

## **Atlanta Community Food Bank**

### **Purpose of the Organization/ Program**

The mission of the Atlanta Community Food Bank (ACFB) is to educate, engage, and empower the community to fight hunger. Founded in 1979, the ACFB currently distributes over four million pounds of food and other donated grocery items each month through a network of more than 600 nonprofit partner agencies in 29 counties in Metro Atlanta and Northern Georgia.

In doing so, the ACFB supports a wide range of people in need, from children to the working poor. Food pantries, community kitchens, childcare centers, night shelters, and senior centers are among the wide variety of agencies that receive products from the Food Bank and in turn directly provide food and other critical resources to low-income Georgians who suffer from hunger and food insecurity. The Food Bank also operates several community projects to aid agencies in community building, technical assistance, and advocacy efforts.

One of these projects, the Community Gardening Initiative, unites neighbors and communities to aid the Food Bank in accomplishing its mission through nearly 375 gardens in the Atlanta area. Each garden brings neighbors together and empowers people to supplement and enrich their food supply by growing it themselves. Community gardening also stimulates social interaction, encourages self-reliance, beautifies neighborhoods, and produces nutritious foods, all while reducing family dietary budgets. While each garden is an autonomous neighborhood-based effort where friends share work and responsibility, the Atlanta Community Food Bank provides gardening expertise, volunteer help, tools, seeds, and more.

### **Community Gardening Summer Intern Expectations/Responsibilities of the Position**

The Community Garden Summer Intern works directly with the Food Bank's Community Garden Manager on a number of projects, including the following:

- Assisting with 3-5 community garden volunteer shifts per week, where 8-30 volunteers assemble to complete a 3-hour project in one of the several community gardens in the Metro Atlanta area.
- Managing the Plant-A-Row-For-the-Hungry Campaign by reaching out to supporters of the program via phone and email, collecting data, and keeping a record of the contact information of donating gardens and recipient organizations.
- Completing a comprehensive orientation of all the Atlanta Community Food Bank programs and projects, including agency visits; truck distribution ride-alongs; Hunger 101; Mobile Food Pantry visits; and Product Rescue Center volunteer shifts.
- Distributing harvests to low-income families via the Atlanta Mobile Market, a Farmer's Market geared towards providing fresh, healthy food options to the low-income areas in Metro Atlanta.

### **Preparation**

For more information please visit [www.acfb.org](http://www.acfb.org) and/or watch <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FOgx0QLx7hA>

## **Qualifications**

The Community Garden Summer Internship requires the wearing of several different hats. Some recommended qualifications are as follows:

- Willingness to serve 25+ hours per week outside in in gardening-related activities.
- An interest in gardening and/or learning about urban agriculture and community organization is key.
- Basic computer skills and public speaking skills are a plus, as some aspects of this position include capturing information and recording it in excel spreadsheets and engaging volunteers to learn more about the issues of hunger and poverty in the community.

## **Working Conditions**

- 20-25 hours each week will be outside in gardens or at local farmer's markets, and 8-10 hours per week may be engaged in office-type activity. The remaining time may include interacting with volunteers who visit the food bank (providing tours, Hunger 101 question and answer or other such interactions).
- Transportation from the Food Bank to the sites is available but students with their own transportation may find that helpful as the position may visit many parts of metro Atlanta during this internship.
- The ability to lift and haul moderate to heavy weight (up to 50 pounds) is required.
- Since much of the work involved with this position is outside and digging in the dirt, it is recommended that interns wear clothing suitable for this activity. Outside of the garden, the Food Bank is a business casual work environment.
- Some Saturday mornings may be needed. If so, the weekday schedule will be adjusted accordingly.

## **On-Site Mentor/Supervisor**

*Fred Conrad, Community Garden Manager*

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*Queie Barnett, Human Resources Manager*

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## **Supervision Plan**

The Community Garden summer intern works directly with the Community Garden Manager on a daily basis. Monthly check-ins with the Human Resources Manager and meeting with other staff during the internship tenure are appropriate as needed.

- Internship Synopsis

Probably the most conclusive insight I learned from interning at the Atlanta Community Food Bank was simply how much sheer teamwork is required to maintain a large nonprofit organization. The work I did only scratched the surface of what goes on at the ACFB. While I helped to coordinate volunteers and harvest, wash, and pack produce as part of the Community Gardens Initiative at the ACFB, there are other entire groups of people at the Food Bank that pick up food donations from places like Wal-Mart or BJ's; load the pallets of food into the vehicles of recipient organizations; manage the contact information of 600 recipient agencies; coordinate volunteers in the Product Rescue Center or any of the other six ACFB projects; and direct the 100+ employees of the actual organization, among many, many other tasks. Physically, the twin warehouses that comprise the ACFB's campus are massive, but the hearts of the people who work at the organization itself are even larger.

That said, don't be afraid to take initiative and explore other parts of the ACFB when you're not working in the gardens or on Plant-A-Row. In fact, Fred will encourage you to do so. Feel free to sit in on a monthly staff meeting, but beware that you may either be asked to stand and introduce yourself or be brought to delighted laughter when one of the employees pulls out his harmonica during the meeting and plays "Happy Birthday" to those who have summer birthdays. Send an email to Daniel to confirm a seat on a truck ride-along, but be forewarned that others will tell you to wear two seatbelts when riding with either Bavone or Nitasha. (Not to worry, though: one seatbelt is fine. Just don't nod off mid-ride.) Also, volunteering at a Product Rescue Center shift is a great way to gain extra AmeriCorps hours if you fall behind. Just be prepared to bond with diverse groups of people over why peanut butter is categorized as a "Food" but jellies and jams are categorized as "Condiments". Share stories with Carlito and Erin. Get to know the volunteers during the brief times you are working with them. Enjoy random conversations with Fred in the van while driving to a garden or in the office while cleaning garlic or shelling black-eyed peas. Community gardening is as much about the people as it is about the food, and the people who work at and with the ACFB have a lot to say if you're willing to listen.

The same goes for living in Atlanta: don't be afraid to take initiative and go out to explore either on your own or with the other Shepherd interns. Although having a car would be ideal, it isn't necessary, as Atlanta does have MARTA, it's own public transportation system. If you plan carefully, the trains and buses combined will take you to within a block of the Food Bank. If you plan on using MARTA regularly, get the month BreezeCard. Though it is expensive, it's by far and large the best deal when it comes to the trial and error that is learning your way around MARTA. Also, be patient, bring a good book, and take advantage of Emory's free Cliff shuttle service. Mastering public transportation is something worth feeling proud about. You can do it.

Regarding food, Atlanta has hundreds of dining options. A Publix and a Rainbow Natural Foods are a short walk from Emory's campus, and the plastic bags you'll get make great trash bags for your apartment. The Dekalb Farmer's Market and the Green Market in Piedmont Park on Saturday mornings are also two excellent and relatively inexpensive options for fresh produce, and Little Five Points also has some great dining options, not to

mention some incredibly quirky street culture. If you're looking for a true taste of the South, set aside some of your stipend and visit Mary Mac's. The moderately-priced food is superb, and – if you're lucky – you'll get a free back rub from Jo Turner, the restaurant's own Goodwill Administrator.

Finally, bring mosquito spray, sunscreen, light clothes, and a pair or two of old jeans. You will come home dirty and sweaty, but there are washers and dryers in the apartments. Also, bring along an extra set of clothes to work each day. Bring lots of socks, a large sunhat, and sunglasses. Also, Emory has a pool, a gym, and plenty of excellent running trails. Plan accordingly, but pack conservatively. Atlanta is known for its heat and bugs, and you won't get away from either during the internship. However, the South as a whole is also known for its hospitality, and you'll find plenty of that wherever you go. Don't be afraid to return the favor. You'll sweat, and you'll get dirty. But you'll learn quite a bit, and that's what this experience is all about.