.6%	15.2%	25.5%	30.4%
<b>NEW JERSEY</b>				
Burlington	5.6%	7.9%	6.7%	11.1%
Camden	9.1%	11.3%	12.3%	17.0%
Gloucester	6.6%	8.9%	5.9%	9.9%
Salem	10.0%	12.1%	14.3%	19.3%





## Pamela Rainey Lawler Influence, Innovation, and Forty Years of Impact

As Philabundance founder Pamela Rainey Lawler looks back on 40 years of cultivating awareness and addressing food insecurity with innovation — she wants others to understand one key takeaway: the power of an idea.

“Forty years ago, no one thought you could move perishable food safely and efficiently,” Rainey Lawler recalls. “One of my approaches to life, a thread that continues to run through Philabundance, is that problems are meant to be solved.”

In the early 1980s, Rainey Lawler came face to face with a problem that would change the trajectory of her career, and ultimately, hundreds of thousands of lives.

“I saw so much perishable food that was leftover — at farmers markets, restaurants, catering events, and I really started to wonder what was happening to it all,” she says.

Leveraging her background in marketing and research, Rainey Lawler quickly realized she had stumbled upon an urgent problem, one that, at the time, had no clear or sustainable solution. And so began a four decade (and counting) journey to drive hunger from our communities and end hunger for good, one that has grown to include more than 350 community partners, serving nine counties, across two states, distributing more than 50 million pounds of food annually.

“In many ways, I can’t believe it’s been 40 years,” says Rainey Lawler. “I saw hunger and food waste as emergency problems that needed to be solved, and sadly, that hasn’t changed. But, in that time, we’ve learned that hunger is the symptom of a larger problem, and Philabundance has grown and evolved to address the root causes of hunger and food insecurity.”

Thanks to support from our community of passionate leaders, staff, volunteers, and friends, Philabundance continues to extend its impact beyond hunger. Our programs are designed to champion priorities like access to healthy food and workforce development, as well as recognize the undeniable role that co-determinants like poverty, homelessness, and socioeconomic status play in the hunger crisis.

“From the get-go, the ability to turn on a dime and solve new and emerging problems has been paramount to our success as an organization,” says Rainey Lawler. “And that philosophy continues to imbue Philabundance, even 40 years later.”

Rainey Lawler understands why Philabundance’s origin story of one woman, a Subaru station wagon, and a dream resonates with the community: it’s a reminder of the difference that one person can make.

“It’s a gift to continue to be involved with this organization,” she says fondly. “To watch it grow has really been a joy.”

“One of my approaches to life, a thread that continues to run through Philabundance, is that problems are meant to be solved.”

—Pamela Rainey Lawler,  
Founder, Philabundance



# Retail Rescue

## Putting Good Food Back Into The Community



In a nation where 40 percent of food produced ends up in landfills, Philabundance is pioneering a powerful solution to bridge the gap between food waste and food insecurity.

The Retail Rescue program operates across a vast network, fostering a sense of shared purpose among retailers, community agencies, and beneficiaries. This initiative ensures that quality, edible food, which would otherwise be discarded, reaches those in need.

“ We receive donations three times a week. These donations allow us to provide fresh food in good varieties to 80-90 families on average every week, many of whom are coming to us are recent refugees from Ukraine, Belorussia and other countries.”

—Luba Streletsky,  
Lifeway Baptist Church

Philabundance partners with over 400 grocery stores and retailers, including prominent names like Giant, Acme, Target, Amazon, and Wegmans, to rescue and distribute food that can no longer be sold in stores.

“Our retail partners are committed to combating food insecurity in their communities while operating more sustainably responsible businesses,” says Lauren Webb, chief food sourcing officer at Philabundance. “They work

diligently to sort through their products to ensure this food makes a positive impact for their neighbors.”

A key aspect of the program’s success is the collaboration with more than 350 community partners, including pantries, community centers, soup kitchens, shelters, and religious organizations. By directly connecting stores with local partners in their neighborhood, Philabundance not only streamlines the process of speedy food distribution but also cultivates a sense of community solidarity.

“We provide our store partners with the name of the local community partner that is receiving their food, but we also share the number of meals their donation equates to annually, as well as the CO2 emissions they reduced by not throwing out this food,” Webb shares. “It keeps the store teams engaged and committed to the program while illustrating the impact of their efforts!”

For community partners, Retail Rescue provides them with a consistent and reliable source of quality food donations. Cuts to federal food assistance programs, coupled with inflation and rising food prices, is forcing agencies to operate on stressed budgets.

“Our community partners love the food they get from the retailers,” Webb says. “I was so excited to visit the St Francis Inn during their lunch service. They cook meals for those in need, almost exclusively from the donations received from their retail partner!”

Last year Philabundance rescued more than 16.7 million pounds of food and distributed it to neighbors in need. This means quality food nourished families instead of producing carbon emissions in landfills, to the benefit of our entire city.

“It was so inspiring to see the end result of all of the efforts that go into saving this food,” Webb adds.







## Philabundance's Summer LunchBox Program: Bridging the Gap for Children During Summer Break

As the school year ends and the long days of summer begin, many children look forward to vacations and time with friends. However, for some families in the Greater Philadelphia area, the summer break brings with it a pressing concern: food insecurity. Without access to school-provided meals, parents struggle to provide the meals their children normally would receive at school. Recognizing this critical need, Philabundance launched its Summer LunchBox Program, aimed at ensuring no child goes hungry during the summer months.

The Summer LunchBox Program is designed to fill the meal gap left by the absence of school lunches, which many families rely on throughout the school year.

"During the summer, many children who depend on school meals for reliable access to food find themselves facing uncertainty about where their next meal will come from," explains Avi Nocella, special projects manager at Philabundance. "Our Summer LunchBox initiative ensures that children have access to nutritious meals even when school is out."

This summer, our all-star Philabundance Community Kitchen team will create 60,000 fresh ready-to-eat kid-friendly lunch meals for families across our service region. Philabundance will supplement these fresh meals with over 11,000 pantry-friendly breakfast kits, each containing enough for two full breakfast meals. The program not only focuses on alleviating hunger but also on promoting nutritional health, which is crucial for children's development and well-being during the summer break.

To distribute these meals, Philabundance has partnered with 25 strategically located youth-serving community partners in all nine Philabundance counties such as local community centers, summer camps, and other non-profits. This community-based approach ensures that the meals reach children across different neighborhoods, particularly in areas where food deserts make access to affordable and nutritious food challenging.

The impact of the Summer LunchBox Program extends beyond just feeding children.

"It's about providing a sense of security and normalcy," says Loree D. Jones Brown, CEO of Philabundance. "When children are well-fed and healthy, they can focus on being kids during the summer, enjoying their break without the burden of hunger."

As Philabundance continues this vital summer program, we call on the community for support. Donations, whether in the form of food items or financial contributions, are crucial for sustaining the program's reach and impact. Volunteers are also welcome to help assemble and distribute meals throughout the summer months.

*For more information on how you can help or to donate to the Summer LunchBox Program, please visit [www.philabundance.org](http://www.philabundance.org)*

Together, we can ensure that no child in our community has to face hunger this summer.