“We couldn’t get ahead,” says Bre, a shift manager for a national fast food chain. “I didn’t want to admit we needed help, but kids and power and water, and the bills begin to add up.” Bre and her husband Brian vividly remember the difficult year they experienced when Brian was between jobs. In addition to their three children, they were caring for Bre’s nephew as well.

Bre and Brian’s family received help they desperately needed by enrolling in SNAP benefits and receiving groceries from an Atlanta Community Food Bank partner agency. At partner agencies and community organizations across our service area, Food Bank benefit screeners enrolled 4,000 households in SNAP last year, helping to connect families like Bre and Brian’s with a resource far greater than charitable food programs alone can provide.

After Brian found a new job, the couple stopped receiving SNAP and groceries from the pantry. “I was relieved because we didn’t need the help anymore,” said Brian. They started volunteering at the pantry on Wednesday nights, and they also made a special cash donation once they could afford it. “Even if it’s your time, money or food, it helps someone more than you realize,” said Bre. “Our hope for the future is to inspire others to give back.”

**The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – SNAP**

Also known as “food stamps,” SNAP is the single most important tool we have for making sure every person in America has enough to eat. Families, veterans, people with disabilities, and senior citizens need to turn to this flexible benefit when their income is not high enough to afford all of their basic needs. In Georgia, SNAP reached about 1.7 million people last year. That’s 1 in 6 Georgians.

Source: Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, 2016.
SNAP is designed to respond quickly and effectively to support low-income families and communities during times of increased need. Enrollment expands when the economy weakens and contracts when the economy recovers and poverty declines. In this way, SNAP helps people to bridge temporary periods of unemployment or a family crisis. Each year from 2009 to 2012, while families were dealing with the impact of the Great Recession, SNAP was estimated to lift 340,000 Georgians, including 163,000 children, above the federal poverty line.

SNAP Lifts People Out of Poverty

SNAP INCOME ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Size</th>
<th>Monthly income</th>
<th>Yearly income</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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*Other factors are also used to determine SNAP eligibility including assets and certain household expenses. Source: GA Department of Family and Children Services, 2016.

SNAP Has Long Term Benefits for Children

SNAP benefits are granted to “households,” or groups of people who live and prepare food together. Of all the households that received SNAP in Georgia last year, 7 in 10 included children.

Of all Georgia children ages 0–18, roughly one third are enrolled in SNAP at any given time. Children with access to SNAP fare better years later. The chart below shows the percentage-point change in outcomes for adults who receive SNAP as children, compared to adults who did not receive SNAP as children.

Kids with SNAP had fewer health problems and better educational outcomes.

7 in 10 GA HOUSEHOLDS THAT RECEIVED SNAP INCLUDED ONE OR MORE CHILDREN

Source: Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, 2016.

“I’ve really come full circle from a user of our program to a full time staff member for a great nutrition organization.”

— Rachael

“Every day was devoted to job hunting,” Rachael says. “I didn’t want my educational investment to go to waste.” Rachael and Dallas met while she was completing her Master’s degree in Public Health at Emory University. After graduating, she secured a position as Farmers Market Manager at a community center. In 2012, Rachael’s job ended due to a lack of funding. Shortly after, Dallas was laid off and Rachael’s first student loan payments were due. The couple had to decide whether to buy groceries or pay their bills.

They applied for SNAP and received $220 per month for six months. They grew vegetables on their back porch and visited local farmers markets to double the value of their SNAP benefits. “I never thought I would find myself on the receiving end of food assistance, with a Master’s degree,” Rachael says. “It was just as hard finding blue collar jobs as to find one in my profession.” Ultimately, Rachael landed a job with the 2-for-1 nonprofit program that helped her. “I’ve really come full circle from a user of our program to a full time staff member for a great nutrition organization.”

SNAP is Important for Georgia

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) administers SNAP. The federal government pays 100 percent of the SNAP program “benefits”—this is the money that actually pays for food. Federal and state governments share the cost of program managers and case worker salaries, each contributing 50%. In Georgia, the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) administers the program.

SNAP benefits pumped about $2.7 billion into Georgia’s economy in 2016. SNAP purchases were made at approximately 10,200 approved retail locations.

Source: Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, 2016.

SNAP is Efficient and Effective

The program’s design allows SNAP to respond quickly to changing need levels and disasters. For example, states can provide emergency SNAP within a matter of days to help victims of flooding, tornados and other disasters purchase food. SNAP also has one of the most rigorous quality control systems of any public benefit program.

Partnerships with organizations like the Atlanta Community Food Bank help to assure that applicants provide all relevant documentation at the outset, allowing DFCS case workers to focus on eligibility determination and enrollment.

“How far back do you want me to go?” said Ben, laughing. “I can’t remember a time when I wasn’t involved in community work.” At age 83, Ben volunteers with the Fulton County Commission on Elderly Affairs, the Georgia AARP and Neighborhood Planning Unit 8 for the City of Atlanta. He also spends time encouraging fellow seniors to enroll in the SNAP program.

A Korean War veteran and former technology worker, Ben moved to Atlanta in 1999. “I made it a point that when I retired from Jet Propulsion Laboratory, I would find senior housing,” he said, noting the importance of a predictable rent schedule. “I knew that I was going to stay active. With my housing, Social Security and the food stamp program, I don’t have to worry about a salary, so long as I leave within my means.”

Ben receives $16 per month in SNAP benefits. “About the amount: if people want to say that that’s too miniscule an amount for them to apply for, they will have a sit-down conversation with me,” he said. “Let’s do some math here… if somebody gave you sixteen times twelve… basically two hundred dollars, why are you going to refuse it?” He mentions the farmer’s market program he uses where SNAP recipients can purchase fresh fruits and vegetables on a two-for-one basis. “I can use SNAP to bolster me as I try to help others.”

SNAP’s fundamental purpose is to help low-income families, the elderly, and people with disabilities afford an adequate diet.

SNAP is Heavily Focused on the Very Poor

About 93 percent of SNAP benefits go to households with incomes below the federal poverty line. 53 percent go to households whose income is less than half of the federal poverty line, or about $10,080 annually for a family of three in 2016. SNAP does a good job of reaching people in need: 89 percent of eligible individuals participated in SNAP in Georgia and 74 of eligible working people participated.

Source: Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, 2016.

Too many households in Georgia struggle to put food on the table. At the Atlanta Community Food Bank, we advocate for the SNAP program because we believe people should have access to the nutritious meals they need, when they need them.