

# SIG- NRV/Blacksburg/VT Community Hub

[FYP-Special Interests Groups] This is the wiki page for the New River Valley Chapter of ForYouPage. Here, you can find a list of resources available to people in this area, a list of upcoming, ongoing, and completed community projects, and whatever else people have added. This wiki was started by us here at ForYouPage, but can be edited by anyone to add resources, projects, discussions, etc. Please be respectful.

- [Local Resources](#)
- [Community To Do](#)
- [Involvement Opportunities at Virginia Tech](#)
- [Wellbeing To-do List For Extra Credits](#)
- [Meals On Main](#)

# Local Resources

## Some of the free local resources

- [New River Valley Community Services](#)
- [Women's Resource Center of NRV](#)

## Local Hotlines

- Raft Crisis Hotline: **540-961-8400**.
- Women's Resource Center-Domestic Violence: **540- 639-9592**
- National Suicide Prevention Hotline **1-800-273-8255**

## Some General Resources

- <http://www.suicide.org/index.html>
- <http://ibpf.org/resource/list-international-suicide-hotlines>
- <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_suicide\\_crisis\\_lines](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_suicide_crisis_lines)
- [http://www.suicidestop.com/call\\_a\\_hotline.html](http://www.suicidestop.com/call_a_hotline.html)
- <http://worldhelplines.org/>

## Comprehensive list of Resources for Virginia Tech students

- Individual Services
  - [Counselors, Psychiatric Care, 24-Hour Crisis Support](#) - Cook Counseling Center
  - [TimelyCare](#) - Virtual mental health support with counselors, a TalkNow option, health coaching, and more
  - [Academic Support, Crisis Support](#) - Dean of Students
  - [Accommodations and Resources](#) - Services for Students with Disabilities
  - [Gender-based Violence Support and Advocacy](#) - Women's Center at Virginia Tech
  - [24-Hour call line](#) - NRVCS (Not VT affiliated)
- For Group Services
  - [Group Therapy](#) - Cook Counseling Center
  - [Support Groups](#) - Non-clinical, staff facilitated
  - [Cultural and Community Centers](#)

- [Interfaith Programming](#)
- [Recovery Community at Virginia Tech](#)
- [FEELS Support Circle](#) - Led by students for students
- Opportunities to learn
  - [Resiliency Workshops](#) - Self-care, emotional awareness, social connection, etc.
  - [Mental Health Workshops](#) - Depression, anxiety, motivation, and more
  - [Health and Wellness Workshops](#) - Helping friends in distress, sleep, unwinding offline, etc
  - [Koru Mindfulness Series](#)
  - [Happiness Groups](#)
  - [Bystander Support Workshops - Hokie Collective](#)
  - [Distress Guide](#) - Help others find support.
- Become Involved
  - [Peer Education Teams](#) - Paraprofessional experience specializing in a variety of health and wellness areas
  - [Student Organizations](#) - Mental health focus
  - [Involvement Advising](#) - Student Engagement and Campus Life
  - [Mental Health Coalition](#) - Represent your student group
  - [Intramural Sports](#)
  - [Sport Clubs](#)
  - [Service Learning and Civic Engagement](#) - VT Engage
  - [Meraki LLC](#) - Wellness Living-Learning Community
  - [Experience VT](#) - Co-curricular involvement

## UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

- EMERGENCY CALL- 911
- SUICIDE PREVENTION HOTLINE - 988
- CRISIS TEXT LINE - 741741 ( Anywhere in USA )
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1-800-273-8255
- Hotline - 1-800-784-2433
- The Trevor Project (LGBT+ Helpline) - 1-866-488-7386

#mental health



# Community To Do

If you're new to our organization, then here are a few things you can do to get started:

- familiarize yourself with the wiki. Check out our resources, and the different pages people have added, and see if we're missing something that you think should be included.
- If you decide you'd like to contribute, go ahead and make an account in the top right corner.
- Creating/editing a page is simple and takes just a few minutes. Please don't delete things that other people have added, and be reasonable with your contributions.

[X] weekly meeting\*

[X] Organizing a list of interested clubs/community groups/school programs\*

[X] organizing community resources\*

[X] Build discord hub\*

[X] set up community meetings\*

[X] Talking to school programming and finding projects

Plan for Spring 2024:

- [ ] Visit different classes to present the work we are doing to students.
- [ ] Get over 25 professors to accept to provide extra credit for students for participating in a mental health-related activity
- [ ] Update all the pages on this book to keep the information up to date
- [ ] Plan for at least one large-scale event for the semester.
- [ ] .....

