



Feed Fannin News

One Community, One Spirit

Feed Fannin, Inc.

Spring 2021



Get Ready to Bid in our Online Auction Aug. 20-29!

With Feed Fannin's annual fundraiser, Bowls of Hope, still sidelined by the pandemic this past March, the organization will once again hold an online auction late this summer to purchase food for the food pantry at Fannin County Family Connection. This one promises to be even bigger than last year's online auction, which raised about the same amount of money as the in-person silent auction that has been a hallmark of Bowls of Hope.

The auction will go live on www.feedfannin.com Aug. 20-29 with pickup of items won to take place on Sept. 3-4 (Friday and Saturday of Labor Day Weekend) at the Fannin County Family Connection facility at 501 Fannin Industrial Park in Blue Ridge.

As of mid-May, more than 100 unique items and gift certificates from local merchants and service providers had been donated for the 2021 event, including a mahogany rocking chair, a handcrafted wooden toy chest, a handmade musical instrument, home décor, jewelry, baskets of goodies, wine tastings, fun food excursions and great golf outings. The auction will also feature plenty of visual and folk art and photography. Many thanks to the volunteers who have solicited businesses and individuals for these donations throughout the spring.

Feed Fannin is grateful for the amazing support of local merchants and service providers, and for the artists who make the auction possible. The community enthusiastically participated online last year, and Feed Fannin volunteers are looking forward to broad support this year as well to help

the organization continue to purchase food for families, children and seniors in need of food assistance in this area. We invite everyone interested in supporting Feed Fannin's efforts to help feed those in need while discovering great adventures, fun dining experiences, beautiful art, crafts, jewelry and so much more.

Feed Fannin pays for nearly 100 percent of the food purchased from regional food banks to stock the food pantry year-round and donates thousands of pounds of nutritious vegetables grown in its community and partner gardens each year for pantry clients.

Volunteers plan to resume holding the traditional Bowls of Hope event in Spring 2022. In the meantime, please continue to visit www.feedfannin.com or our [Facebook page](#) to learn more about the upcoming online auction and stay informed about plans for the 2022 Bowls of Hope. ❀



Feed Fannin Garden volunteers rally to prepare the Ada Street Farm for spring planting.

Feed Fannin Chair Ron Ciochon displays a certificate of appreciation from the Fannin County Young Farmer Association.



Farm & Garden Report

I think most everyone longed for 2020 to be over and has looked forward to the freshness of Spring and new growth. In spite of the hardships that 2020 presented, I think it is important to look to the lessons learned and express gratitude for the abundance that was given.

Garden preparations have started and sweet potatoes, corn, tomatoes, cabbage, cucumbers, squash and herbs are some of the crops that will be grown at Feed Fannin's farm on Ada Street this summer. Weekly work days are held Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 9-12. Volunteers are always welcome and very much needed.

Feed Fannin has some exciting new outreach programs that started or have been expanded during 2021. We grew our School Outreach Program to include a \$500 grant to assist all three Fannin County elementary schools and Fannin County Middle School with their garden clubs and greenhouse supplies. Fannin County High School will also receive a \$500 grant to assist students in attending Future Farmers of America (FFA) leadership training.

Our organization was recently invited to participate in the first-ever Ag Literacy Day sponsored by local FFA chapters. Volunteers involved in agriculture visited elementary schools to read students a book related to agriculture and share the roles they (the volunteers) play in agriculture in our community.

I had the honor of representing Feed Fannin at Ag Literacy Day. The children were attentive and inquisitive, and it was a joy to experience. I was also invited to the FFA Advisory Council luncheon held at the Ag Center on May 4. This was my second year to attend the event, and it is interesting and informative to come together with others in the community who are dedicated to advancing agriculture.

During an FFA banquet on May 6, Feed Fannin received a Certificate of Appreciation for its FFA support via the above-mentioned grants to the middle and high schools.

East Fannin Elementary School's kindergarten class, under the leadership of STEM teacher Christie Holtman,

grew tomato plants from seed and recently donated them to Feed Fannin to plant in our garden. Produce harvested from the plants will be donated to the food pantry. Appreciation is also expressed to Quinn's Nursery in McCaysville for providing additional tomato and cabbage plants to the Ada Street and Research gardens.

In addition, the first-ever Feed Fannin Scholarships, established through a seed grant from one of the organization's volunteers, were presented at the Fannin County High School 2021 Scholarship Ceremony on May 11. Fellow board member Carol Martel and I presented \$1,000 scholarships to each of two deserving high school graduates, Abigail Ledford and Patrick Conner.

Patrick has been accepted to the Honors Program at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College and will study agriculture, and Abby will be attending the University of North Georgia's Dahlonega campus to pursue a degree in education on her way to becoming an elementary school teacher. Congratulations to these two accomplished students, and our best wishes as you begin your college studies.

Spring has been busy so far and has brought new growth to Feed Fannin. Our organization continues to be amazed and grateful for the support expressed by the entire community, the loyal businesses, patrons, and volunteers who have continued to support Feed Fannin throughout the challenges of 2020 and early 2021. We look forward to what lies ahead in the Summer and Fall harvest this year. Blessings have been bestowed on us, and Feed Fannin is looking for new ways to continue to give back to the Blue Ridge and Fannin County community.

❁ Kathy Beck, Farm and Garden Manager



Fannin County High School graduates Abigail Ledford and Patrick Conner, recipients of the first-ever Feed Fannin Scholarships.

Feed Fannin volunteers erecting tomato cages at the Ada Street Farm in mid-May.





New Produce Initiative Takes Off

Feed Fannin began a new Farm to Pantry produce initiative last summer that has proved very successful. In June 2020, just as the coronavirus pandemic was worsening, the Fannin County Family Connection Food Pantry stopped receiving fresh produce through a grant that had expired.

Meanwhile, the pantry had been serving a record number of clients throughout the spring of 2020, thanks to so many people being forced out of work, and fresh produce donations from the pantry's usual sources had dried up.

Feed Fannin saw an opportunity to further support the community and began in mid-summer to source and purchase produce from local farmers. The organization continued this initiative weekly through the winter months and right through the present day. From July to December 2020, the Feed Fannin gardens and the Farm to Pantry produce initiative provided 13,100 lbs. of produce to hungry pantry clients.

Old Dial Road Farm grew and supplied Feed Fannin with beautiful lettuce, cabbage, collards, radishes, carrots and Swiss chard from their greenhouse throughout the winter. In addition, Feed Fannin has sourced tomatoes, potatoes, squash and cucumbers from other local providers.

What a blessing to watch the reactions of pantry clients as well as volunteers when all the beautiful produce has been delivered to the pantry each week!

Throughout the pandemic, the lobby of the food pantry has been closed to the public — volunteers ferried shopping carts full of groceries and produce outside to the cars of waiting clients, but the lobby reopened this May, and Feed Fannin has a new fresh produce section just inside the doors. FF Chair Ron Ciochon purchased the black produce shelving himself, and volunteers had a sign made to call attention to Feed Fannin's role in providing produce for pantry clients. Volunteers are shown above stocking the shelves with fresh Farm to Pantry produce. ❀

UNG Food Pantry, 'Lunch in a Crunch' Supported by Feed Fannin

The University of North Georgia's new Blue Ridge campus has implemented two initiatives designed to keep its hungry students' focus on their academics, and Feed Fannin is partnering in both efforts.

Last fall, while the pandemic limited UNG students to online learning and food insecurity became more noticeable to administrators, the non-residential school set up an on-campus food pantry to help those who are struggling to afford groceries, toiletries and certain school supplies.

Feed Fannin member Anna Speesen is coordinator of Academic Success Services at UNG Blue Ridge, and she oversees the pantry. Feed Fannin, with its

ability to stretch dollars by purchasing food in bulk through local food banks, began contributing regularly to the school's food pantry. Students who fill out a confidential form to participate can come to the campus twice a week to pick up the nonperishable food and other basic items they need.

"When hunger is a distraction, students have a harder time in the classroom," Speesen said. "This pantry has the potential to help combat food insecurity."

Early this year, Speesen saw another opportunity to help students on the Blue Ridge campus, which offers no dining services. With the help of Feed Fannin volunteers and a few UNG alumni, she established an amenity known as "Lunch in a Crunch" to give students self-service options for meals and snacks (soups, tuna, noodle cups, crackers, etc.) throughout the day between classes so they can remain on campus and focus on their studies. ❀



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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.



Volunteer Ken Banwart harvests cabbage leaves for the chimps

Not a Bit is Wasted in Feed Fannin's Cabbage Patch

Volunteers harvested a good-sized batch of cabbage leaves on May 17 from the Mittleider Garden that is part of Feed Fannin's Barbara Ferer Research and Demonstration Garden. The tough outer cabbage leaves that would otherwise be composted were donated to the primate residents of Project Chimps, who enjoy tasty cabbage rolls with peanut butter. The cabbage heads are donated to the food pantry. Feed Fannin volunteers also planted tomatoes, cucumbers and squash in the Mittleider Garden once the weather finally warmed up in late May. 🌸



This past winter, the employees of Home Depot's Blue Ridge store selected Feed Fannin as the recipient of the \$1,000 in charitable donations they collected for "Operation Surprise," a project of Home Depot's Good in Action program. Shown here are Store Manager Holly Chandler and another employee presenting the check to grateful Feed Fannin volunteers.

Feed Fannin Farm & Garden Manager, Kathy Beck, also a member of the Fannin County Young Farmer Association, is shown discussing agriculture and promoting literacy with kindergarten students at Blue Ridge Elementary School during Ag Literacy Day on March 25.



Photo courtesy of The News Observer