



# Feed Fannin News

One Community, One Spirit

Feed Fannin, Inc.

Summer 2020

## Feed Fannin, Family Connection Team with Local Meals on Wheels

Feed Fannin and the Fannin County Family Connection Food Pantry joined forces this year to support the local Meals on Wheels senior food program operated by the Fannin County Senior Life Services Center.

Last fall, Meals on Wheels requested the help of Feed Fannin volunteers in delivering weekly meals to their homebound, low-income senior clients. In addition to doing that, Feed Fannin teamed up with the Food Pantry to provide a monthly box of nonperishable staples to Meals on Wheels clients living in outlying areas of Fannin County such as Cashes Valley, Higdon and Doublehead Gap.

These supplemental food boxes augment the Meals on Wheels dinners and typically contain simple-to-serve items such as peanut butter, bread, soups, stews, tuna, canned fruits, applesauce and cereal, along with protein shakes, juice, vitamin water and snack bars. Fresh fruits are included when available.

Nationally, nearly 9.5 million seniors are threatened by hunger. One in four live alone, and one in five are lonely. Fannin County's senior population is even more stressed, and Meals on Wheels addresses this need.

The 45 low-income seniors visited weekly (normally) and now bi-weekly during the coronavirus pandemic are shut-ins who lack access to healthy food and adequate nutrition on a daily basis. And as older adults, many with chronic health conditions such as diabetes or heart disease, they are at heightened risk for the coronavirus. In addition to

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## Farm & Garden Report

It is approaching the Fourth of July weekend as I write this article. I am happy to report that the Feed Fannin garden was planted this Spring and brought some needed normalcy to my world.

Wet soil and cooler temperatures were a problem all during the Spring. We were unable to plant red potatoes because of all the rain. We were forced to adhere to the "no planting until after Mother's Day and blackberry winter." Cabbages planted late winter in the six raised beds and covered with screen to protect the plants, yielded 373 lbs. of produce for the Food Pantry, and the beds have been planted again for summer. Thank you volunteers for your help getting the garden planted between the raindrops, and even with umbrellas, and your support of social distancing guidelines. You are amazing!

The focus of this Summer Farm and Garden report is on gratitude and thankfulness for the spirit and generosity from the community and volunteers who help the farm and garden become a reality.

First of all, the Fannin County Board of Education generously allows Feed Fannin the use of the property for the farm. Early this Spring during a wind storm, a portion of the barn roof on the property was raised. We appreciate the relationship with the Fannin County Board of Education and the swift attention of their Maintenance Department to help with the roof repair.

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FF volunteers Brenda (center) and Charlie McKee pack their vehicle with boxes filled with meals to deliver to homebound seniors living in outlying areas of the county. They are assisted by Pam Godfrey (left), site manager for the Fannin County Senior Life Services Center, who coordinates the local Meals on Wheels program.



On the weekend Bowls of Hope would have been held, Feed Fannin volunteers took selfies at home enjoying bowls of soup and posted them on Facebook as a tribute to the event. Shown are (l-r) Publicity Chair Diane Payne, Feed Fannin Founder and Past Chair Barbara Ferer, PR/Marketing Committee Chair Carol Martel and her husband, Treasurer Carlos Martel, and current Chair Ron Ciochon.

## Reflections on the Cancellation of our 2020 Bowls of Hope

I remember the day in early March when Jane and I, the co-chairs for Feed Fannin’s Bowls of Hope, initially discussed the effect the novel Coronavirus could possibly have on BOH and how we might have to consider at least doing some things differently to disperse attendees. I also remember how quickly the situation changed less than a week later, and the only decision became to cancel BOH. There was a little push-back expressed at first that cancellation was an overreaction, but it soon became evident that it was the correct decision.

I think most of us on the BOH committee worked so hard initially on the physical aspects of unwinding all the minute details of cancellation, that it took a couple of weeks for the reality to set in that BOH was cancelled and for the mourning and disappointment to be fully felt and realized. I am confident none of us realized at that time the impact that COVID-19 could have on our community and the world, and the lives that would be affected in mostly negative, but also a few positive ways.

