



Photo: Jefferson State Community College Food Pantry work-study students Jaden Ledbetter and Blayne Whisenhunt.

Breaking bread: college students fight food insecurities with Alabama food banks

The Alabama Community College System has joined forces with local food banks to ensure that students can devote their resources to school instead of worrying about their next meal.

Colleges like Chattahoochee Valley and Jefferson State have set up food pantries, stocking shelves with non-perishable food and boxing them to give away to students throughout the year.

Although some people believe that college students are taking care of themselves, factors such as being a first-generation student, juggling school with work, and providing for their families mean that some students struggle with food insecurity.

"When students go hungry, they lose their ability to focus in class," said Chattahoochee

Valley Community College Associate Dean Vickie Williams. "The impact of food insecurity on health and academic performance is long-lasting."

According to Feeding America – a network of nationwide food banks – the most common approach to addressing college hunger is direct food distribution.

Jefferson State psychology student Jaden Ledbetter has spotted a surge in foot traffic since the college opened its food pantry, which is housed inside the Student Success Center at the main campus.

"I give time because I love the thought of giving back, especially if it's someone that's in a bad situation," said Ledbetter.

Research shows that food assistance helps improve graduation rates, and the Heart of Alabama

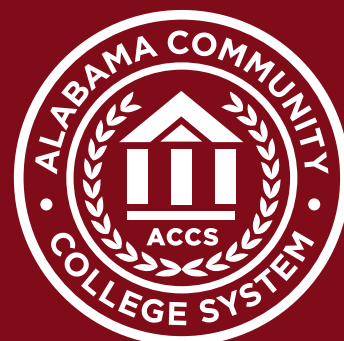
Food Bank CEO agrees. Michael Coleman said his team serves over half of Alabama's counties, and much of his coverage area includes rural communities.

Coleman said rural, lower-income residents are trying to improve their lives, but when cost-related challenges arise, education is "one of the things they end up splicing out of their life."

He doesn't want to see any students sacrificing their dreams.

"What they need is our support and our encouragement to help them overcome their barriers," said Coleman.

To help end college hunger, connect with your local food bank.



FROM CHANCELLOR JIMMY H. BAKER

In Alabama, the stakes are high for workforce and economic development. Alabama's community and technical colleges are stronger than ever before to help our communities reach success.

Together with stakeholders across Alabama, the Alabama Community College System is working to serve as the pathway for more and more residents to experience a change in their quality of life.

Alabama has a reputation for innovation and collaboration, and the Alabama Community College System is well-positioned to help improve the workforce landscape.

Something for everyone in celebration of the ACCS 60th anniversary

In honor of the Diamond Jubilee 60th anniversary celebration of the Alabama Community College System, all 24 community and technical colleges are offering something for various age groups to explore in their communities.

Whether academics or trades, athletics or cultural arts, more than 800 remarkable programs and services are offered by the ACCS throughout the year. The Diamond Jubilee committee has selected a series of 24 events to showcase our colleges as one, unified system.

For those of you who love a bit of adventure, the Alabama Mining Academy and Underground Mining Simulation Tour is definitely one to check out. At Beville State, you'll get to experience firsthand what it's like to be a miner. But if you're in the mood for something a bit more festive, the Christmas Tree Lighting at Lurleen B. Wallace is the perfect choice.

Visit www.accs.edu/community for more information on College Showcase events.

More than 95% of the students who attend our colleges live in Alabama and more than 71% who graduate remain in Alabama to work and raise their families.

Community college nursing apprenticeships skyrocket in Alabama, meeting urgent demand for nurses

Alabama faces a shortage of nurses as older nurses' departures exceed the number of new nurses entering the workforce. This trend has led to many vacant nursing jobs in facilities across the state, leaving major healthcare employers struggling to fill thousands of positions.

In response, Alabama's community and technical colleges have been tackling nursing shortages with nursing apprenticeships. These are paid career paths that allow residents to learn and earn at the same time. Coastal Alabama and Gadsden State community colleges were the first to offer nursing apprenticeships in Alabama, and more such apprenticeships have sprung up across the state since 2022.

"We are very proud of what this program has become, and we're confident that applicants who complete apprenticeships will have a stronger foundation to pass the NCLEX exam and to begin their careers caring for patients at a high level," said Peggy Benson, Executive Officer of the Alabama Board of Nursing.

The board issues permits to the student nurse apprentices and regulates their practice to ensure patient safety and access to care. Currently, apprentices serve more than 60 healthcare businesses across the state.

"We've had several hospitals from the state and outside our region call and ask, 'How'd you do this? Show us the blueprint', so it lets us know we're setting a standard for others across the country," said Tracy Doughty, Huntsville Hospital President and Chief Operating Officer.

The hospital offers nursing apprenticeships through Drake State, where 19 licensed practical nurses were recently pinned in the college's inaugural LPN Launch cohort.

More information about the apprenticeships is available at www.accs.edu/healthcare.

Photo: Trinity Carlisle, a Drake State LPN Launch graduate, and Dr. Alice Raymond, Drake State Health Sciences Division Chair/Director of Innovation and Program Success.



Out-of-state veteran takes on mission to graduate from an Alabama community college

Roughly 200,000 service members leave the military each year, and reports indicate about half of recently separated veterans face difficulty connecting with available resources and benefits for several years.

Alabama veterans and military families are overcoming these barriers by connecting with their local community colleges.

Lori Hauptman, an Army veteran, is one example.

"I thought that I had forgotten how to be a civilian and how to be a student," she said.

Hauptman had university credits but no degree, so she got a job working at a physical therapy clinic out-of-state. As she got comfortable working with patients, she wanted to learn more about the trade.

An Army captain working as a physical therapist inspired Hauptman to pursue her next mission. He noticed her passion for

patient care and knew of the best school to help her achieve her dreams: Southern Union State Community College. There, Hauptman is majoring in physical therapy assistance.

A 2017 study published in the American Journal of Orthopsychiatry found that most student service members and veterans enroll in 2-year institutions, and are overall more likely to major in engineering, applied sciences, and social sciences.

Hauptman is determined to commute one hour from Georgia to Alabama each week because "here at Southern Union everyone is welcoming and made it very easy to fall back into the rhythm of being a civilian," she said.



Photo: Southern Union Community College student and Army veteran Lori Hauptman.

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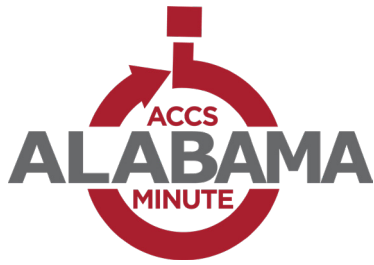
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Residents complete no-cost training to meet rising fiber optics workforce demand

More than \$400 million in federal funding for broadband across Alabama means a greater demand for fiber optics technicians and installers. The Alabama Community College System's Innovation Center has a no-cost training program to get residents ready for these job opportunities at colleges across the state.

"The course interested me partly because of my US Air Force radar experience and a few years managing a small cable TV system in Arkansas," said Alabama resident Robert Holiday.

Holiday recently completed the Fiber Optics Technician and Installer Course at Coastal Alabama Community College.

"The course was well designed with plenty of equipment, tools and instructors, so prospective students should be confident they will have an opportunity for learning new skills."

As more technicians receive training through their local community college, a greater number of residents will gain access to high-speed internet.

During a press conference in Dothan, Governor Kay Ivey spoke on her administration's mission to connect every Alabamian to high-speed internet. She said, "With these resources, we are investing in the future of the people who call our state home."

To register for training, call 1-855-206-2671 or visit www.innovation.accs.edu.



Photo: Courtesy of the ACCS Innovation Center.