

Together at the Table 2026

Conference Sessions | November 12–13, 2026

Schedule at a Glance

Room	10:30–11:30 a.m.	1:45–2:45 p.m.	3:00–4:00 p.m.	4:15–5:15 p.m.
Hurd A	All Together: Building Collaborative Solutions to College Food Insecurity	From Campus to Capitol: Building Unlikely Coalitions to Advance Hunger-free Campus Policy in Texas	Finding Funds and Friends in Local Government and Heavy Industry	—
Hurd B	Summer Feeding Program Rural Non-congregate Meal Service	School Meals: America's Most Important Public Health Measure	Beyond the Box: A Community Conversation on Reimagining Food Access	Stop Packing Boxes. Start Building Programs: Lessons from Launching a Rural Non-congregate Summer Meals Program
Hurd C	From Research to Action: How Cross-sector Partnerships Can Drive Regional Food System Change	Where Policy, Research, and Practice Meet: Lessons Learned from the Multi-year Double Up Food Bucks Texas Expansion Evaluation	Leaving Markings on the Tree: What a Failed 1860 Expedition Teaches Us About Bridging Food Security Gaps in Texas	Hunger Data Lab: Mapping Texas Summer Meal Data
Hurd Markham Room	Beyond the Volunteer Shift: Designing Community Engagement that Moves People from Exposure to Responsibility	Sustaining Cross-sector Partnerships through a Changing Funding Landscape	Bridging Borders, Building Trust: Lessons from a Binational Food Rescue Partnership	Mapping What Matters: Federated AI for Food Access and Disaster Response
Truett Chapel	Beyond Charity: How Faith-based Partnerships Build Stronger Communities	A Longer Table: Building Coalitions Across Difference to End Hunger	COMIDA! Multi-faith Partnerships to End College Hunger	Call to Feed the Hungry
Truett Great Hall	Hunger Free Communities: Voices from Across Texas	Hunger Free Nacogdoches Sin Hambre: Year One in Review	Bridge the Gap – Beyond the Meal: Building Collaborative Pathways to Food Security	Food is the Beginning of the Conversation—Not the End
Truett Room 107	—	Texans at Every Table Youth Leadership Academy: Building Connected Communities through Youth Leadership	We the People: A Community Table for Dialogue Across Difference	Poverty-Informed Practice: Bridging Division Without Blaming the Poor

Session descriptions and speaker information follow in chronological order.

Thursday, November 12

10:30–11:30 a.m.

All Together: Building Collaborative Solutions to College Food Insecurity

Hurd A | 10:30–11:30 a.m.

College Hunger

College students experiencing food insecurity often face challenges that extend beyond food availability, including gaps in campus systems, limited access to resources, stigma, and policies that can make getting help difficult. This interactive breakout session will feature a 30-minute screening of the documentary *Learning Hungry*, followed by a facilitated panel discussion examining how colleges and communities can move from awareness toward sustainable, systemic solutions.

Guided by the Together at the Table theme, Bridging Division. Advancing Solutions, participants will hear perspectives from students, campus leaders, community partners, and food-security advocates and consider how people with different roles, experiences, and approaches can work toward the shared goal of ensuring students have access to the food they need to flourish. Attendees will leave with practical questions and strategies for strengthening student voice, building cross-sector partnerships, identifying gaps in existing systems, and translating conversations into action on their campuses and in their communities.

Kayla Smith

Kayla Smith is a Psychology major and Child and Family Studies minor at Baylor University with a passion for helping children, families, and communities flourish. Her experience spans behavioral health as a Registered Behavior Technician, peer health education, early childhood research, and community service.

Lochlan Walsh

Lochlan is a University Scholar from Little Rock, Arkansas, in her junior year at Baylor. She is studying Political Science, Philosophy, and Medical Humanities and hopes to pursue a career in public policy after she graduates.

Summer Feeding Program Rural Non-congregate Meal Service

Hurd B | 10:30–11:30 a.m.

Child Nutrition Programs

In this session, we will explore how the East Texas Food Bank operates a high-impact, low-touch rural non-congregate meal service that expands access to nutritious food for children and families in underserved communities. By implementing the Rural Non-Congregate (RNC) program and available waivers, participation increased by 56 percent. The session will highlight practical strategies for operating an efficient and sustainable program while minimizing administrative barriers and maximizing community reach. We will also discuss how this innovative service model has contributed to financial sustainability, allowing the program to operate in the black for the second consecutive year.

Maryon Wright

Maryon Wright is a Child Hunger Programs Manager, where she leads initiatives that expand access to nutritious meals for children in underserved communities. With five years of experience in the field, Maryon specializes in child nutrition programs and rural meal services.

From Research to Action: How Cross-sector Partnerships Can Drive Regional Food System Change

Hurd C | 10:30–11:30 a.m.

Data | Hunger Free Communities

This session explores how the Central Texas Regional Food System Council is working to connect research to action—and what that journey looks like from the perspectives of the cross-sector leaders and neighbors who help shape it. Panelists from county government, local agriculture, and community-based organizations will reflect on what drew them to the Council, how cross-sector collaboration has informed their work, and what it looks like in practice to build shared ownership around long-term food system solutions.

The conversation will reflect on the Council's focus areas – local food production & farm viability, supply chain infrastructure, and healthy food access – and provide examples of how upstream, root-cause solutions can create lasting change. This session will also discuss challenges, best practices, and opportunities ahead.

Emily Foxman

Emily Foxman is the Director of Food System Planning at the Central Texas Food Bank, where she oversees the Central Texas Regional Food System Council and multi-sector strategies for improving healthy food access. For over a decade, she has worked across local and global food systems to advance applied research, public policy, and program design focused on food and nutrition security.