BOH was one of the first community events of the Spring that had to be cancelled, but one by one we have all watched a domino effect as all our favorite events have gone by the wayside. In addition, celebrations of birthdays, graduations, Mother’s Day, Father’s Day, vacations, and even burying loved ones have and will continue to look different this year. We miss the fellowship of meeting with our church groups and even a simple trip to browse through one of our favorite stores or share a meal with friends.

It’s been interesting to watch the ingenuity of different organizations as they maneuver through the process of quarantine and reopening. I know for me, I have learned to more fully appreciate the simple things that I took for granted. I have watched in awe and with appreciation the risks that health professionals, government leaders and

first responders have been willing to take for others. My faith has become stronger. I have learned that I am not in control. My love of family and friends has become more focused, and my already immense love of nature and the outdoors has deepened.

I think it has been hard to want to do something to help others who are suffering... to fix it... and not know what to do. You know we Southern girls like to make a casserole, and everything will be better. But there are big problems everywhere that I can’t fix. What I can do, is what I can do. I have learned to do like everyone else, and that is face each day as it comes. Go ahead and plant a garden. Volunteer where you feel safe. Check on family and loved ones. Just go ahead and carefully discover and live life in its new format.

I like what the Chamber of Commerce has on their website: “1 Fannin #StrongerTogether.”

I don’t know exactly what BOH will look like in 2021. I think it will look different as some safety and logistics procedures learned from the Coronavirus pandemic will most likely carry-over and become a way of life for the near future. We have learned we can do what we have to do, and I am confident that together we will figure it out.

What I do know is that Feed Fannin volunteers are committed to our mission of feeding the hungry in our community through the partnership we have with Family Connection Food Pantry. Our community is incredible in the way they support our efforts. Our board of directors is creative and resourceful, and our committees are tireless in their pursuit, once given a challenge or plan of action. We will continue to wade through as we navigate the uncharted waters of COVID-19, learning and doing what we need to do as we go along.

❁ Kathy Beck, Event Co-Chair

Mercier Orchards has donated all the money to Feed Fannin from the sale of masks to its customers through June; At right, Feed Fannin Chair Ron Ciochon accepts a check for \$500 in April from Tim Richter, owner of Toccoa Riverside Restaurant, in a "drive-by donation" arranged during the pandemic. The restaurant had just begun to sell take-out meals to customers during limited hours after having been closed for about a month.



## Generous Donations to Feed Fannin Continue to Help During Pandemic, Shut-Down, Economic Crisis

Although Feed Fannin had to cancel this year's annual fundraiser, Bowls of Hope, due to the coronavirus pandemic, many generous donors have stepped in to offset the economic impact, allowing our nonprofit organization to continue its mission of feeding the hungry and supporting the Fannin County Family Connection Food Pantry.

"We have heard from many new donors this spring and summer who have given us checks or made online donations via our website ([www.feedfannin.com](http://www.feedfannin.com))," said Feed Fannin Treasurer Carlos Martel at the organization's July meeting. "The donations have ranged from \$20 up to \$5,000."

He also noted that the majority of **Bowls of Hope** ticket holders allowed Feed Fannin to keep their money as donations when the event was cancelled, which helped reduce the shortfall in revenue. Also, many merchants, restaurants and individuals who had donated items and gift certificates for the event's silent auction permitted the organization to keep these items for use in an **online or "virtual" auction being planned for August (details to be announced soon)**.

In addition to an article and editorial about the cancellation of the Bowls of Hope in the News Observer that called for donations, Martel cited opportunities to give that were posted on Feed Fannin's Facebook page in March and April. Donations through the Facebook page have so far totaled about \$1,500.

"I'm an optimist by nature, but we were concerned that, as demand for food rose due to the economic downturn and loss of jobs, we might simultaneously face a severe decline in donations due to the uncertainties of the pandemic and its impact on the community," Martel said. However, our

loyal supporters — along with many new ones — have come through for us, and the response from the community has been heartwarming."

"For a while after the cancellation of Bowls of Hope in March, we had calls asking 'how can we help,' and soon we began receiving unexpected checks in the mail and two to three donations on our website via PayPal each day," he continued.

One person even signed over his economic stimulus check to Feed Fannin, writing on the memo line simply "Help people." Donations have slowed since May, but the organization is fortunate to be able to continue to meet the growing demand for food.

