

## Feeding Families of Buford Highway

**Organization Name:** We Love Buford Highway, Inc.

**Main Organization Contact:** Lily Pabian, Executive Director (lily@welovebuhi.org)

### Project Summary

Over the past two years, our agency has fed over 98,000 people of Dekalb County, through culturally centric, community focused, mobile events. As we work our way towards an ongoing pandemic recovery and continued economic hardships of rising costs, we are committed to continuing our work in addressing the food insecurity issues that impact local immigrant communities of all ages.

The total immigrant populations represent nearly 40,000 people (undocumented immigrants not included) in which the agency serves in the following demographics: 38% are Latino / Latinx, 10% are Asian American or Pacific Islander, 11% are Black / African American, and 3,8% are White, with 18% of the total population living in poverty (2020 Census).

The **Feeding Families of Buford Highway** Project commits to feeding **300 families with nutritious, culturally centric foods every other month** impacting nearly **4,500 individuals in Q3 and Q4 of 2022**. We have fed over 3000 people (600 families) in Q1 and Q2 of 2022.

**Budget Breakdown: To impact 300 families (4,500 people) of the Buford Highway Corridor, District 2 communities. Cost includes event management and all logistics, outreach flyers, translations, canvassing, digital marcomms, volunteer management, and distribution site (located in areas of large community presence).**

**Total Requested: \$47,100.00**

<b>August – Back to School (theme) Saturday 8/27/2022</b>  <b>Total: Food: \$14,100.00 School Supplies: \$825.00</b>	Produce + Fruits & Dozen Large Eggs  <b>CPU: \$35 / 300</b>	Dry Staples (rice, beans, tortillas, pasta, canned products)  <b>CPU: \$12 / 300</b>	School Supplies (Pencils, glue sticks, pouch, scissors, sharpener, crayons, eraser)  <b>CPU: \$5.50 / 150</b>
<b>October – Dia De Los Muertos / Halloween family (theme) Saturday 10/29/2022</b>  <b>Total: Food: \$14,100.00 Kids activity: \$450.00</b>	Produce + Fruits & Dozen Large Eggs  <b>CPU: \$35 / 300</b>	Dry Staples (rice, beans, tortillas, pasta, canned products)  <b>CPU: \$12 / 300</b>	Children Activity  <b>CPU: \$3.00 / 150</b>
<b>December – Holiday Healing Event (theme) Saturday 12/17/2022</b>  <b>Total: Food: \$ 17,100.00 Kids activity: \$525.00</b>	Produce + Fruits & Whole Chicken (In time for Holidays)  <b>CPU: \$45 / 300</b>	Dry Staples (rice, beans, tortillas, pasta, canned products)  <b>CPU: \$12 / 300</b>	Christmas coloring books and crayons  <b>CPU: \$3.50 / 150</b>

## **Our Community's Lack of Access to Food**

The Buford Highway Corridor is a place that for over 40-years has been the multicultural hub of the South, a home to multi-generational households and businesses of immigrants and first-generation Americans. We attribute lack of access to healthy and affordable food in our communities to three main factors: lack of proximity to neighborhoods, linguistic isolation, and mandatory ID registration.

Lack of proximity to community: Immigrant households along Buford Highway are often multi-generational, with many mouths to feed, and parents tend to be essential workers who must juggle three or more jobs during their seven-day week. Many of the food-giving initiatives that were born out of the COVID-crisis did not consider the lack of mobility for these families (they do not have access to a car and are most comfortable going to places that are part of their daily work route).

School districts, particularly of those designated as Title I, of which a large percentage of the area resident students attend, are often operating through a drive-through model that effectively restricts access to those with vehicles and a drivers' license, positioning undocumented individuals to desperate means so they can feed their children. A majority of Dekalb County Public School's Region I schools along the corridor fall within the Title I designation.

Language isolation: Has been one of the reasons why our communities cannot access food. 51.8% of Doraville, 35.5% of Chamblee, and 21.1% of Brookhaven speak primarily Spanish, with lower but still present percentages accounting for Asian and Pacific Island Languages and other Indo-European Languages. This means that food-giving sites that do not provide interpreters and translators are creating linguistic barriers for Limited English Proficiency (LEP) populations. Members of our communities are less likely to attend events that are not a) promoted in their language, b) do not feel linguistically welcoming to them, and c) do not provide them with resources to navigate the process (sign-up, pick-up instructions, answering questions).

