

# Northern Community Food Security Team

## Meeting Minutes

**Date:** March 10, 2026

**Time:** 11:30 AM – 1:30 PM

**Location:** Wake Forest Town Hall, Meeting Rooms A–B

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## 1. Call to Order – Drew Brown, Jr.

- The Northern Community Food Security Team met to review program updates & share partner activities. All attendees were introduced, welcomed and thanked partners for their continued commitment.
- Highlighted increasing demand across the region and the rising need for unified strategies of coordinated cross-sector collaboration as federal food insecurity funding support decreases.
- Provided the purpose and vision for the first Food Summit on August 26, 2026. Also provided background on its development and intended outcomes.

## 2. Food Security Program Manager Report – Sydney Klein Mierop

### 2.1 SunMeals Program

- Eligibility requirements reviewed; sites must be in an eligible zone or meet free/reduced lunch thresholds.
- Sponsor: **Food Bank CENC**
  - Application deadline: March 31
  - Service dates: June 1 – August 21
- Sponsor: **WCPSS Child Nutrition Services**
  - Application deadline: April 10
  - Service dates: June 22 – July 21
- Additional forms required for closed sites; inquiries directed to CNS or Maci Davis (maci.davis@wake.gov).

### 2.2 SunBucks Program

- Provides \$120/month per eligible child.
- Parents encouraged to verify address accuracy on FRPL applications.

- Unhoused families will pick up cards at the Raleigh Public Health Building; additional guidance forthcoming.

### **2.3 SunMeals 2 Go**

- Must be in a rural and area-eligible zone.
- Rolesville Baptist expressed interest; WCPSS seeking two sites.
- Food Bank CENC exploring a site at Wendell Parks & Recreation.

### **2.4 Community Engagement & Events**

- **Drinking Gourd Gallery – Food for Thought Exhibit**
  - Month of May at Wake Forest Community Library.
  - Panel scheduled for May 20, 6:30–8:30 PM; seeking panelists (chef/entrepreneur, lived-experience representative, farmer, pantry operator, policy expert).
- **June – Hunger Awareness Month**
  - Partnership with Wake County Public Libraries for story times and food drives.
  - June 29, 5:30–7:00 PM: Nonprofit & Business Networking Event (Raleigh, location TBD).

### **2.5 Capacity Building Academy**

- Applications open; two representatives per nonprofit.
- Training dates: April 30 & May 1 at Cooperative Extension, Raleigh.
- Includes three months of 1:1 coaching (12 hours/month).

### **2.6 Capital Area Food Network Updates**

- March 26: Countywide Food Policy Network meeting (virtual).
- April 21: Quarterly Network Meeting at the new Public Health Building.
- April 23: Statewide Regional Gathering (Save the Date).

### **2.7 Youth Food Security Summit**

- Scheduled for September 12, 2026, in Raleigh (location TBD).
- Accepting high-school youth planner applications through April 10.

### **2.8 Additional Program Manager Updates**

- Mini-Pantry Network continues to experience high demand for shelf-stable protein.
- Ongoing planning for June and September awareness months.
- Updates provided on the George Shaw Project; chart to be shared with partners.

## **3. Partner Updates – Round-Robin**

### **3.1 Wake County Northern Regional Center**

- Reported outcomes from January meeting focused on integrating mental wellness into food insecurity initiatives.
- Strategies discussed included social interaction opportunities, healthy cooking classes, outreach to aging adults/veterans/youth, and community garden activities.

### **3.2 Wake Forest Community Table**

- Serving approximately 165 meals on Mondays and Wednesdays.
- Experiencing increased demand; working to incorporate eggs into meals.

### **3.3 W.A.R.M. Café**

- Preparing to become the first pay-what-you-can café in Downtown Wake Forest.
- Aiming to serve 300 meals in April.

### **3.4 NECC Community Garden & Gathering Place**

- Preparing for spring planting.
- SEBTS students helped

### **3.5 Tri-Area Ministry**

- Serving approximately 2,000 families per month.
- Operating 10 days per month.
- Purchasing more food than ever due to increased need.
- Providing roughly 100 pounds of food per family.
- Seeking additional food service partners.

### **3.6 Celebration Church**

- Largest distribution site in Wake County, serving 700+ families on Saturdays.
- Developing a website to help residents locate nearby food pantries.

### **3.7 Additional Partner Highlights**

- Wake Forest Farmers Market updates and upcoming dates.
- North East Wake Backpack Buddies healthier options and growing needs.
- Town of Rolesville wants a Mini-Pantry & planning for Holiday Meals
- Cornerstone Caregiving updates that they would like to partner
- NC Department of Environmental Quality shared grant information

## 4. Food Summit Planning Team Formation – Ross Yeager

- Recommended participants include Town staff, nonprofit partners, business owners, hospital representatives, and individuals with lived experience.
- Planning timeline established for March–August 2026.
- First planning meeting will define roles, expectations, and communication cadence.

### Food Summit Committee Members

- **Ross Yeager** – Wake County Northern Regional Center
- **Sydney Klein Mierop** – Wake County Food Security Program
- **Kristen Stafford** – Town of Rolesville
- **Teresa Paul** – North East Wake Backpack Buddies
- **Mike Burger** – Tri-Area Ministry
- **Drew Brown, Jr.** – Town of Wake Forest
- **Steve Sticklin** – Community Partner / W.A.R.M. & WFCT

## 5. Food Summit Planning Discussion

### A. Purpose & Outcomes

- Priority-setting, data sharing, partner alignment, and community voice.
- Success defined for families (Find Food, Fund Pantry, Feed Family), partners, and the Town.
- Key challenges identified: rising need, reduced federal funding, and gaps in protein access.

### B. Structure & Format

- Considered plenary sessions, breakout groups, panels, and facilitated workshops.
- Discussed including lived-experience speakers, partner showcases, and unmanned resource tables.
- Recommended launching a pre session survey to shape structured conversations

**6. Attendance:** Ross Yeager, Chris Nieto, Kevin Meese, Steve Sticklin, Teresa Paul, Ann Van Cleave, Kristen Stafford, Tilda Caudle, George Shan, Mike Burger, Hannah Stroot, Aaron Witty, Melvin McLawhon, Kiel Ortiz, and others.