Local businesses have also been very supportive of Feed Fannin. Mercier Orchards has donated a very generous amount representing the proceeds through June from the sale of masks required to enter the popular tourist destination (see chalkboard sign above).

Tri-State EMC's Operation RoundUP Program, which invites its customers to round up their payments to the nearest dollar approved a grant to Feed Fannin of \$4,500.

Cabin Concierge, a new food and grocery delivery service in Blue Ridge, announced in April that it would donate a percentage of its fees from each delivery to Feed Fannin.

Tim Richter, owner of Toccoa Riverside Restaurant and a longtime supporter of Bowls of Hope, donated \$500 to purchase food for the Food Pantry (see photo top right).

Brandon Lofton, also a loyal Bowls of Hope supporter and owner of another prominent Blue Ridge restaurant, The Black Sheep, donated a similar amount. Some local churches have also given Feed Fannin additional gifts from

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Feed Fannin volunteers load shopping carts with groceries and fresh produce to roll out to clients of the Food Pantry. This photo was taken in January at the Pantry's new and much larger facility at 501 Industrial Park Road in Blue Ridge, well before the coronavirus became a pandemic. Shown here are (l-r): Carlos Martel, Priscilla Cashman, Jeff Gorham and (back to the camera) Carol Martel.

## Pandemic Poses Challenges for Food Pantry and its Clients

The first half of 2020 will go down as one of the most unsettling periods of time our country has ever faced and one that has harshly impacted local clients coming to the Family Connection Food Pantry.

The Pantry saw a huge surge of clientele in need as a result of the coronavirus pandemic and ensuing job losses as stores, restaurants and many other businesses were forced to shut down and residents and visitors were strongly encouraged to self-quarantine. In April, May and June, 657 families came for help; 112 of these families were first-time clients; and the total number of individuals served during this time period was 4,839.

"In terms of people served, this has been the largest year on record for us by far," said Sherry Morris, executive director of Fannin County Family Connection, referring to the organization's FY 2019-2020 that ended on June 30. The Pantry served 19,456 individuals during the year, an increase of 13.7 percent over the previous year. The number of families served was 7,050, a 16.2 percent increase. For 487 of these families, it was their first visit to the Pantry.

Their needs were and are great, but the volunteers and staff have delivered nutritious food to each and every person who has needed it. No matter the demand, the shelves have stayed well stocked thanks to the vigilance of the tireless Pantry Manager, Greg Gelp, Feed Fannin ordering guru, Robin Frye, and the financial support of Feed Fannin, which pays 100 percent of the cost of food purchased from regional food banks.

By April, the Chattanooga Food Bank was not charging for milk orders for the Food Pantry, thanks to the United

States Department of Agriculture's Coronavirus Food Assistance Program and the CARES Act. This has enabled Feed Fannin to save money on its usual milk orders.

In fact, all the rest of Feed Fannin's expenses for purchasing food for the pantry also were temporarily paused in April because the Chattanooga Food Bank, through its participation in the Feeding America Network, issued the Food Pantry a \$12,000 grant for food purchases. It is unclear how long the federal COVID food assistance programs will last or if funding through the CARES Act will be extended or renewed, so this "free ride" may soon be discontinued.

Local grocers have not been donating as much fresh produce as usual during the pandemic, Morris said, so the Pantry will welcome any fruits and vegetables local residents can spare from their gardens. [Feed Fannin is exploring working with local farmers to purchase fresh produce.]

When the pandemic hit, Pantry volunteers and staff quickly adapted strategies to keep the food distribution process swift and safe for all workers and clients. Starting back in March, a drive-through delivery system was put into place and will remain at least through the summer so that clients don't have to come inside. Thanks to generous donations of cleaning supplies and gloves from several local companies, all steps of the grocery deliveries are sanitized between each client.

Feed Fannin looks forward to a busy and fruitful summer. We also hope for the continued support of our loyal volunteers and faithful donors as we move our mission forward, no matter what obstacles we might face.

❁ Priscilla Cashman, Food Pantry Liaison

# amazon smile

## Smile! We're now registered on AmazonSmile!

Are you an Amazon shopper? Now, you can support Feed Fannin's mission by shopping on

[smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com) and designating our organization as your favorite AmazonSmile charity. Feed Fannin then will receive a portion of every purchase you make on this website, at no cost to you. Easy peasy. Thank you!

