

VIDANT DUPLIN HOSPITAL



Duplin Hospital Foundation



During nearly the past two years, the persistence of Covid has caused many problems for and changes to the “normal” operations of our daily lives. School closings, job layoffs or furloughs, supply chain disruptions, working from home—all of these and more have disrupted our lives, making the need for hope more crucial.

In Duplin County, one of the most acute needs caused by Covid is providing food to food-insecure residents. Fortunately, the county has several non-profits and volunteer groups that continue to work hard to address this need. Some of these groups are recipients of grant funding from Vidant Duplin’s Community Benefits Program grants (CBP).

One of the many partnerships Vidant Duplin has developed through the CBP has been with the Food Bank of Central & Eastern North Carolina. Operating since 1980, the Food Bank serves 34 counties in central and eastern North Carolina, working with partners throughout the region both to obtain and to distribute food to the individuals and families that are most in need.

In Duplin County, the Food Bank works with ten distribution partners—principally food pantries, churches, and other charitable volunteer-based groups. Duplin County, with a population of 58,967, has a high rate of food insecurity. The latest figures indicate 9,740 residents (14%) are food insecure. Even more concerning, 3,560 (25%) are children under age 18. Ninety-two percent (9,086) of school children receive free/reduced school meals.

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Through its extensive networks, the Food Bank can benefit from high volume to make its operations very efficient. It delivers five meals for every dollar donated, so 97% of donated funds goes directly to provide food to needy people, with only 3% going to administration and fundraising.

The impacts of school closings and job losses because of Covid have greatly increased the needs for food for many Duplin families during the past year. The Food Bank calculates increased demand at 38%. In response, through local partners they have delivered 1.7 million pounds of food, equaling 1.4 million meals.

In some areas of Duplin, the lasting impacts of Hurricane Florence also continue to exacerbate food insecurity for many Duplin families. Duplin Christian Outreach Ministries (DCOM) is a major partner with the Food Bank and is also a grant recipient of Vidant Duplin's CBP, funded for disaster recovery as well as food assistance. Located in an area of Duplin hard hit by Florence, they continue to assist families with their food needs while also helping them rebuild from Florence.

With more than 1871 houses and 1240 mobile homes sustaining significant wind and flood damage, many of these residents have not yet been able to repair or return to their homes, even three years after the hurricane. Much recovery work has been slowed because of Covid's impact, which has hampered getting building materials and workers, as well as making it difficult to safely host and house volunteer relief workers.

DCOM, like several other faith-based organizations assisted by Vidant Duplin's CBP, addresses child hunger through its backpack ministry program, working through the public schools and the Food Bank to send weekend and summer meals to families dependent on school meal programs. In Duplin, with 63% of students relying on school meals, the continuation of these programs during Covid shutdowns has been crucial.

Without the food supplies and assistance provided by the Food Bank, the efforts of DCOM and other partner organizations in Duplin County to address these food shortage needs would be significantly diminished. But with their help, the needs of many families continue to be met, and their hope kept alive.

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(Oct. 1, 2020-Sept. 30, 2021)

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