

bestcause

Healthy Food, Strong Communities

For many people, shopping at a nearby grocery store or farmers market is just a part of the weekly routine. These people have the time, transportation and resources to purchase whatever food they want for their families, including healthy, fresh options. But for many others – nearly two million in Georgia, according to the Atlanta Regional Commission – food shopping looks very different. These Georgians are stuck in food deserts with access only to fast food restaurants and convenience stores with few healthy options.

To combat this problem, Georgia Food Oasis came together 18 months ago. This organization is a collaboration between more than 40 existing groups such as Atlanta Community Food Bank, The Atlanta Mobile Market, The Captain Planet Foundation, Fulton Fresh, Georgia Food Bank Association, Georgia Organics and many more, all focused on changing those deserts into places of abundance. Cicely Garrett, the Food Systems Innovation Manager for Atlanta Community Food Bank, explains, "We chose Food Oasis for our name because we wanted to change the conversation. Instead of focusing on what is not, focus on what could be: innovative solutions that address access, choice, education, quality and cost."

In a short year and a half, Georgia Food Oasis has made great strides toward those solutions. They partnered with the Atlanta Mobile Market to offer two-for-one value on SNAP benefits (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) used on their

fresh produce, helping to minimize the obstacle of cost. Partner organization Fulton Fresh brought 19 tons of fresh produce to more than 5,000 residents in 16 neighborhoods. Another partner, the Captain Planet Foundation, donated 1,000 pounds of fresh produce grown in 52 Metro Atlanta school gardens.

"We hope that Food Oasis will become an umbrella of integrity and confidence for the fresh and healthy food movement in underserved communities," Garrett says. To join that movement, you can become an individual "Champion" supporter or an organizational "Partner." Attend their bi-monthly meetings at Atlanta Community Food Bank, and visit georgiafoodoasis.org for more details.