Use this unique link to choose Feed Fannin as your designated charity:

<https://smile.amazon.com/ch/45-5600278> ❁



Barn roof damage from wind storm in early spring, repaired with the help of the Board of Education's Maintenance Department

Next, appreciation is expressed to a Blairsville farmer who is fondly referred to as “The Tater Man” by many locals, and who has been a friend to Feed Fannin for many years by sourcing the sweet potato slips for the garden. He is additionally a mentor to me. He has been farming and growing both potatoes and sweet potatoes for over 50 years. He is a great teller of stories and is a fount of wisdom and knowledge. This year The Tater Man had decided not to plant sweet potatoes himself, but still offered to source the plants needed for the Feed Fannin garden. The amazing part of the story is that when he discovered the grower that we normally use would not be able to provide the plants we needed due to problems related to the pandemic, he didn't stop there. He continued to search all of Georgia and North Carolina with the same results before finally finding the plants we needed and Feed Fannin was able to purchase the plants from a grower in Tennessee. Thank you to “The Tater Man” for your persistence and kindness. The sweet potato plants are looking fantastic!

Gabe and Ginger Montgomery of Quinn's Greenhouse in McCaysville are great supporters of Feed Fannin. As part of our educational program, Ginger teaches a Spring educational garden related class each year for the community. In addition, Quinn's provides many of the plants we use in the Ada Street and Mittleider gardens. Thank you to Quinn's Greenhouse for your educational support and for starting and donating cabbage and tomato plants for Feed Fannin.

I received a message during the winter this year before the pandemic that the West Fannin Elementary School garden club, led by 4th grade science teacher, Mary Jane Pace, and mentored by several North Georgia Master Gardeners, wanted to grow some plant starts for the FF garden to express their gratitude and as a “pass it on” gesture for the financial support that Feed Fannin provides to them as well as other local elementary schools each year. When the pandemic closed the school after seeds had been started, Mary Jane and several NGMG volunteers tended and potted the plants and donated tomato and herb plants to Feed Fannin. Thank you to West Fannin Elementary students and leaders. Basil and

oregano have been planted near tomatoes as companion plants and bronze fennel, dill, sage, bee balm, chives, mint and thyme planted to act as host plants to attract beneficial insects and deter aphids and whiteflies.

A huge thank you to a new friend and supporter of Feed Fannin, Gilda from 6 Ponds Farm in Morganton, who came to the rescue and donated additional tomato plants when we needed them. Also, thank you to volunteers Jim and Meredith Yacavone who started and donated some additional heirloom tomato plants.

As is usual in the springtime, volunteers help spruce up the farm property. We want to grow produce but also want the property to look beautiful. We have had several deep string-trimming and mowing sessions and clean-up days while social distancing. In addition, volunteers keep the property trimmed and mowed throughout the summer. It is an ongoing chore. Thank you to Ham Kimzey for mowing weekly throughout the summer and to all who trim.



The garden in July: sweet potatoes on the left, corn and newly started tomatoes on the right.

On one Spring day, three ladies and I tackled the clean-up of the pollinator garden near the corner of the barn. The railroad ties had pushed out over time. We were able to dig out behind them, and with the help of rebar, concrete mix and rocks, we secured ties, weeded the area, laid landscape fabric, added more soil, seeded and added pollinator plants. Several other volunteers added some large pots in several corners of the garden and planted flowers to also help with pollination and attract good insects. The bees and beneficial insects are now buzzing, and hummingbirds have been dropping by to visit. Nature will work together to provide the environment needed for the garden to flourish. The red winged blackbirds come daily, and there are frequent visits by unwanted mascots, several very large groundhogs. With the addition of herbs and a (few more bags of concrete), we hope to be able to deter

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### New digs for Mittleider Garden

Feed Fannin's Mittleider Garden has been relocated to the Fannin County Family Connection on Industrial Park Drive in Blue Ridge and is settling in to its new digs fairly well. Its caretakers, including volunteer Guy Gooch (upper right) are growing cabbages, tomatoes and cucumbers in this compact space, and all vegetables harvested from the garden are donated to the Family Connection Food Pantry. Nothing goes to waste here, as volunteers are taking the tough cabbage leaves they trim off the plants to Project Chimps, where the resident chimps are enjoying gourmet treats in the form of cabbage leaf rolls with peanut butter.