Louie Minor

Alicia Jallah

Laura McDonald

Beyond the Volunteer Shift: Designing Community Engagement that Moves People from Exposure to Responsibility

Hurd Markham Room | 10:30–11:30 a.m.

Data **Hunger Free Communities**

Many universities and community organizations create opportunities for students and volunteers to encounter hunger, homelessness, and poverty firsthand. Yet exposure alone does not guarantee a deeper understanding. In some cases, a volunteer experience may leave assumptions intact—or even reinforce them.

This interactive session asks a different question: What separates exposure from transformation?

Drawing on paired pre- and post-perception data and student reflections from an immersive university-community learning experience, the session examines how intentionally combining preparation, direct community engagement, structured reflection, and continued responsibility can shift participants' understanding of poverty and their role in addressing it.

Participants will examine evidence of changes in students' perceptions of opportunity, resource barriers, welfare, and responsibility, alongside reflections on dignity, complexity, shared humanity, and the movement from service toward advocacy.

Rather than offering a single program to replicate, the session provides a practical design framework that universities, nonprofits, healthcare organizations, and community agencies can adapt to strengthen their engagement efforts. Participants will leave with a way to rethink their engagement experiences, moving beyond service hours toward deeper understanding, reciprocal partnership, and sustained action.

Dr. Laura Robinson-Doyle

Dr. Laura Robinson-Doyle is a Clinical Associate Professor, researcher, and community-engaged educator at Southern Methodist University whose work focuses on health promotion, poverty, food insecurity, social determinants of health, and experiential education. Through teaching, research, and community partnerships, she explores how education can extend beyond the classroom to help students engage thoughtfully with complex social challenges and approach them with compassion, critical thinking, and a commitment to meaningful action.

Beyond Charity: How Faith-based Partnerships Build Stronger Communities

Truett Chapel | 10:30–11:30 a.m.

Faith Communities **Hunger Free Communities**

This interactive session explores how faith-based organizations, housing communities, nonprofits, and local partners can work together to move beyond short-term charity models toward sustainable community solutions. Drawing on six years of frontline outreach through VFL Community Outreach CDC, attendees will gain practical strategies to build partnerships, increase community engagement, and address food insecurity holistically. Through discussion and panel insights, participants will leave with collaborative approaches that strengthen underserved communities while advancing long-term impact and stability.

Dr. Deryck Hunte

Dr. Deryck J. Hunte is the President and CEO of VFL Community Outreach CDC and Pastor of Vision Church HTX, where he has served for 21 years. Dr. Hunte leads collaborative community initiatives focused on food outreach, resident services, education, mentorship, and holistic community development throughout underserved communities in Houston.

Valencia Hunte

Valencia Hunte serves as President of VFL Community Outreach CDC, where she leads community outreach, resident engagement, family support initiatives, and programs serving underserved communities throughout Houston. Through collaborative partnerships, VFL works to strengthen families through food outreach, mentorship, education, community resources, and holistic support services.

Hunger Free Communities: Voices from Across Texas

Truett Great Hall | 10:30–11:30 a.m.

Hunger Free Communities

Join members of the Baylor Hunger Collaborative team and community members from across Texas to learn about Hunger Free Communities training programs and how you can get involved. Hunger Collaborative Education and Training Center Coordinator,

Katherine Best, and Hunger Free Community Accelerator Director, Katie Nye, will share about three opportunities to grow your knowledge in food security work: Hunger Free Communities Certificate Course, Hunger Free Communities Leadership Program, and the Hunger Free Texas Coalition Network. Then, presenters will invite community members from Nacogdoches, Waco, and San Antonio to share about their food security work and how the Hunger Free Communities Certificate Course strengthens their anti-hunger efforts. Through this session, participants will learn valuable information and gain access to enroll in the Certificate Course; receive practical steps to engage with the Hunger Collaborative's Certificate Course, Leadership Program, and Hunger Free Texas Coalition Network; and be introduced to creative solutions to address hunger in their community. Attendees will leave inspired to bridge the gaps between assets and needs in their own communities and to reach across differences to build a sustainable anti-hunger effort in their community.

Katherine Best

Katherine Best, LMSW, is the Education and Training Center Coordinator at the Baylor Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty. Her work includes curriculum formation, student engagement, and coordinating partnerships with university students, faculty, and staff, as well as working with external partners.

Katie Nye

Katie Nye, MSSW, is the Director of the Hunger Free Community Accelerator at the Baylor Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty. Since 2013, she has led efforts to help communities across the U.S. form and sustain Hunger Free Community Coalitions, strengthening local systems to increase food security.

Dr. Catie Munguia

Dr. Catie Munguia is the executive director of Better Together Nacogdoches and the Chair of Hunger Free Nac Sin Hambre.

April Strickland

1:45–2:45 p.m.

From Campus to Capitol: Building Unlikely Coalitions to Advance Hunger-free Campus Policy in Texas

Hurd A | 1:45–2:45 p.m.

College Hunger Policy

College hunger crosses institutional, political, and community boundaries; solving it requires more than individual campus programs. In Texas, hunger affects an estimated 38% of community college and 29% of four-year students, yet translating this data into tangible policy remains a significant challenge. This session examines the legislative journey of Texas Hunger-Free Campus (HFC) policy, tracing the evolution from HB 4571 to HB 1289 and the strategic roadmap for the 2027 session. Drawing from states with established HFC frameworks, presenters will examine how campuses, policymakers, food banks, and community partners can move from short-term solutions toward sustainable basic needs infrastructure.

Rather than approaching food security as a single-issue challenge, Hunger-Free Campus policy creates common ground among higher education leaders, policymakers, and community partners by connecting food access to student success, workforce preparation, and institutional outcomes. Drawing on approaches from California, Pennsylvania, and Washington, attendees will explore how different policy models can inform Texas's path forward while learning strategies for building unlikely partnerships across the political spectrum, strengthening campus-to-state data systems, and translating student needs into actionable policy solutions. Through an interactive coalition-mapping exercise, participants will identify potential champions, engage new partners, and advance collaborative approaches to addressing college hunger in their communities.

Isabel Agbassi

Isabel Agbassi (she/her) is the Advocacy Research Coordinator at Swipe Out Hunger, where she architects the data and research systems powering national Hunger-Free Campus advocacy campaigns on behalf of students across North America. A Texas-based policy researcher with experience at the intersection of food justice, health equity, and legislative advocacy, Isabel brings expertise spanning community food distribution, regional food systems planning, and statewide coalition coordination.

Alondra Medina

Alondra Medina is the Texas C 3 PMommunity Engagement Coordinator at Swipe Out Hunger, where she supports student leaders, campus administrators, and community partners to strengthen food access programs on higher education campuses. She brings over five years of experience in program coordination, communications, and outreach within the nonprofit and public health sectors.

School Meals: America's Most Important Public Health Measure

Hurd B | 1:45–2:45 p.m.

Child Nutrition Programs

School meal programs reach more children every day than any other nutrition intervention in the United States, serving millions of breakfasts and lunches that are often the healthiest meals children consume. Yet school meals are frequently misunderstood and overlooked in discussions about public health, food security, and health equity.

This session will explore the latest research on the nutritional quality and health impacts of school meals, including evidence demonstrating that school meals are more nutritious than foods consumed from most other sources and play a critical role in reducing food insecurity, improving diet quality, supporting academic achievement, and promoting lifelong health. Participants will examine how federal nutrition standards have transformed school meals over the past two decades and review emerging research on topics such as universal school meals, dietary equity, and the role of schools in addressing chronic disease risk among children.

The presentation will also highlight the connection between school meals, poverty reduction, and educational outcomes, emphasizing why access to healthy school meals should be considered a fundamental public health strategy. Attendees will leave with practical tools and advocacy strategies to support Healthy School Meals for All policies at the local, state, and national levels.

Whether you are an educator, healthcare professional, researcher, policymaker, nonprofit leader, or community advocate, this session will provide evidence-based insights into why school meals are one of the nation's most effective investments in child health, educational success, and economic opportunity.

Ryan Cengel

Ryan Cengel MS MA RDN LD SNS- Ryan Cengel is a Registered Dietitian with over a decade of experience in school nutrition. He currently serves as the Director of Food and Nutrition Services for Manor Independent School District, a position he has held since 2021.

Where Policy, Research, and Practice Meet: Lessons Learned from the Multi-year Double Up Food Bucks Texas Expansion Evaluation

Hurd C | 1:45–2:45 p.m.

Data Policy

The Double Up Food Bucks Expansion and Evaluation efforts in Texas demonstrate the interdisciplinary nature of community-focused food insecurity work and the impact of policy. Double Up Food Bucks is a nutrition incentive program that matches Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits for fruit and vegetable purchases at participating farmers' markets and grocery stores in Texas. Hear from presenters representing non-profit partners who are implementing and researchers evaluating the multi-component initiative in Texas about high-level findings from an over 6-year collaboration. Additionally, they will share how they are able to bridge research, practice, and policy, and sustain a multi-year collaboration. Further, they will discuss best practices for working in a multitude of different food retail environments, rural/urban communities, and settings across Texas to have sustained impact while being adaptive to the community/environment they are working in. Attendees will learn about aspects that have made the program successful, implementation strengths, growing pains experienced during expansion, and the importance and necessity of trans-sector and interdisciplinary work in the food insecurity and food access space.

Dr. Kathryn Janda-Thomte

Kathryn Janda-Thomte, PhD, MPH is an Assistant Professor at Baylor University in the Department of Public Health. Her research and practice focuses on better understanding how and where food insecurity is occurring in our communities, and how to better support individuals, households, and families navigating food insecurity and limited food access across the life course.

Hannah Thornton

Hannah Thornton, MS, RD, is the Senior Director of Food Access and Education at the Sustainable Food Center. Hannah is a Registered Dietitian and holds an MS in Nutrition from Texas State University and an MS in Biology from Florida International University.

Sustaining Cross-sector Partnerships through a Changing Funding Landscape

Hurd Markham Room | 1:45–2:45 p.m.

Data Hunger Free Communities

This session explores how Food is the Best Medicine (FBM), a food-is-medicine program serving postpartum families in Central Texas, has sustained and adapted its services amid funding uncertainty, staffing challenges, and changes in community partnerships. Since 2022, FBM has grown from a small grocery assistance initiative into a home-delivery program that has provided nearly 60,000 meals to more than 500 households, with research demonstrating significant reductions in food insecurity. Presenters will share how collaboration among healthcare providers, researchers, nonprofits, and food vendors has strengthened the program's resilience, including its rapid response to the loss of a key partner. Through practical lessons and Q&A, attendees will explore strategies for building sustainable cross-sector partnerships, navigating disruptions, and maintaining essential food access programs beyond individual funding cycles.

Alexis Falzone

Alexis Falzone is a PhD candidate in Public Health specializing in Social and Behavioral Health Sciences at Baylor University. She is currently an instructor of record for an undergraduate Health and Human Behavior course and a research assistant working on projects focused on food access.

