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NEW JERSEY FOOD BANKS HELD INAUGURAL FEEDING NEW JERSEY STATEWIDE CONFERENCE  
*Local food assistance organizations came together for networking, speakers, and peer-to-peer discussions*

LAWRENCEVILLE, NJ —June 13, 2023

On Thursday, June 8, the Community FoodBank of New Jersey (CFBNJ), Food Bank of South Jersey, Fulfill, Mercer Street Friends, and Norwescap hosted Feeding New Jersey 2023, the state's first conference on food insecurity for food pantries, soup kitchens, and other local food assistance organizations. Nearly 300 representatives from more than 145 nonprofits across the state attended the conference, which was held at Rider University.

Feeding New Jersey 2023 gave participants a chance to connect with other organizations, learn about best practices to increase capacity and effectiveness, and collaborate for hunger-relief. The schedule included an advocacy panel with all five food bank CEOs, a welcome address by New Jersey Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin and Director of the New Jersey Office of the Food Security Advocate Mark Dinglasan, peer-to-peer discussions, a networking lunch, a town hall on operational excellence, and closing remarks from Claire Babineaux-Fontenot, CEO of Feeding America.

"This event built on the progress we've made together to fight food insecurity. We have changed the conversation on hunger, in no small part because of coalitions like this," said New Jersey Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin. "Food banks, experts, and advocates have shared their wisdom and strengthened our state's resolve to alleviate hunger and find long-term solutions."

Peer-to-peer sessions featured discussions with food bank representatives on communications, grant writing, nutrition, SNAP outreach, volunteering, and succession planning. Afterwards, attendees spoke about the value of the engaging and educational event.

"As a Fulfill partner, I am very aware of how we benefit from working together with our food bank. I was honored to help plan this inaugural conference," said Geralyn Fraggetta-Drury, Executive Director of Freehold Open Door. "I knew it would be beneficial to bring feeding agencies from across the state together, but I never imagined how wonderful it would be! The innovation, dedication, creativity, passion, heart, and support that we share is simply amazing. We are stronger together and, one-by-one, we can make sure the voices of the families we serve are heard. I am excited to work as a cohesive group dedicated to ending hunger."

The five New Jersey food banks plan to host Feeding New Jersey annually to strengthen the partnership among the state's network of food assistance organizations in pursuit of a hunger-free Garden State.

"This first-ever event brought together a statewide network of organizations with a common goal – to end food insecurity in New Jersey," said Joe Dempsey, Interim CEO at the Community FoodBank of New Jersey. "When we share our knowledge and resources, we can amplify our impact to make a real and lasting difference for our neighbors in need. I'm proud of what we accomplished together at Feeding New Jersey 2023, and I look forward to further strengthening these partnerships in the future."

“Our pantry partners are so vital to our organizations and the work we are doing collectively to create a hunger-free New Jersey,” said Fred Wasiak, President & CEO of the Food Bank of South Jersey. “Deeply embedded in our communities, our pantry leaders are on the forefront of serving our neighbors. Their voices are integral to our operations, and this conference is a tremendous opportunity for them to share ideas and connect with colleagues from across the state.”

“After having to take a pandemic pause on our annual feeding network conference at the Jersey Shore, we are so excited to come back from COVID with a conference that’s statewide,” said Triada Stampas, President & CEO of Fulfill. “We always learn so much from bringing our feeding partners together, and as expected, the conference was a great experience for everyone who attended. We are all committed to the same mission, and it was a great day of sharing and learning from one another.”

“Mercer Street Friends has become a more focused and forward-thinking organization in recent years. The opportunity to share successes and challenges with our peers across the state enhances the work we do and helps us be a better neighbor, said Bernie Flynn, CEO of Mercer Street Friends. “Together with a strong network of local partners, we’re consciously bringing new resources and making impactful investments so that families aren’t having to make difficult choices around basic needs.”

“Feeding New Jersey 2023 was the first-of-its-kind gathering of organizations dedicated to ending food insecurity in our state. The conference provided a powerful platform for sharing knowledge, resources, and best practices, amplifying our impact and bringing us one step closer to a hunger-free New Jersey,” said Mark Valli, CEO of Norwescap. “At Norwescap, we understand that access to nutritious food is crucial for the health and well-being of individuals and families. Through our advocacy work and programs like Women Infants Children (WIC) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) outreach, we strive to address the intersection of nutrition, health, and food security. Together, we can make a real and lasting difference for our neighbors in need, ensuring that no one in New Jersey goes to bed hungry. With continued support, we are transforming lives and empowering communities.”

[Click here](#) to download photos and b-roll of the conference.

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#### **ABOUT THE COMMUNITY FOODBANK OF NEW JERSEY**

*[The Community FoodBank of New Jersey \(CFBNJ\)](#), a member of Feeding America®, has been delivering food, help, and hope across the state for more than 45 years. Last year, CFBNJ provided nutritious food for over 85 million meals through its network of more than 800 community partners including pantries, soup kitchens, emergency shelters, mobile pantries, and child and senior feeding programs, serving 11 New Jersey counties directly and four in partnership with affiliate organizations. For our hungry neighbors, the Community FoodBank of New Jersey is the powerful agent of change that fills the emptiness caused by hunger and provides resources that are essential to earning a sustainable living.*

#### **ABOUT FOOD BANK OF SOUTH JERSEY**

*The Food Bank of South Jersey believes that no one should go to bed hungry. Since 1985, it has served the children, families and seniors of Burlington, Camden, Gloucester and Salem counties by distributing safe and healthy food, providing nutrition education and cooking course, and developing sustainable pathways for neighbors to improve their lives. A 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and member of Feeding America, FBSJ distributed 15 million meals in 2022, through direct distributions and its network of more than 200 partner agencies. For more information, visit [FoodBankSJ.org](#).*

#### **ABOUT FULFILL FOOD BANK**

*Fulfill has been providing food for families at the Jersey Shore for more than thirty years. We supply over 1.1 million meals each month by distributing food to nearly 300 feeding agencies in Monmouth and Ocean Counties, including soup kitchens, food pantries, and shelters, and by delivering food to families, children, seniors, veterans, and more.*

*Fulfill also offers a suite of programs to connect people to the resources they need to become self-sufficient. Our team assists with applications for SNAP, affordable health care, and Medicaid. They also help with affordable housing*

applications, budgeting and money management, utility expenses, and senior services. To learn more about our programs or how to get involved, visit [www.fulfillnj.org](http://www.fulfillnj.org).

### **ABOUT MERCER STREET FRIENDS**

*As a Quaker-affiliated, nonsectarian 501(c)(3) organization, Mercer Street Friends is dedicated to nourishing minds and bodies, empowering families and communities by providing comprehensive programs to address poverty and the physical and emotional trauma it creates for children, families and the community. Our programs focus on: food, families and education.*

*As the primary source of government and privately donated food, Mercer Street Friends Food Bank leads the community response to hunger in Mercer County. In 2020, the Food Bank channeled more than 5.5 million pounds of food to a network of more than 100 food pantries, shelters, school districts, soup kitchens, meal sites, senior centers, programs for the disabled and low-income housing sites. Throughout the year, Mercer Street Friends served over 100,000 individuals, providing 50,000 weekend Community Food Bags, totaling 800,000 weekend meals to families throughout the County.*

### **ABOUT NORWESCAP**

*Norwescap's work throughout New Jersey empowers thousands of individuals and families to move away from the crisis of poverty, and toward a future where they can thrive. Our comprehensive array of services helps people address immediate needs as well as build resiliency for long-term success. From Head Start centers to adult education scholarships; from our Food Bank distributing to a network of more than 100 food pantries, shelters, soup kitchens, on-site feeding programs, childcare centers, senior centers, and programs for the disabled to nutritional support through WIC and SNAP; from financial capacity building and free tax prep to matched savings for a family's first home or car, every Norwescap program offers an opportunity to move forward. Altogether, our mission positively impacts the lives of over 30,000 individuals each year. To learn more, visit [Norwescap.org](http://Norwescap.org) or follow us on Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, and YouTube.*