

## AT A GLANCE

1 in 4 children in Coastal Georgia are at-risk for hunger, according to America's Second Harvest of the Coastal Empire. Just outside one of the nation's largest Historic Districts, our Savannah neighbors are choosing between rent and food for their families. In 2017, the YMCA of Coastal Georgia launched Fresh Express, a monthly produce distribution program to provide additional access to nutritious foods to healthy food priority areas within our community. With an increase in participation and a growing need for access points, Fresh Express expanded to a second distribution site in July 2019.

The additional distribution location provided access on both the East and West sides of Savannah each month and increased the average number of people served to 204 individuals.



## APPROACH

In July 2017, in response to an increase of food poverty in the downtown Savannah community, the YMCA of Coastal Georgia launched a monthly fresh produce and bread distribution program, Fresh Express. Local economic data and a partnership with local public health clinic, Curtis V. Cooper Primary Health, the Y selected an east-side distribution site that provided both car and walking access for participants.

In July 2019 an increase in need initiated the expansion of Fresh Express to include a west side site. With a high senior population and limited transportation options, an accessible, community -centered location was needed to reach some of the vulnerable populations including seniors and children.

## PUBLIC HEALTH CHALLENGE

In our Coastal Georgia community, 137,410 residents live with food insecurity, according to data from Feeding America's 2017 Map the Meal Gap. Recent research surrounding the global health crisis projects that 19% of Georgia residents will experience food insecurity due to the stress and economic strain of our current climate in 2020.

According to the 2018 U.S. Census Bureau, Georgia is one of nine states exhibiting statistically significant higher household food insecurity rates than the national average. In downtown Savannah, 54.4% of the population is African American. African American households face hunger at a rate of more than twice that of a white or non-Hispanic household. Fresh Express provides two crucial, non-invasive access points for residents.

**“Fresh Express has proven to be a good community partner in a particularly scarce time. The care and dedication of their team was genuinely felt throughout the Greater Westside of Savannah. Thank you, Fresh Express, for your healthy intervention.”**

*- Bernetta Lanier  
District 1 Alderwoman*

## RESULTS

In the two years, Fresh Express provided 17,518 pounds of fresh food to the East Side community. With an average of 120 people served monthly at the initial location, a second distribution site was launched on the West Side of Savannah in July 2019. Through the support of the REACH grant and using data to determine healthy food priority areas, Fresh Express was able to expand to a new west side location. The new location was selected for the increased accessibility for the vulnerable senior population.

Expanding to add a second site has increased the average monthly reach to 205 people. Additionally, Fresh Express serves an average of 64 senior households each month which is nearly double the 37 served with only one location.

## SUSTAINING SUCCESS

While procurement procedures adjusted to the COVID-19 health crisis, Fresh Express was the recipient of a generous grant from Georgia Organics providing emergency funding for fresh produce during the pandemic closure. These funds enabled Fresh Express to purchase 2,800 pounds of food for distribution during the State of Georgia Shelter in place order in 2020. As the need for access to fresh foods grows, we are actively seeking a third Fresh Express distribution site to launch in 2021.

## FIND OUT MORE

To learn more about the YMCA's Fresh Express program, please visit [www.ymcaofcoastalga.org/freshexpress](http://www.ymcaofcoastalga.org/freshexpress). For more information regarding all of the REACH programs Nutrition programs, view our video here:

<https://www.facebook.com/135287093182859/videos/1532278217149604/>.

This project is supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health cooperative agreement (1814).

## CONTACT

Deidre Grim, PhD, MPP, MURP  
REACH Nutrition Program Manager  
6400 Habersham St.  
Savannah, GA 31405  
P: 912. 438.0161

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
<http://nccd.cdc.gov/nccdsuccessstories/>

The findings and conclusions in this success story are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official position of the funding agencies or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