Victoria Threadgould

Victoria Threadgould has worked in nonprofit healthcare since 2018. She currently raises funds to support programs and patient service lines across all Ascension Seton adult hospitals in Austin, Texas.

[Headshot from Monday.com — image placement pending]

A Longer Table: Building Coalitions Across Difference to End Hunger

Truett Chapel | 1:45–2:45 p.m.

Faith Communities Bridging Division Hunger Free Communities

What if ending hunger doesn't require everyone at the table to look alike, vote alike, worship alike, or even agree on everything?

What if it simply requires us to keep making the table longer?

In a moment marked by deep political, cultural, and religious division, hunger remains a reality that crosses nearly every boundary we create. And throughout history, some of the most meaningful progress against hunger and poverty has happened when people who might otherwise never find themselves in the same room chose to work toward a common purpose.

We do not need to be uniform to be unified.

A Longer Table will illuminate the stories of hunger advocates who have learned to create seats for unlikely partners—people who resist the temptation to make agreement on everything a prerequisite for working together on something.

Drawing from Bread for the World's experience mobilizing people of faith and conscience across denominations, political perspectives, communities, and congressional districts, this session will explore what it takes to build coalitions capable of advancing meaningful solutions to hunger.

Rather than asking, "How do we get everyone to agree?" we will ask a different question: "How do we build a table large enough for our differences—and strong enough for our shared commitment to ending hunger?"

Rev. Noah Mata

Rev. Noah Mata is a pastor, communicator, church planter, and advocate for justice whose work lives at the intersection of faith, public life, and the movement to end hunger.

Sakeenah Shabazz

Sakeenah Shabazz is the Deputy Director of Policy and Research Institute (PRI). Prior to this role, she served as an appointed Senior Policy Advisor at the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS).

Taylor Johnson

Taylor Johnson is a Domestic Policy Advisor with Bread's Policy and Research Institute. He conducts analysis on current data and research and advises the organization on federal and state policy reforms that address hunger and poverty in the U.S.

Hunger Free Nacogdoches Sin Hambre: Year One in Review

Truett Great Hall | 1:45–2:45 p.m.

Hunger Free Communities

Hunger Free Nacogdoches Sin Hambre (HFNSH) is the manifestation of the first-year experience of Nacogdoches, Texas, community members who participated in the Hunger Free Community Accelerator (HFCA) through the Baylor Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty. This session will review the first-year experiences of those who participated in the Nacogdoches cohort of the HFCA and the creation and beginning implementation of HFNSH, as well as review current work and future directions. This session will include personal experiences germane to the creation of a community coalition, a review of the landscape analysis of food insecurity in Nacogdoches County, research methods and results, and address future directions of this work.

Dr. James Morris

James Morris is the Director of the BSW program at Stephen F. Austin State University School of Social Work and the Co-Chair of Hunger Free Nacogdoches Sin Hambre.

Kristin Bailey-Wallace

Kristin is an Associate Professor at Stephen F. Austin State University, with more than 15 years of teaching, advising, and field experience in the undergraduate social work program.

Dr. Catie Munguia

Dr. Catie Munguia is the executive director of Better Together Nacogdoches and the Chair of Hunger Free Nac Sin Hambre.

Gabriela Martinez

Gabriela is a graduate social work student at Stephen F. Austin State University.

Texans at Every Table Youth Leadership Academy: Building Connected Communities through Youth Leadership

Truett Room 107 | 1:45–2:45 p.m.

Bridging Division **Hunger Free Communities**

Houston Food Bank's Texans at Every Table Youth Leadership Academy is reimagining what youth engagement and service can look like. This interactive program equips high school students to become skilled bridge-builders, using active listening, perspective-taking, and problem-solving through constructive dialogue to give them a meaningful seat at the table in shaping their communities' futures.

In this session, Houston Food Bank staff and two student co-presenters will share how the Academy helps young people uncover the links between social disconnection, polarization, and food and economic insecurity — and, more importantly, how students can work together to address these challenges. Attendees will hear key insights from the pilot year, including how youth-led dialogue sparks community-driven advocacy.

Participants will walk away with practical strategies for engaging youth as connectors across divides, integrating dialogue and reflection into service-based learning, and helping students transform empathy for community issues into real, actionable solutions.

Pam Otal

Pam Otal is the Community Engagement Liaison at the Houston Food Bank, where she leads Texans at Every Table, a new social cohesion initiative focused on dialogue and bridge-building across different perspectives to build long-term economic and food security across Southeast Texas. With seven years of nonprofit experience, Pam works to empower and uplift underserved communities through outreach, engagement, advocacy, and relationship-building.

Miranda Lara

Miranda Lara is the Civic Engagement Coordinator at Houston Food Bank, where she supports a network of community partners in integrating civic engagement into their operations and equips organizations with tools to help neighbors participate in the decision-making process. Her interest in civic engagement began as a University of Houston student, when she spoke with students about the importance of voting and participated in voter registration campaigns.

Jewel George

Jewel George is a senior at Elkins High School. She has been a Student Hero at the Houston Food Bank since January 2025, and a member of the pilot Texans at Every Table Youth Leadership Academy.

Amruta Masina

Amruta Masina is an 11th-grade high school student and has been affiliated with the HFB for over 3 years. She was a part of the pilot Social Connections Student Heroes Leadership Program.

3:00–4:00 p.m.

Finding Funds and Friends in Local Government and Heavy Industry

Hurd A | 3:00–4:00 p.m.