Work we are doing in fall 2023:

- [X] Gained a list of things that we could offer for extra credit from Erica
- [X] Sent emails to professors to get them to give extra credit and got some to accept
- [X] Hosted meeting every week under Active Minds to encourage mental health conversation on campus
- [X] Planning for the following semester to increase participation
- [X] Collaborating with ForYouPage on acquiring grants for this movement

# Involvement Opportunities at Virginia Tech

If you're a Blacksburg local or Virginia Tech student that is looking to get involved with Virginia Tech-specific initiatives, look no further.

## Mental Health

- [Cook Counseling](#): The Cook Counseling Center at Virginia Tech has a few different programs in need of involvement from Virginia Tech students that we work with closely.
  - Cook Therapy Group
  - Calls to action
    - Videos/photos
  - Staff Bike CRM Convo Host CRM Convo Roundtable
  - Peer Support Comm
  - CRM Toolbox for club
  - CRM ambassadors
- [Active Minds](#): A club at VT that aims to raise awareness about mental health, raise funds for critical mental health education and resources, promote positive mental health and wellness, educate students and educators about the signs and symptoms of mental health disorders, and encourage students who are struggling to reach out and seek help.
- [Hokie Wellness](#): The mission of Hokie Wellness is to foster a healthier Virginia Tech community by providing prevention services, education, outreach, and resources to employees and students. The department strives to educate and empower every Hokie to take an active and engaging day-to-day approach to their wellness in order to enjoy a long, healthful, and purpose-filled life. Programs:
  - [Peer Educators](#)
  - [Recovery Community](#)
  - [Hokie Collective](#)
  - [Hokie Hiccups](#)
  - [FEELS Group](#)

## Community Resiliency

- [The Indigenous Community Garden/The Community Friendship Garden](#): The Indigenous Community Garden (also known as the Community Friendship Garden) provides an opportunity for students, faculty, staff and other community members to learn how to

care for our plant relatives and live in a good relationship with the natural world which sustains us while simultaneously promoting food security and awareness of Indigenous traditional ecological knowledge.

- [Live Work Eat Grow Community Gardens](#): Excerpt from their website:

"Our gardens provide space for individual and household plots, summer camp, potluck suppers and hands-on volunteer and educational opportunities. We are excited to have a learning and service environment that promotes the growing of healthy food and dynamic community.

We currently have three community garden sites in Blacksburg with deer fencing, water access and gardening guidance. Individual plots are rented on an annual basis."

### **Disaster/Emergency Preparedness:**

- [Virginia Tech Emergency Management](#): Virginia Tech Emergency Management provides a wide variety of programs and services designed to promote emergency preparedness, response, and recovery at Virginia Tech. Programs:
  - [Trainings and Exercises](#)
  - [Building Emergency Coordinators](#)
  - [Student Advisory Board](#)
  - [Departmental Plans](#)

# Wellbeing To-do List For Extra Credits

At Active Minds at VT and ForYouPage.Org, alongside Cook Counseling Center and Hokie Wellness, we're delighted to offer a mental health education initiative with extra credit opportunities for Virginia Tech students. Our diverse To-do List includes Hokie Wellness sessions, Cook Counseling workshops, and advocacy activities like Hokie Hiccups and collaborations with mental health organizations. More than just earning credits, it's a journey towards enhanced understanding, community involvement, and personal growth in mental health. Eager to join or have your own ideas? Reach out to [activemindsatvirginiatech@gmail.com](mailto:activemindsatvirginiatech@gmail.com) - we're excited to work together on this impactful journey!

Please choose activities based on your professor's requirements.

**Discover more about our school's Cook Counseling Center and Hokie Wellness, along with their various workshops. Take a look at the offerings below:**

## 1. [Attending Wellness sessions / Training sessions offered by Hokie Wellness](#)

- Hokie Wellness at Virginia Tech offers a range of wellness and training sessions aimed at improving mental and emotional well-being. These include the Koru Mindfulness program for stress management, body positivity workshops, opioid overdose response training, financial wellness sessions on personal finance management, violence prevention workshops addressing healthy relationships and consent, and smoking/vaping cessation workshops. Each session is designed to enhance resilience and stress management skills, contributing significantly to overall mental health and well-being.

## 2. Attending Workshops offered by the Cook Counseling

- By attending workshops offered by the Cook Counseling Center at Virginia Tech, you can actively engage in sessions designed to enhance your mental health and well-being. These workshops provide valuable insights and tools to help you navigate various challenges, fostering personal growth and emotional resilience. It's a great opportunity for you to learn from experts and develop skills that are beneficial both in your academic journey and personal life.



### 3. [Attending or requesting a Community resiliency model workshop](#)

- Attending workshops offered by the Cook Counseling Center at Virginia Tech is an excellent way for you to engage with structured, time-limited educational programming. These sessions are designed to provide information and build skills on various mental health topics such as anxiety and mindfulness. These workshops are an opportunity for you to gain deeper insights and practical strategies for managing your mental well-being.

## **Support Virginia Tech's mental health education and services by sharing your valuable insights and feedback:**

### 5. [Collecting data about different mental health resources on campus](#) (Survey provided by Active Minds at VT to understand the issues that students are facing)

- Participating in the data collection about mental health resources on campus is a crucial step towards understanding and addressing the issues faced by students. By filling out the survey provided by Active Minds at VT, you contribute valuable information that helps identify the needs and challenges in student mental health. This action enables a deeper understanding of the campus's mental health landscape, aiding in the development of more effective support systems and resources. Your input is essential in shaping a more supportive and informed campus environment.

### 6. Filling out the Health Mind study (Mental health survey by the state of Virginia)

- Typically distributed exclusively by the university via your @vt.edu email, these are usually sent out in March or May.
- Filling out the Health Mind Study, a mental health survey by the State of Virginia, is an actionable item that contributes to a broader understanding of mental health issues faced by individuals. By participating in this survey, you provide essential data that can help in identifying prevalent mental health concerns, trends, and needs within the community. Your input is invaluable in shaping mental health services and support structures, ensuring they are tailored to effectively meet the needs of those they serve. This survey is an opportunity for you to make a meaningful contribution to the enhancement of mental health resources and awareness.

## **Interested in Advocacy? Explore these opportunities to get involved:**

### 7. [Get involved with Hokie Hiccups](#) (Hokies share their stories of struggle and resilience through expressive arts and creative mediums)

- Some examples of getting involved are not limited to the following:
  - Sharing your personal story through Hokie Hiccups,
  - Participating in Hokie Hiccups events, subject to availability,

- Volunteering at Hokie Hiccups events.
- Getting involved with Hokie Hiccups offers you a unique chance to connect and share in the collective journey of resilience and growth at Virginia Tech. This event, part of the Mental Health Coalition's initiative, is designed to normalize the struggles students face in college, reminding everyone that it's okay to have challenges. Hokie Hiccups creates a space for Hokies to share their personal experiences of growth and overcoming obstacles through various expressive arts and creative mediums. It's not just about sharing struggles, but also about celebrating resilience and the growth that comes from navigating life's 'hiccups'.

## 8. Attending and participating in the FEELS support group. (By students and for students mental health support group)

- Attending and participating in the FEELS Peer Support Group at Virginia Tech is an empowering way for you to join a student-led mental health support space. This group provides a platform for students to connect with peers, sharing experiences and strategies related to navigating mental health concerns and maintaining emotional well-being. While it's not a substitute for professional mental health treatment, FEELS offers a supportive environment for you to explore coping strategies and find solidarity in shared challenges, fostering a sense of community and mutual support.

## 9. Participate in events organized by mental health organizations. (Student organizations who work towards improving the mental health of students on campus)

- Check out <https://gobblerconnect.vt.edu/events?categories=3322> to find the most up-to-date and recent events.
- If you're interested in Virginia Tech's mental health organizations, find more information at <https://hokiewellness.vt.edu/students/outreach/mhc.html>.
- Participating in events organized by mental health organizations at Virginia Tech, such as those coordinated by the Mental Health Coalition (MHC), is a meaningful way to engage with and support mental health initiatives on campus. The MHC, comprising representatives from various student organizations, focuses on elevating mental health discussions, supporting programming efforts, and working towards common goals like policy changes. By getting involved, you can contribute to these efforts, enhance your personal and professional development through training and workshops, and deepen your understanding of campus mental health resources.

# Meals On Main

## Who We Are

Hey! We're Meals on Main, and we operate a free weekly food truck in Christiansburg, Virginia. Every Tuesday, we take the local YMCA's food truck (affectionately known as Becky) and give out roughly 150 meals. In the last five months (as of April 2024) we've given out over 1300 free meals, all at zero net cost to ourselves or the VTYMCA. We've gotten pretty lucky on our journey to feed people good food for free, but we'd like to share our operational methods, and hopefully help others to create sustainable systems for getting people free/affordable food and serve nutritious, tasty meals.