### FARM/GARDEN REPORT continued from P. 5

groundhogs from feasting on the vines of the sweet potatoes like they did last year.

We have installed new signage next to the street entrance to the farm on Ada Street and at the barn near the railroad tracks due to wear and tear of the elements on the previous signage. The sign at the street entrance is two-sided and has the street address number to provide more visibility and make the farm easier to locate for visitors. If you are interested in touring the farm, please leave a message for Feed Fannin

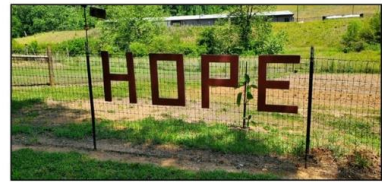


at the contact numbers shown on this newsletter, and someone will be in contact with you to schedule a visit.

So, our summer growing season is underway with the world in a little different situation and some unknowns. There have been a few challenges and delays, but we are grateful for the community support and the opportunity of another garden season. There's something hopeful that comes to mind when you think of gardening. Hope is something we all can use this year. Thank you to

volunteer, LuAnn Quaiel for making and donating a "HOPE" sign to hang on our garden fence as a reminder to all who pass.

We are hopeful for another bountiful crop, but it will be difficult to exceed the 4.7 tons of produce that we donated to the Family Connection Food Pantry in 2019.



Please continue to support Feed Fannin through the donation of any extra produce you have in your garden throughout the summer. Please consider planting an extra row or planting vegetables in a pot for donation to someone in need. The number of food pantry clients continues to increase and growing vegetables to donate might be another way you could help in addition to financial donations and volunteering your time.

Thanks again to all volunteers and the friendship and support of the community. I hope to see you soon at the farm some Monday, Wednesday or Friday at 9:00AM to drop off extra produce or to help with a few farm and garden chores. (P.S. If you love to string trim, do I have an opportunity for you!)

❁ Kathy Beck, Farm and Garden Manager

## **FOOD DELIVERY TO SENIORS** *continued from P. 1*

all of the other effects the virus has had on the world in 2020, it has put our low-income seniors in danger of malnutrition, hunger and depression.

Pam Godfrey, Fannin County Senior Center and Fannin County Meals on Wheels site manager, oversees the local program. In addition to providing group meals at the center on week days for 35-45 seniors with the help of volunteers from local churches and other organizations, she manages a small fleet of volunteer drivers who fan out across the county to deliver Meals on Wheels to those who are homebound and cannot come to the center.

Godfrey is quick to emphasize that her “staff are an invaluable part of this process.” Regretfully, they have had to suspend providing these hot meals at the Senior Center temporarily due to the COVID-19 outbreak. The regular delivery of food to the homebound is all the more critical at this time.

“Last fall, we were down some drivers when Sandee and Jeff Gorham and some others from Feed Fannin approached me about collaborating with their organization and the Pantry to deliver food along two of our regular routes, and we’ve been very happy to have them work with us,” said Godfrey. “We are very blessed to have a lot of good volunteers helping us to serve Fannin County residents 60 and older. They’ve been particularly valuable during the pandemic, when some of our longtime volunteers have had to stop driving their routes because they are at high risk for the coronavirus themselves.”

“This is a segment of our population that is really hurting,” said Feed Fannin and Fannin County Family Connection volunteer Sandee Gorham, who along with her husband delivers food boxes to those on her route. “These are homebound seniors who can’t make it to the Senior Center for a daily meal or drive to the Food Pantry for a cartload of groceries, and we need to support them, both with food and companion-ship,” she said. “We have an amazing and dedicated team of volunteers who regularly drive a Meals on Wheels route, as well as order, pack and deliver the supplemental food boxes. They so richly represent Feed Fannin’s One Community, One Spirit philosophy!”

Sherry Morris, executive director of Fannin County Family Connection, grew up in the area and

Meals on Wheels Site Manager Pam Godfrey with Feed Fannin volunteer drivers Tom and Nancy Niswander preparing to make MOW deliveries.



understands the population who depends on Meals on Wheels for survival. “These are typically people who have spent their lives earning local wages, almost never above minimum wage,” she said. “They exist now on \$400-700 per month. Generally, their children grew up and moved away — there was nothing for us here when I was growing up except boarded-up towns and a defunct mining company. So, we have seniors stuck at home with virtually no income and little help from family members who long ago left the area.”

❁ Diane Payne, newsletter editor

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## **You Can Help!**

Feed Fannin and the Food Pantry intend to continue to provide the supplemental food boxes to the Meals on Wheels patrons on a monthly basis. Anyone wishing to help support the initiative can contribute with donations or volunteering their time by:

- ✓ Visiting the Feed Fannin website, [www.feedfannin.com](http://www.feedfannin.com), to find out more about our ongoing volunteer and community project needs. You may also email us at [feedfannin@gmail.com](mailto:feedfannin@gmail.com) or call 706-946-1001 (leave a message) for further information. Monetary donations may be mailed to PO Box 1085, Blue Ridge, GA 30513;
- ✓ Visiting the Family Connection website, [www.fannin.gafcp.org](http://www.fannin.gafcp.org), calling 706-632-6063 or mailing monetary donations to PO Box 2715, Blue Ridge, GA 30513;
- ✓ Visiting the Senior Center website, [www.ngcainc.com/senior-life-services-Fannin-County](http://www.ngcainc.com/senior-life-services-Fannin-County), calling 706-632-6063 (leave a message), or mailing monetary donations to 440 W. First St., Blue Ridge, GA 30513.

# Make a Gift to Feed Fannin

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Would you like to receive information about Feed Fannin by email? Y\_\_\_\_ N\_\_\_\_

Amount of gift donation: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Need a tax receipt? Y\_\_\_\_ N\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to:  
Feed Fannin, Inc.

Mail form and donation to:

Feed Fannin  
PO Box 1085  
Blue Ridge, GA 30513

**Your gift is greatly appreciated!**

## Our Mission

Working together to educate and encourage our community towards self-sufficiency while providing food for those in need.

**FEED  
FANNIN**



ONE COMMUNITY, ONE SPIRIT

## Keep Up with Feed Fannin

Feed Fannin Inc.

P O Box 1085

Blue Ridge, GA 30513

Phone: 706-946-1001

(Leave message)

Email: [feedfannin@gmail.com](mailto:feedfannin@gmail.com)

Website: [feedfannin.com](http://feedfannin.com)

Chair: Ron Ciochon

## All Education Classes Have Been Cancelled for the Remainder of 2020 because of the Coronavirus Crisis

### *DONATIONS continued from P. 3*

their Sunday collections. And retailers like Wrapsody in Blue and Wrapsody Outdoor Living have also made donations, even while their businesses were closed during the pandemic.

In addition, several restaurants that were forced to shut down donated perishable and nonperishable items from their freezers and pantries directly to the Food Pantry. One food supplier donated 1,000 lbs. of flour!

“Feed Fannin is very grateful for these generous donations,” said the organization’s Chair, Ron Ciochon. “We are so appreciative of the many businesses and individual supporters in our community who have come forward, eager to give during these difficult times. Their donations are helping us keep pace with the needs of families, children and an increasing number of seniors seeking food assistance from the Food Pantry at Fannin County Family Connection.”

Ciochon pointed out that all of the aforementioned donations are also helping to support and enhance a new partnership of Feed Fannin and Family Connection with the “Meals on Wheels” program at the Fannin County Senior Center (see related article on P. 1).

✿ Diane Payne, newsletter editor

## Feed Fannin awarded Starbucks Grant

We are excited to report that Starbucks recently awarded Feed Fannin a **Starbucks Foundation Neighborhood Grant** for \$1,500 that was used to purchase \$12,000 worth of food staples in bulk from the Atlanta and Chattanooga food banks. Jonathan Barnes, manager of the stand-alone Starbucks store on Highway 5, nominated Feed Fannin for the grant while attending a Starbucks meeting in Chicago last fall. Last summer, he began donating leftover baked goods from the store to the Food Pantry, and met FF volunteer Priscilla Cashman, who is our liaison with the Pantry. That led to a tour of Feed Fannin’s five-acre farm on Ada Street, where fresh produce is grown for the Pantry. In November, Barnes presented Cashman with a framed certificate of the Starbucks Foundation Neighborhood Grant. ✿

