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COBB COMMUNITY FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES COBB COMMUNITY FOOD FLEET

New initiative connects businesses and non-profits to procure, store, and distribute food for those in need

ATLANTA (June 1, 2020)—**Cobb Community Foundation (CCF)** is pleased to announce the **Cobb Community Food Fleet**, an initiative where they have brought together Noonday Association, Athena Farms, the Atlanta Braves, Ryder Trucks, S.A. White Oil Company, Mobilized Fuels, and numerous Cobb County non-profits to ensure that lack of storage space does not hinder Cobb non-profits' food distribution efforts to those in need.

This initiative began, unnamed, in mid-March when CCF reached out to United Way of Metro Atlanta - NW Region and Cobb Collaborative to assist in pulling together a group of non-profit, school district and county government leaders to share the challenges each group and their constituencies were facing, make known the resources each group had available, and determine the best path forward to meet needs in Cobb County. The original group, labeled the Cobb Crisis Response Team, began with daily 7:55 a.m. calls on March 23rd which have been slowly whittled down to one call a week. One of the many outcomes resulting from this group's efforts is that in an environment where over 100,000 Cobb Countians have lost their jobs, more than half of them being in the lowest paying industries, Cobb's non-profits are providing boxes of food to over 5,000 families each week.

Howard Koepka of Noonday coordinates the communications among twenty-plus separate organizations distributing food in Cobb County, ranging from MUST Ministries to the two school systems to Cobb Senior Services to smaller organizations such as H.O.P.E. Family Resource Center in Mableton. "Many of these organizations did not know that each other existed," Koepka says. "Now, they not only are aware of each other, they are eliminating duplications of services, identifying and serving areas unserved, and literally sharing food, box trucks and other resources to make sure that everyone in Cobb County has access to food, regardless of whether or not they can pay for it."

One of the greatest challenges facing these organizations is limited access to large quantities of food as a result of the disruption to the supply chain during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the USDA's

new [Farmers to Families Food Box Program](#) has created an abundance of certain foods, primarily produce, which Cobb's food providers want to take full advantage of. The issue, according to Koepka, is storage. "Produce needs to be refrigerated, and no single organization has enough space to accommodate the two and soon three thousand boxes that are now coming in each week from Athena Farms."

[Athena Farms](#), located in Forest Park, is one of over 40 contractors in the South East Region that was awarded funds from the USDA to distribute food boxes. **Jessica Brantley, Director of Purchasing for Athena Farms**, explains why they reached out to Cobb Community Foundation. "We really liked that they are working to help resource non-profit food providers serving Cobb, so working through them is helping to feed much more than just the clients of a single organization." Last week, Athena delivered 2,000 boxes of produce, and even larger shipments will be coming at least through the end of June. As is the case for many farms, Athena's primary customer base is restaurants. "The Farmers to Families Food Box Program has put all of our employees back to work," says Brantley.

"While at least some of the immediate food shortage challenges have been resolved, we had to resolve the storage issue if food was going to make its way to those who need it," says **Shari Martin, President and CEO of Cobb Community Foundation**. "Our mission statement includes the phrase, connecting donors who care with causes that matter." She continues, "The **Atlanta Braves** stepped up to provide the refrigeration space that avails all of Cobb's non-profit food providers of the produce coming in, at a time when members of our community need it most."

The one remaining need, however, was to be able to accommodate the scarcest item of all right now: meat. Poultry, pork, beef and fish all require a freezer, and the Atlanta Braves' storage space was already full. What was not full, however, was their loading dock. Enter **Kim Gresh, owner of S.A. White Oil Company and Cobb Community Foundation board member**. "So many of our customers want to help right now, so we reached out to one that we knew would want to be involved." Enter **Huddle House** and one of their vendors, **Ryder Trucks**. Ryder has made available a 53' freezer container and trailer which Huddle House transported to the stadium. Alongside was **Mobilized Fuels**, S.A. White's sister company, that will provide the diesel fuel needed to keep the freezer running between now and the end of August.

Over these next two months, **Noonday** will be coordinating the logistics of food delivery by Athena Farms and other providers and the subsequent pick-up by five of the larger food non-profits:

MUST Ministries, Storehouse Ministries, Reflections of Trinity, Sweetwater Mission, and Family Life Restoration Center. These organizations will be picking up food not for their clients, but also for other smaller non-profit food providers. The involvement of the for-profit community, the non-profit community, and even the local and Federal governments to provide, store and deliver food throughout Cobb made Cobb Community Food Fleet the ideal name for the initiative.

In the meantime, Cobb Community Foundation continues to identify resources, financial and otherwise, to help feed Cobb. “Thanks to the Cobb Board of Commissioners grant of \$1 million for food last month,” notes Martin, “these organizations will be able to purchase additional food needed in bulk.” Martin says this will allow the non-profits greater access and preferred pricing. “And thanks to these great partners, we’ll have a place to store it.”

Frozen meat and canned and dry goods remain in demand. There is one more item on her wish list for Cobb’s non-profit food providers. “With the volume being what it is, there’s now a need for a refrigerated box truck.” She says that this is just another example of an opportunity to connect donors who care with causes that matter.

Learn more by contacting Shari Martin at shari@cobbfoundation.org, or by visiting www.cobbfoundation.org.

About Cobb Community Foundation

In 1993, a group of Cobb business leaders recognized the community's need for a vehicle to invest in its future and created Cobb Community Foundation. We are a 501(c)(3) organization that uses the power of charitable giving and our role as community convener and catalyst to improve the quality of life in Cobb County and beyond. We are living our mission every day by inspiring charitable giving, building resources for the future and connecting donors who care with causes that matter. To learn more, email CCFTeam@cobbfoundation.org or visit www.cobbfoundation.org.