Becky the food truck, 12/12/23

## Our Mission

Hunger is a silent killer. It can be hard to recognize when someone around you is food insecure, and every single one of us knows someone who is. More than one in ten people in the United States

(the wealthiest nation on the planet!) are food insecure<sup>[1]</sup>, but what does that really mean? The USDA defines food insecurity as "a household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food."<sup>[2]</sup> On a day-to-day basis, that looks like not knowing where your next meal is coming from, or even when you'll be able to eat next. It's challenging to live that way, let alone work. To get a better idea of food insecurity rates near you (in the US only, sorry) check out [this great webpage](#) from Feeding America, an organization whose goal is collecting and compiling data on food insecurity for public use.

At Meals on Main, we believe in the power of food. It's one of a few "equalizers;" everyone needs food, regardless of their life situation, and everyone should have access to healthy, delicious food. Everyone deserves to have their basic needs met, and we do what we can to provide one of those needs, and build community in the process. We do our best to be available every single Tuesday, rain or shine, to reliably provide at least one meal per week, entirely for free, with almost no questions asked (more on that later).

## Our Inspiration

We're heavily inspired by Food Not Bombs, a group of independent collectives. Each chapter operates independently to share free food to those who need it. The food is usually vegan or vegetarian, so that it's accessible to as many people as possible, and their core beliefs are as follows (copied from Wikipedia):

- Meals are usually vegan or vegetarian. The Gainesville, Florida, USA chapter, for example, serves meals that include animal products such as chicken, pork chops, brisket, steak and shrimp.<sup>[1][2]</sup>
- Meals are free to anyone.
- Each chapter is independent and autonomous and makes decisions via [consensus](#).
- Dedication to [nonviolence](#).
- Views "food as a right not a privilege."<sup>[5]</sup>

From their beliefs, their goals follow logically (copied from Wikipedia):

1. To combat [poverty](#) and [homelessness](#)<sup>[6]</sup>
2. To facilitate community gatherings of hungry people
3. To allow anyone to volunteer to help cook, and then eat.<sup>[7]</sup>

Each collective has little to no contact with other collectives and operates within their own community. It's easier to get started than you think, and in the United States, there is always surplus food to be found, food that would otherwise go to waste. If this inspires you like it does us, then just do it! Everybody needs food, but not everyone can get the food that they need. Look

around your area, and you'll find people in need.

## **How We Got Started**

A dishwasher and a line cook walk into a bar [kitchen]. It sounds like a joke, but it's where this all started. Seth and Connor (that's us!) met working in the kitchen of a bar/restaurant. Our friendship began with a few book recommendations (namely [this one](#) and [this one](#)). We realized that we had a lot of shared values, and began cooking up a plan to feed people in the area. Our original intention was to put up a canopy in a parking lot and give out fried rice, at cost to ourselves. We began asking around our town for a parking lot that we could use, and got INCREDIBLY lucky. The local YMCA had a lovely looking parking lot, so we emailed them about using it. Ding! Reply: they have an entire food truck lying around, almost totally unused, and they'd be willing to let us use it to serve food in one of the communities that they already have a program in. And so, Meals on Main was born.

The first meal we served was a holiday meal consisting of turkey stuffed with bread crumbs, mashed potatoes with gravy, and collard greens. Since then, we've served over a thousand more meals, all nutritionally complete and (mostly) well-received by the community. A few of the other meals include beef lasagna, chicken/seafood gumbo, beef birria tacos, and chicken fried rice.





Our first meal, 12/12/2024

### **A Day on the Food Truck**

We serve food every Tuesday, and we always start early. We arrive at the local YMCA around 7:30, and hit the ground running. We retrieve the food we purchased from the Y's storage fridges, load up the truck, and drive over to the restaurant that we work at by 8am. We both work in the kitchen at the same restaurant, and they graciously allow us to use their equipment and prep space before the rest of the day's staff arrives (note: if you or someone on your team works in a restaurant, this can be HUGE, and cuts down on a lot of prep time. People are generally willing to help feed people who need it, and this is an easy way for restaurant owners to help without doing any labor).

We get started in the kitchen right away. Any recipe that's going to require something to simmer for a while is the first thing to get done, namely stews/soups. From there, we work backwards from

the parts that will take the longest to the parts that will take the least amount of time, with special emphasis on things that we won't be able to do once we leave the restaurant kitchen (e.g. anything that requires a food processor, lots of counter space, or other commercial equipment that we don't have on the food truck). Once the big pieces are squared away, we vacate the kitchen before 11am. Whenever anything needs to be moved from place to place, we take special care in securing all food in food-safe ways. This means heavily plastic wrapping any kind of liquid, storing any dryer elements in our Cambro containers, and securing everything on the food truck against any kind of shifting/movement during driving (lots of bungee cords!). From there, we park back at the YMCA and get the truck hooked up. We're fortunate to have a lot of built in appliances on the food truck. Becky has two ovens, a flat-top, a six-burner range, and 3 steam table containers, all running on a propane tank secured to the back of the truck. We also have a generator that powers the lights, water pump, hot water heater, fridges, and vent fan.

After parking at the Y, we move into the middle-prep phase. This is where we do what we can on the food truck. For example, when we made beef lasagna we put the lasagnas together on the food truck and started baking them in the ovens, but we made all of the sauce and shredded the cheese at the restaurant. This middle phase is variable in how long it takes, and depending on how much time we have, we'll start doing the dishes once the time-consuming bits are complete. Sometimes we'll grab lunch at a local spot and eat it on the truck, and we're ready to move again by 3pm.

We arrive at the service location by 3:30pm, get the generator and propane running, and enter the final prep phase. At this point, we're getting everything set for service, and doing any kind of easy, last minute preparations. Usually, that looks like getting everything into the steam tables, working out a plan for putting together meals quickly, and cutting up any fruits that'll be served with the meal. One of us will take a few minutes to set up a sign outside with that week's menu and allergens, and a canopy for people to wait under if it's raining.

We work with the YMCA for many reasons, but the most important piece is keeping this process sustainable. Through the YMCA (or any local government-recognized organization/nonprofit) we have access to the [CACFP meal reimbursement program](#). While we're setting up the food truck and finalizing preparations for service, the YMCA's AmeriCorps volunteers are inside with the kids, providing them with approved recreational activities. This is a key requirement for the branch of CACFP that we are reimbursed through, and there's no way that the two of us could do it without these awesome volunteers.



Virginia Tech Football Special Teams volunteering with Becky!

It's 5pm! Time for service. If all else has gone well, this part goes off with few issues. We do our best to accommodate any kinds of allergies or eating choices (vegan, vegetarian, etc.) on the fly. As we give out meals, we ask only one question of everyone that comes to get food: "How many kids, how many adults?" We only get reimbursed through CACFP for the meals served to people under 18. Generally, we have nearly equal numbers of kids and adults, so we aim for each meal to cost roughly half of the reimbursement per meal, that way we can serve food to adults at no cost. Technically, service is from 5-7pm, but we generally stay 30-60 minutes after 7pm, to catch any stragglers that might have been working or otherwise busy. While we wait for the last few people to trickle in, we get a jump on cleaning the food truck, and pack up around 7:45 (earlier if we give out all of the food we brought).

Upon getting back to the Y, we finish up any miscellaneous cleaning tasks, and group all of the dishes up for easy transport the next day. Our sink space is limited, so we often take the rest of the dirty dishes to the restaurant the next day, and clean them after we finish our shifts for the night. If you're looking to do something similar, the commercial dishwasher is the single most helpful part of having access to restaurant equipment. Dishes become a 45 minute affair, and we are done for the week.

## How It Works

The USDA has a funding program called the "[Child and Adult Care Food Program](#)" or CACFP, through which we are reimbursed for all food costs. We operate under a Virginia-specific arm of this program, the "At Risk Afterschool Meal Program." You can find out more [here](#). The requirements vary by state, and eligibility varies by school district, but on this page we'll detail how we do it here in Western Virginia. Chances are good that your state has a similar program with similar requirements.



There are a few requirements that must be met with every meal served, and they are best met in partnership with an established locally-operating nonprofit. If you haven't already guessed, we partner with our local YMCA to meet these requirements. An operation like ours is impossible without their help and resources, particularly

## **Getting Involved**

If you're seeing this page, presumably you're someone looking to improve your local community, and the lives of those around you. Maybe your heart hurts when you see someone whose basic needs aren't met. Maybe you're coming from a more politically aware angle, looking to help those who fell through the cracks of our current system, or maybe you just really like cooking food, and you want to leverage that skill for the good of those around you. Whatever the reason, if you're looking to sustainably give out food for free, you're in the right place. Hopefully our journey can inspire and inform you and a few friends, and we will be updating this wiki regularly, with lots of recipes, free tools, strategies, and general advice. Stay tuned, and check out some other pages while you're here.

## **Update: 8/30/2024**

On August 23, 2024, Seth and Connor received the overall award at the Igniting Connections Symposium for Early Childhood Education from the New River Valley Chapter of the Virginia Association for the Education of Young Children. They received the award for their efforts with Becky the Food Truck. They also created a space for three new full-time positions at the VT YMCA within the food truck program.