

Donation Station provides local food to the insecure

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Meghan Lassiter

Guest columnist Donation Station was created with one mission in mind: bridge the gap between the availability of fresh local food and those who are in need. Donation Station was started by Farmer Foodshare, an organization based out of Durham, N.C., that is committed to reshaping the disconnected food system. They achieve this goal by removing barriers to growing and accessing local food. 'Our approach to hunger is what makes us unique as an organization. From the beginning, we have been committed to addressing both sides of the problem, small farmers struggling to stay in business, and disadvantaged populations who lack access to fresh and nutritious food.'

There are currently about 40 Donation Stations around the state that are run by volunteers and set up at various farmers' markets. In 2018, Donation Stations across North Carolina donated over 51,400 pounds of fresh, local food. NC Cooperative Extension has partnered with Farmer Foodshare to bring Donation Station to New Hanover County. Our staff at the New Hanover and Brunswick County Extension offices, alongside our Extension Master Food Volunteers, run a table at the Wilmington Farmers Market at Tidal Creek. Donations are accepted on the first and third Saturdays of each month. All donations are taken to Mother Hubbard's Cupboard in downtown Wilmington after the market and distributed to their clients. The Wilmington Farmers Market at Tidal Creek is open year-round on Saturdays 8 a.m.-1 p.m. and is located at 5329 Oleander Drive # 00, Wilmington, NC 28403.

This is where you, the community members, come in. Farmers market shoppers can help Donation Station by choosing to donate fresh produce they buy at the market or by donating cash to our table. The

cash is then used to buy produce from the farmers and all donations and purchased produce are taken to the food pantry. This not only supports local farmers around New Hanover County and surrounding areas, but also expands access to fresh, local, and nutritious foods to the food insecure neighbors. According to Feeding America, both New Hanover and Brunswick County have a food insecurity rate of around 14%.

Donation Station in New Hanover County, on average, takes in about \$150 in cash donations and donates about 50 pounds of produce each time we set up at the market. With more interest and volunteers, we are hoping to expand Donation Station to other markets in Brunswick County and extend the hours to cover each week at the Wilmington Farmers Market at Tidal Creek.

For more information on how you can donate, volunteer at the Donation Station booth, or for any other questions contact Meghan Lassiter, Family & Consumer Science Agent, meghan-lassiter@ncsu.edu, or call our office 910-253-2610.

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