Policy **Hunger Free Communities**

Getting local governments and big industry partners on board with a hunger-fighting agenda can be a challenge, but it's a challenge worth taking on. Strong commitments from city and county leaders open access to public resources, which are in turn boosted by bringing in industry partners with an interest in local diplomacy. In Texas, local tax rebate programs in particular open the door to new revenue streams, but only if the elected officials in charge know where to direct the funds. In Ozona, county officials worked with wind farm companies to direct sustaining funding to the local Meals on Wheels program after it lost COVID-era funds and then faced budget cuts again in 2025. Come learn how they did it.

Bekah S McNeel

Bekah Stolhandske McNeel is an award-winning journalist and lifelong Texan. She has been reporting on hunger solutions over the past year and a half, highlighting the people and innovative partnerships keeping food on tables across the state.

Frank Tambunga

Frank Tambunga is the county judge for Crockett County who helped broker deals with wind farms to help fund senior feeding programs.

Beyond the Box: A Community Conversation on Reimagining Food Access

Hurd B | 3:00–4:00 p.m.

Child Nutrition Programs **Hunger Free Communities**

Addressing food insecurity requires more than increasing food distribution — it requires reimagining the systems that connect communities to fresh, affordable, and culturally relevant foods. Houston ISD Nutrition Services and Nia Fresh Market are partnering to transform school campuses into accessible community food access points, creating a new model that leverages trusted institutions, local partnerships, and innovative approaches to improve food access for Houston families.

Marcus Glenn

Marcus Glenn serves as the Executive Director of Farm to School and Sustainability for Houston Independent School District's Nutrition Services Department, where he leads innovative initiatives connecting students to agriculture, food systems, and sustainability. Through strategic partnerships, experiential learning opportunities, and sustainable practices, Marcus works to create meaningful pathways that strengthen student engagement, workforce development, and community impact.

Gordon Taylor

Gordon is Founder and CEO of Nia Fresh Market, a food tech startup. Before founding Nia, Gordon started a company called Guzo (business collaboration), worked in venture capital/private equity (FM Capital, Vistria Group, Patriot Capital), and management consulting (Deloitte).

Leaving Markings on the Tree: What a Failed 1860 Expedition Teaches Us About Bridging Food Security gaps in Texas

Hurd C | 3:00–4:00 p.m.

Data **Policy**

This presentation uses the doomed Burke and Wills expedition to frame the present-day SNAP issue. Burke's party died because no one left a marking, no one dug deeper, and no one drew on the local knowledge around them. The same three failures appear in today's SNAP data, where falling enrollment reads like progress, when a deeper look reveals rising need.

This presentation traces SNAP origins, with a focus on the last decade, before exploring Texas' whiplash pandemic years and the sharp declines following H.R. 1 in July 2025, which left ~500,000 fewer Texans on SNAP, 60% of them children. Four drivers are examined: administrative slowdown, social deterrents, new work requirements, and immigration enforcement. This analysis rules out demographic changes and economic factors.

After the presentation, participants should leave knowing that falling enrollment is not falling need, and that charity cannot close a 9-to-1 gap in food provisions. County-level variation also requires a local response informed by the community's assets and needs. Lastly, the Hunger Free Communities Certificate Course can give participants the tools they need to bridge data divides - having policymakers read the marks on the tree and act on the information.

Kyle Lauckner

Kyle Lauckner is a junior at the University of Notre Dame, majoring in Economics and Political Science. Since joining Scouting America in 2013, Kyle has been passionate about helping communities in need.

Bridging Borders, Building Trust: Lessons from a Binational Food Rescue Partnership

Hurd Markham Room | 3:00–4:00 p.m.

Policy **Bridging Division**

Bridging division doesn't begin with agreement—it begins with trust. Discover how food banks, agricultural producers, and nonprofit leaders across the United States and Mexico built an unlikely partnership to rescue surplus produce while strengthening food banking systems on both sides of the border. This interactive session shares lessons from the Cross-Border Produce Rescue initiative about navigating different priorities, cultures, governance structures, and power dynamics without losing sight of a shared mission. Through stories, discussion, and reflection, participants will gain practical ideas for building collaborations that are resilient, equitable, and designed for mutual benefit.

Catherine Gibson Hernandez

Catherine Gibson is the Project Director for the Southwest Boundless Collaboration at the Arizona Food Bank Network, where she leads the Cross-Border Produce Rescue initiative in partnership with Feeding America, Red BAMX, and regional food banks in the United States and Mexico. She specializes in cross-sector collaboration, systems change, and stakeholder facilitation, helping organizations transform shared purpose into practical action.

COMIDA! Multi-faith Partnerships to End College Hunger

Truett Chapel | 3:00–4:00 p.m.

College Hunger Faith Communities

There is a college or university in your neighborhood. And there seems to be a chasm between the needs of college students, faculty, and staff and the resources of the Church. It is time to bridge the division. Taken from the work of Central United Methodist Church in Albuquerque and their robust advocacy for food security, this presentation invites participants to engage with the systemic problem of hunger on college campuses through the lens of the Basic Needs Consortium and its cross-disciplinary partnerships. In New Mexico public colleges and universities, thousands of students, faculty, and staff likely struggle to meet basic needs, such as food and housing. This presentation will discuss the need for multifaceted leadership across campuses to improve basic-needs security for students, faculty, and staff. Basic needs insecurity is a serious problem on all our campuses, especially affecting our minoritized students and low-income faculty and staff. Most importantly, participants will understand multiple tested ideas to connect faith communities and other nonprofits to join the movement to end hunger in higher education.

Andy Stoker

Andy Stoker is Director of Advocacy at FaithWorks. A United Methodist minister, Andy served most recently as Senior Pastor at Central United Methodist Church in Albuquerque.

Anyra Cano

Rev. Anyra Cano serves as the Director of Programs and Outreach at FaithWorks.

Bridge the Gap – Beyond the Meal: Building Collaborative Pathways to Food Security

Truett Great Hall | 3:00–4:00 p.m.

Hunger Free Communities

The Hunger Free Coalition of Brazoria County developed a solution to a need, based on data, to address the issue of food insecurity for children during extended breaks from school. The Bridge the Gap Project provides food for food-insecure children during Fall, Thanksgiving, Christmas or Winter Holidays, and Spring and Summer Breaks. While supporting Bridge the Gap, opportunities were given to address food insecurity “beyond the meal.” A Health and Wellness Day was implemented in July 2026 to address the other tenets of food insecurity, including personal hygiene, dental and medical health, mental health, financial literacy, and immediate food needs. Families received access to food, personal hygiene products, laundry supplies, school supplies, haircuts, vision and dental screenings, medical services, mental health resources, financial literacy education, Houston Food Bank assistance, and free family meals. More importantly, the event was a collaborative effort of the community working with the coalition. The HFCBC invites you to come explore how to build collaborative pathways through community resources to address additional food insecurity factors. Tabletop discussions will be used to brainstorm ideas and strategies for other coalitions and community groups to bring awareness to solutions that extend beyond the meal.

Melaina Gutierrez

Gloria Luna

Julie Engelking

We the People: A Community Table for Dialogue Across Difference

Truett Room 107 | 3:00–4:00 p.m.

Bridging Division

What should we be talking about together?

This session invites participants to take a seat at a community discussion table and help decide. Rather than beginning with a presentation or predetermined topic, participants will suggest questions or issues they believe deserve conversation. The group will vote, choose a topic, and spend the session exploring it together through a facilitated dialogue.

The format is modeled on a simple kind of gathering that can happen regularly in cafes, libraries, faith communities, campuses, and other places where people meet: an open table where the people who show up help shape the conversation.

Along the way, we'll practice listening across differences, making room for lived experience, asking better questions, and looking for areas of understanding without requiring agreement. We'll close by reflecting on what happened at the table and what recurring, community-led conversations like this might make possible in the places we call home.

Blake Kent

Blake is a Baylor University alumnus with a degree in English Literature whose career has spanned military service, international development, and community building. A U.S. Army Veteran who served two tours in Iraq, he later served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Kazakhstan and earned a master's degree in International Relations from Troy University. Based now in Washington, DC, his work has focused on community development, peacebuilding, local leadership, and creating spaces where people can build trust, belonging, and practical solutions together.

4:15–5:15 p.m.

Stop Packing Boxes. Start Building Programs: Lessons from Launching a Rural Non-congregate Summer Meals Program

Hurd B | 4:15–5:15 p.m.

Child Nutrition Programs

Rural Non-congregate Summer Meals have transformed how communities can reach children facing food insecurity, but successful implementation requires far more than packing meal boxes. It demands strong partnerships, thoughtful planning, operational systems, and the ability to adapt when challenges arise.

Drawing on Ujima Hunger Coalition's experience implementing Rural Non-Congregate Summer Food Service Programs across multiple rural communities, this session will explore the operational decisions, unexpected obstacles, and continuous improvements that strengthened the program over two summers. Participants will learn practical strategies for building community partnerships, managing procurement and logistics, developing compliant menus, training distribution teams, navigating administrative reviews, and creating sustainable systems that expand access to nutritious meals.

Rather than presenting a polished success story, this session offers an honest look at lessons learned—including what we'd do differently—and practical tools attendees can immediately apply. Together, we'll explore how collaboration, innovation, and continuous improvement can bridge gaps in rural food access and advance lasting solutions for children and families.

Brian Wieher

Brian Wieher, SNS, CCNP, is Executive Director of Ujima Hunger Coalition and has more than 20 years of experience in child nutrition and food access programs. He leads strategic partnerships, program development, and innovative solutions that expand access to nutritious meals for children and families.

Rachel Mohler

Rachel Mohler, MS, RDN, LD, is Senior Program Manager for Ujima Hunger Coalition and a registered dietitian with more than 15 years of experience in child nutrition, food security, and public health. She leads implementation of USDA nutrition programs, including Rural Non-Congregate Summer Food Service Program operations, and specializes in program design, regulatory compliance, and systems that improve access to healthy food.

Hunger Data Lab: Mapping Texas Summer Meals Data

Hurd C | 4:15–5:15 p.m.

Data Child Nutrition Programs

This interactive workshop introduces the Baylor Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty's forthcoming Texas Summer Meals Dashboard, a new data visualization tool designed to make summer meal participation data more accessible and useful to communities across the state. Building on the Hunger Collaborative's existing School Meals Dashboards, the new tool will help users explore participation trends, compare geographic areas, and identify opportunities to strengthen access to no-cost summer meals for children. Presenters will demonstrate the dashboard's features and guide participants through practical applications for community planning, outreach, and program improvement. Attendees will leave with strategies for using data to inform decisions, strengthen partnerships, and expand the reach of summer meal programs in their communities.

Courtney Haworth

Courtney Haworth is a Licensed Master Social Worker and PhD student at Baylor University who has served on the Research Team at the Baylor Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty since 2020. Her work focuses on food security, program evaluation, social justice, and the intersection of faith and social work practice. She supports research and evaluation initiatives, collaborates with community partners, and has presented and published research on issues related to hunger, health, and social well-being.

Dr. Jodien Johnson

Jodien is a lecturer in the Department of Sociology at Baylor University and a Senior Fellow of Research and Evaluation at the Baylor Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty, where she works on food insecurity and poverty-related research and evaluation projects. She holds a Ph.D. from Baylor University in Applied Sociology.

Mapping What Matters: Federated AI for Food Access and Disaster Response

Hurd Markham Room | 4:15–5:15 p.m.

Data

This panel and live demonstration offer a working counterexample to a familiar failure: curbing food insecurity and responding to disaster quickly and efficiently rarely fail for lack of good intentions, but because the people who could help work from incomplete pictures, disconnected data, and partnerships that never form across sector lines. Over more than five years, a national hunger nonprofit, a technology company, and a university AI lab have built exactly the kind of unlikely partnership this year's theme calls for. The through-line is data that started with the community. In 2020, Tackle Hunger built the Tackle Hunger Map, now home to roughly 40,000 food charities, a critical dataset shared with the Department of Defense to address food insecurity during the pandemic. From it grew two federally funded research projects: AI-FEED, an NSF-funded tool that scores neighborhoods as healthy, unhealthy, or neutral food-access "hot spots" by combining health, transportation, and food-source data; and AI-Response, a NIFA-funded system built after Hurricanes Helene and Milton that gathers ground-level status reports from food charities and uses AI to surface the most urgent needs on a live map.

These lessons now inform emerging work that brings food-access and disaster-response insight together with flood and water intelligence, so responders can build a situation-specific picture of a disaster while sensitive data stays with its owners. Presenters will demonstrate the mission in action and, just as candidly, discuss how three very different institutions built the trust to share data at all. Attendees such as nonprofit leaders, funders, technologists, and emergency planners will leave with a concrete model for forming unlikely partnerships, a practical understanding of how AI and shared data can extend their reach, and questions to bring back to their own tables.

Alison Reese

Alison Reese is Executive Director of Tackle Hunger, a national nonprofit supporting local food charities, and COO and Co-Founder of Simplicity Integration, a water- and flood-intelligence technology company. In 2020, she designed and helped build the Tackle Hunger Map, now home to roughly 40,000 food charities nationwide, and partnered with the Department of Defense's Joint Artificial Intelligence Center to apply that data to food-insecurity challenges.

Ed Hicks

Ed Hicks is Chief Technology Officer of Simplicity Integration, where he leads development of the SI-AI water-flood-disaster-intelligence platform. Previously, Ed worked for both federal and civilian Programs as a Director of Computer Vision and AI at Dell Technologies. He brings deep experience in large-scale deployments utilizing innovative and emerging technologies.

Dr. Ioannis Kakadiaris

Dr. Ioannis A. Kakadiaris is a Hugh Roy and Lillie Cranz Cullen Distinguished University Professor of Computer Science at the University of Houston and founder of the Computational Biomedicine Lab. An internationally recognized expert in artificial intelligence, computer vision, and machine learning, he was Founding Director of the Borders, Trade, and Immigration Institute, a Department of Homeland Security Center of Excellence, and co-founder of the Pumps and Pipes cross-domain innovation initiative. He holds a Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania and has earned the NSF Early Career Development Award among numerous honors.

From Pews to Policy: The Call to Feed the Hungry Campaign

Truett Chapel | 4:15–5:15 p.m.

Faith Communities Policy

This session introduces the Call to Feed the Hungry, a nonpartisan campaign launched by the Episcopal Diocese of Texas and Episcopal Health Foundation to engage 20,000 voters in support of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and encourage policymakers to fully fund this essential resource. Presenters will explore the role SNAP plays in addressing food insecurity, its impact on individuals and communities, and opportunities for congregations, nonprofits, and individuals to participate in the campaign. Attendees will learn how to share information, engage their communities, and contribute to efforts to strengthen SNAP.

Rev. Willie Bennett

Rev. Willie Bennett has been a senior congregational engagement officer with the Episcopal Health Foundation since 2018. He and the engagement team have worked to help several congregations transform their ministries to be more expansive and effective. Prior to that, Rev. Bennett was an organizer with the Industrial Areas Foundation for 25 years.

Food is the Beginning of the Conversation—Not the End

Truett Great Hall | 4:15–5:15 p.m.

Hunger Free Communities

What if the greatest challenge facing hunger organizations isn't a lack of food, but the way we've defined success?

Emergency food assistance is essential, but if our work ends when the meal is delivered, or when the pantry box is handed over, we've only addressed today's crisis—not tomorrow's. This session challenges attendees to rethink hunger relief by exploring how every meal can become the beginning of a conversation that builds trust, uncovers root causes, and connects people to lasting solutions.

Through engaging stories and practical examples from rural communities, participants will discover how collaboration across healthcare, education, nonprofits, faith communities, and government can transform emergency food programs into catalysts for healthier, more resilient communities.

Attendees will leave inspired with practical ideas for building partnerships, shifting organizational thinking from outputs to outcomes, and advancing the conference theme by bridging differences in pursuit of a shared goal: helping fewer people need us tomorrow than they do today.

Arthur Crawford

Arthur "Art" Crawford is the CEO of The Silver Sage and the Hill Country Resource Center in Bandera County, Texas, where he leads innovative initiatives focused on food security, healthy aging, rural health, and community development. Under his leadership, the organization has grown into a regional resource hub serving thousands of older adults and families across rural Texas.

Poverty-Informed Practice: Bridging Division Without Blaming the Poor

Truett Room 107 | 4:15–5:15 p.m.

Hunger Free Communities

Food insecurity work often focuses on access: more food, better distribution, stronger partnerships, and clearer pathways to support. But access alone is not enough if the systems meant to help people also create shame, confusion, mistrust, or hidden barriers. This session introduces Poverty-Informed Practice as a practical framework for bridging division without blaming the poor.

Aligned with the Together at the Table theme of “Bridging Division. Advancing Solutions,” this session will help participants examine how assumptions about poverty can unintentionally shape service design, eligibility processes, communication, and community partnerships. Attendees will explore the roles of stability, bandwidth, belonging, and dignity in creating more effective and humane food security work.

Participants will leave with concrete questions and tools they can use to review their own practices, reduce unnecessary barriers, and build tables where people are not simply invited, but respected, heard, and able to stay.

Dr. Chad Dull

Chad Dull, Ed.D., is a speaker, author, and founder of Poverty-Informed Practice. A former educator, dean, and nonprofit executive, Chad helps organizations better understand poverty as a circumstance rather than a character flaw.

Friday, November 13

9:15–10:15 a.m.

Looking Toward 2027: Hunger and the 2027 Texas Legislature

Location TBD | 9:15-10:15 a.m.

Stacie Sanchez Hare

Stacie Sanchez Hare is the Director of No Kid Hungry Texas where she leads a campaign to end child hunger in Texas. She joins us after working at City Year San Antonio as the Managing Director of Impact, overseeing partnerships with schools and community organizations in the San Antonio area. Before returning to Texas in 2017, she lived in New York City for 15 years where she worked in city government and nonprofit roles related to youth development, community engagement, and social justice issues. Stacie earned a Master of Science in Social Work from Columbia University. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Social Work from St. Edward's University. Stacie serves on the Jolt Texas Initiative Board, a nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering young Latinos in civic engagement. Stacie is based in San Antonio where she was born and raised.

Jamie Olson

Jamie Olson is the VP of Policy & Advocacy at Feeding Texas.

Across the Aisle, Around the Table: Bridging Division to Advance Hunger Solutions

Location TBD | 9:15–10:15 a.m.

Adam Nicholas Phillips

Adam Nicholas Phillips is an executive leader and strategist whose career has been defined by a single animating purpose: the renewal of public life for the common good.

Over two decades, Adam has built and led institutions, coalitions, and initiatives at scale — moving across government, international, nonprofit, and civic sectors to shape the narratives and structures that make a more just and pluralistic world possible.

As a Biden-Harris Administration official at the United States Agency for International Development, Adam led Faith-based and Localization efforts in a dual development and diplomatic capacity, developing the first-ever U.S. policy for strategic religious engagement and partnerships across the federal government — working closely with the White House, Department of State, Department of Defense, Department of Agriculture, and others — to shape development policy, forge new and non-traditional partnerships, and advance democracy initiatives across nearly 100 countries.

As Chief Executive Officer of Interfaith America — the nation's largest bridge-building organization — Adam led the scaling and near-doubling of institutional operations spanning campus, corporate, and civic spaces, stewarding one of the country's most consequential efforts to turn religious diversity from a source of division into a force for the common good.

Earlier in his career, Adam led faith mobilization at global advocacy and development organizations including ONE, Bread for the World, and World Vision, and carried that same values-driven commitment into political campaigns at the national level. He is also an ordained minister who has founded and led congregations.

His work has been featured in The Atlantic, The New York Times, CNN, The Washington Post, NPR, the Huffington Post and the Christian Broadcasting Network's 700 Club. He delivered the first-of-its-kind TEDx talk on Christian inclusion. Adam lives in Chicago with his wife Sarah and son Desmond.

10:30–11:30 a.m.

Flourishing Communities

Location TBD | 10:30–11:30 a.m.

Dr. Craig Gundersen

Dr. Craig Gundersen is the Snee Family Endowed Chair at the Baylor Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty and a professor in the Department of Economics at Baylor University. Prior to joining Baylor, he was ACES Distinguished Professor in the Department of Agricultural and Consumer Economics at University of Illinois and, before that, he had positions at Iowa State University and USDA, Economic Research Service. Gundersen is the creator of Feeding America's Map the Meal Gap project, a Round Table Fellow of the Farm Foundation, and a Faculty Affiliate of the Wilson Sheehan Lab for Economic Opportunities at the University of Notre Dame. Gundersen is a Fellow of the Agricultural and Applied Economic Association (AAEA).

Dr. Byron Johnson

Dr. Byron Johnson is Distinguished Professor of the Social Sciences at Baylor University where he is the founding director of the Institute for Studies of Religion as well as the founding director of the Institute for Global Human Flourishing. Johnson is a faculty affiliate of the Human Flourishing Program at Harvard University, a senior scientist at the Gallup Organization, and co-founder of the Religious Freedom Institute, based in Washington, DC. Professor Johnson is also a visiting distinguished professor in the School of Public Policy at Pepperdine University.

Beyond the Bottom Line: Business as a Force Against Hunger

Location TBD | 10:30–11:30 a.m.

Jonathan de Wolff

Jonathan de Wolff, Co-Founder, Chief Sustainability Officer, and Head of Corporate Philanthropy at inKind, an Austin-based financial technology company serving the hospitality industry, leads initiatives that strengthen independent restaurants and advance social and environmental responsibility. Their work focuses on building partnerships, supporting restaurant operators, and developing innovative solutions to challenges such as food waste, workforce well-being, and financial resilience. Previously, Jonathan founded a cybersecurity company that expanded secure internet access to more than seven million people across the Global South.