



Media Release

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One Year Ago, a Food Bank Turned Away Junk Food – Here’s What Happened

WASHINGTON, DC, August 11 –The results are in: One year after the Capital Area Food Bank [announced a ground-breaking decision to stop accepting junk food](#) from grocery donors, its food is measurably healthier than before:

- 84% less junk: The CAFB distributed 143,000 fewer pounds of snacks and cookies in the fiscal year ending July 2017 versus the prior year.
- More protein: The CAFB provided 366,000 more pounds of milk, yogurt, and other dairy items (+26% year over year), as well as 542,000 more pounds of beans and other vegetarian protein (+57% year over year).
- Improved overall nutritional content: 84% of the CAFB’s food currently meets the organization’s rigorous standards for salt, sugar and fiber, up from 69% that met the criteria in 2015.

“I used to get a bin of candy from the CAFB. Since they made this decision, I haven’t been getting that anymore. The CAFB has made me realize how important it is to give not just bags of food, but nutritious food,” said Jasmine Ramsay of Pennsylvania Avenue Seventh Day Adventist Church, one of the food bank’s 444 food assistance partner non-profits which serves neighbors in Capitol Heights, MD.

“Without a doubt, the Food Bank’s work decreases the likelihood of heart disease and diabetes in the men, women and even children we serve,” said Nancy E. Roman, CEO of the Capital Area Food Bank.

The non-profit has reported fundraising up 22 percent year-over-year since eliminating junk food, signaling public backing for this health-focused innovation. It has retained relationships with its twelve grocery retail donors.

“We in the retail industry recognize that our customers want to eat smarter,” said Gordon Reid, President of Giant Food. “The partnership with the Food Bank has helped us meet that customer demand and it has stretched us in a positive way.”

Roman said many organizations, including the CAFB, are adding produce to their distributions, but few are actually rejecting bakery items.

“And as anyone with a diabetic in their family knows, eliminating the bad stuff is as important as adding in the good,” said Roman, whose mother is diabetic.

Roman, who has accepted a [job as CEO of Michelle Obama’s Partnership for a Healthier America](#), says she will work to leverage and expand on the Food Bank’s work as they call on more food banks to follow the CAFB’s leadership.

“The Food Bank is modeling a shift that if followed nationally, will lead to a step increase in food quality for the nation’s low income families,” Roman said. “That is just one important step toward equity.”

The national attention has attracted not only interest from other food banks, but also new partners. The Houston-based non-profit Brighter Bites reached out to the CAFB following the announcement, resulting in an innovative in-school partnership that will launch this fall. “When we heard about the CAFB’s trailblazing

approach to providing good food, we knew we had found the right partner to launch with in the mid-Atlantic to continue our mission of creating communities of health through fresh food,” said Brighter Bites founder Lisa Helfman.

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About the Capital Area Food Bank: *The Capital Area Food Bank is the largest organization in the Washington metro area working to solve hunger and its companion problems: chronic undernutrition, heart disease and obesity. By partnering with nearly 450 community organizations in DC, Maryland and Virginia, as well as delivering food directly into hard to reach areas, the CAFB is helping 540,000 people each year get access to good, healthy food. That’s 12 percent of our region’s mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, sisters, brothers, and grandparents. To learn more, visit: capitalareafoodbank.org, or find the Capital Area Food Bank on Facebook at [facebook.com/CapitalAreaFoodBank](https://www.facebook.com/CapitalAreaFoodBank), and Twitter at [@foodbankmetrodc](https://twitter.com/foodbankmetrodc).*