Mandatory ID registration: Undocumented immigrants accounted for 36% of the immigrant population in Georgia (American Immigration Council) in 2014, and in 2020, 1 in 13 children in the state lives with at least one undocumented family member. According to the American Immigration Council's Fact Sheet Immigrants in Georgia, the state has 20,610 active DACA recipients as of March 2020, and DACA has been granted to 25,743 people in total since 2012. Moreover, immigrant workers in 2018 accounted for 13% of the labor force and undocumented immigrants in Georgia paid an estimated \$563.7 million in federal taxes and \$355.2 million in state and local taxes (2018). Undocumented immigrants along Buford Highway, by not providing the ID required to receive food, were marginalized from a large part of these food giving events.

Data collection has been key to our events and the data we have collected has shown that 50% of our food goes to children under the age of 18. These results show that we have designed a program that not only gives back to the community with dignity and with their cultural diversity in mind, but that we are also reaching the most underserved communities and their children. In January, our data results pointed out, based on an additional survey question, that 47.1% of families need food, that 47.1% of families need rent assistance, and that 5.3% of families need clothes and school supplies.

We take great pride in our ability to curate these events in a way that brings resources to the community. We also make sure to have the support and respect of municipalities and police departments, positioning our program at the crossroads of community connection. As we look ahead to the next several years, we see a real need and opportunity to scale our program as a catalyst to build trust and impact to those least likely to trust and engage in public serving health activities. Our mobile

event invites partner participation from organizations such as Center for Pan Asian Community Services, CareSource, the Latin American Association, Latino Community Fund GA, Los Vecinos de Buford Highway, Fundación Adelante, Guatemala, and more.

### **Brief History of Impact**

In 2018, WLBH collaborated with the Atlanta Regional Commission's Livable Centers Initiative Program resulting in *23 Big Ideas* to enhance and strengthen the Buford Highway corridor in the cities of Chamblee and Doraville. In the same year, we partnered with Living Walls to feature nine BIPOC artists to celebrate Buford Highway's cultural diversity. We also hosted a Halloween/Día de los Muertos Parade, the Bikes and Bits and trolley food tours; that same year we partnered with Concrete Jungle to plant persimmon trees and paint a pedestrian path in a BH corridor shopping center parking lot, incorporating the owner's Asian heritage. We successfully mapped immigrant-owned locales and published the first Buford Highway Business Guide, which evolved into the BH Shuffle campaign to promote local immigrant-owned businesses. We launched BH Lights; a project focused on transforming existing unused urban spaces into places for community engagement. The project showcased light installations displayed in Latin, Asian, and Middle Eastern communities to reflect the corridor's unique demographic composition. BH Lights was awarded the KaBOOM! Play Everywhere Challenge which supports projects in the U.S. that encourage play in unexpected places for kids to thrive. This same year we launched In Whose Hearts is a Highway, an Oral History Project to document the corridor's stories, which were showcased on GSU's Special Collections & Archives Library website. In 2019 this project received an award from the Georgia Historical Records Advisory Council. In 2019, we were invited to an advisory role for the City of Brookhaven's Arts & Culture Master Plan, expanding our influence and involvement as a collective and advancing our mission in the community. The master plan was adopted in 2020 and our executive director sits on the city's Arts & Culture Commission.

Beginning in 2020 we pivoted our initiatives to assist Buford Highway residents who were heavily impacted by the COVID-19 crisis and launched The Feeding Families of Buford Highway a program under our CARE Pillar that addresses the growing food insecurity issues of the Buford Highway corridor and other well-being initiatives. Through CARE, the agency organized the first COVID-19 test site on Buford Highway and in 2021, worked to ensure that 1700 shots were administered to our communities through culturally centric mobile events (representing 6 local languages in outreach and interpreter services).

### **About We Love Buford Highway, Inc**

We Love Buford Highway is a charitable, 501(c)3 nonprofit with a mission to preserve the multicultural identity of Atlanta's Buford Highway Corridor. The agency's work brings individuals and communities together for perspectives and experiences shared through its people and stories to catalyze connection, awareness, and belonging. The organization sees its people as the epicenter for advocacy and impact where immigrant communities thrive for generations. Since 2017, WLBH has amassed an audience of over 20,000 followers across communication channels, offering programs and events that promote focus on the south's largest, immigrant friendly- community, while impacting over 98,000 immigrants throughout the pandemic. The organization meets its mission under four strategic initiatives: Story, Arts & Culture, Enterprise, and Care. We Love Buford Highway began as an Instagram account to document a changing Buford Highway corridor, an approximately ten-mile stretch of state road internationally recognized for its sizeable immigrant population, restaurants, and shops. Learn more at [www.welovebui.org](http://www.welovebui.org) or on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), and [Twitter](#) @welovebui, or reach out to [lily@welovebui.org](mailto:lily@welovebui.org). Listen to our immigrant stories podcast, [Voices of a Highway](#).

Past Event Photos:


