



# Network News

SUMMER 2020



Farmers at Big River Farms harvest onions.



Pastor Bruce and Brenda Carpenter of New Oil Christian Center



Wa Kou Hang grows organic produce at Big River Farms.

## FARM TO FAMILY—A WIN-WIN DURING TOUGH TIMES

Food shelf and meal program guests are receiving an increased benefit this summer: locally grown, fresh, organic produce from our own Big River Farms. Thanks to donor support, farmers can sell their produce directly to The Food Group for distribution to local food shelf partners. Your contributions are leveraged to provide nutritious, high-quality vegetables and fruits to families who are most affected by the economic downturn.

This year's farms-to-families produce distributions expand on past collaborations with local farmers, food co-ops, and gleaning partners. Donations have multiplied the volume of produce available during a year when both farmers and food shelf guests appreciate the extra support.

**"The pandemic created great uncertainty** for the farmers in our program, with many of their usual markets gone or scaled back," says Laura Mirafuentes, Big River Farms director. "At the same time, there's a high interest in local food. The additional funding we've received from donors during the COVID-19 crisis has double the impact, helping our farmers through purchase of their produce, and providing fresh food to our food shelf and meal program partners for their guests."

**New Oil Christian Center in the Camden neighborhood** of Minneapolis is a new partner since the COVID-19 emergency onset. Pastor Bruce Carpenter and his wife Brenda are leading the small congregation to prepare and provide 3000

meals each week, mostly to homeless adults and families in temporary shelter, and to seniors with medical conditions or mobility challenges. Learning that they could get fresh farm food at no charge through partnership with The Food Group and Big River Farms was "a match made in heaven," according to Bruce. Volunteers use the church's commercial-grade kitchen to prepare meals that are delivered to distribution sites on their "Soul Good" food trailer. "We deliver hot, wellbalanced meals so our guests can eat healthy food," he says. "We so appreciate these deliveries from the farm," Brenda adds. "And our volunteer cooks are trying new foods and finding new recipes like sautéed turnip greens!"

This year also happens to be a good growing year, so there is a bountiful harvest. **Farmer Wa Kou Hang is pleased to participate in the initiative.** "Organic produce should be affordable and cheaper than conventional produce because we manage soil fertility naturally. Supporting good health is one of our core operating farm business principles. I am happy to be part of organic producers who can participate in Farm to Food Shelf. Our produce will reach low-income families who have limited access to quality organic produce," he says.

"It's amazing to have this funding to allow our farmers to get the healthy food to lower-income homes and people who most need the food, and still pay the farmers," Laura says. "I look forward to the continued growth of this partnership!"

# Such a time as this

*A Message from the Executive Director*



"Such a time as this" is a phrase I think about a lot these days. As we continue to face challenges unlike any of us have ever seen, we are presented with an opportunity to reimagine "normal." COVID-19 has forced us to confront many tough realities that have existed for a long time. For many families, putting food on the table has long been a challenge—especially for communities of color in Minnesota. And yet, at such a time as this, we have a chance to do better.

I am inspired by our community's generosity— you are giving your time and money to get food to those who need it most.

I am heartened that we are engaging more deeply in tough conversations: conversations about where our food comes from and how we can better support local farmers.

Conversations about systemic racism and inequities in the food system. Conversations about real and lasting ways to lift people out of poverty. While none of us has all the answers, with collaboration, vulnerability and courage, I believe change is possible.

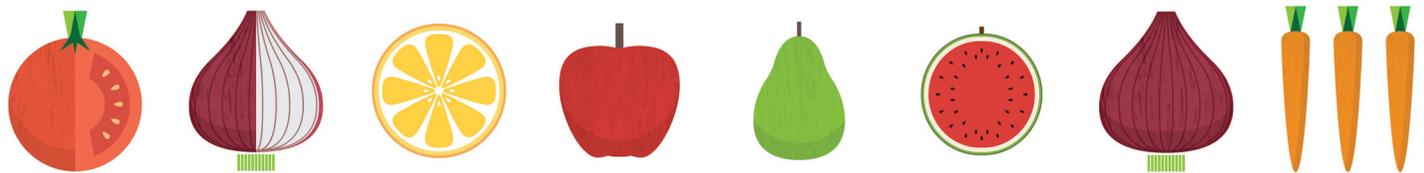
You have responded quickly and generously to rapidly changing food needs in recent months. You have

increased our purchasing power to buy food from farmers of color, supporting their businesses and providing beautiful, healthy produce to folks who otherwise would not have access to it through our Farm to Food Shelf initiative. You have expanded our ability to procure culturally relevant foods, knowing that accessing familiar food is important to promote health. **You have increased our capacity, moving double the amount of food in and out of our warehouse since April.**

You have been amazing partners during these difficult days. Together, we have the resilience and the resources for such a time as this. Thank you for your ongoing commitment and investment in the work of fighting hunger and nourishing our community!

With gratitude,

Sophia Lenarz-Coy  
Executive Director



## YOUR SUPPORT IN ACTION Since March 1

**3,600,998**  
meals provided

**80%**  
**INCREASE**  
in outgoing  
deliveries to food  
shelves

**31**  
new agency  
and program  
partners

More than  
**2700**  
volunteer hours  
preparing food  
for distribution

# Call to Action: Volunteers Needed!

The need for emergency food has increased, and we need your help more than ever to feed people in need. Volunteer shifts are Monday through Friday, 9-11 am and 1-3 pm, along with 4-6 pm shifts on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Your help is truly appreciated!

Individuals who meet the age and health guidelines can sign-up through our volunteer hub at [thefoodgroupmn.volunteerhub.com](http://thefoodgroupmn.volunteerhub.com). To schedule a group of up to 14 volunteers please contact Dan Johnson: [djohnson@thefoodgroupmn.org](mailto:djohnson@thefoodgroupmn.org).

Volunteers are screened upon arrival according to health guidelines. Volunteers are required to wear masks and are always spaced six feet apart. Our work areas are sanitized before each shift.

From the beginning of April through mid-July volunteers contributed over 2,700 hours; packing 575,000 pounds of food for our neighbors. You can support the community by helping!

*Hope to see you soon!*



A volunteer helps assemble culturally connected emergency food packs for distribution.



Volunteers prepare for community food distribution at Powderhorn Park, Minneapolis.

## Donor Spotlight: Entrust Datacard™

Entrust Datacard hosted a Virtual Food Drive and raised over \$9,000 to help with the emergency response to the COVID-19 virus as well as the severely limited food access due to grocery stores destroyed or closed due to the unrest following the killing of George Floyd. Since our partnership began thirty years ago, Entrust Datacard has given nearly \$39,000 towards the fight against hunger in our communities. We are grateful and proud to partner with a company who values giving back.

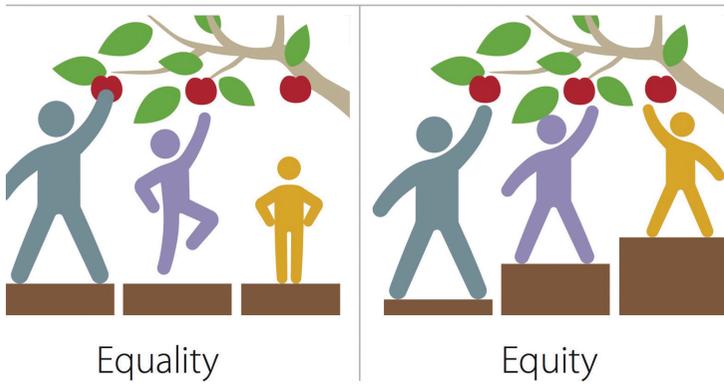
"At Entrust Datacard, giving back to the communities where our employees live and work is an important

part of who we are. These are challenging times for many people around the world and we feel it is important to offer our support, especially around the Twin Cities where we are based. Our team really stepped up for the virtual food drive, donating more than \$9,000. I am humbled by the generosity of my colleagues and proud of the impact we are making."

Matt Stern  
Senior Vice President of  
Business Development  
at Entrust Datacard



To create your own Virtual Food Drive for your employee team, worship community, or organization, contact Talia at [tmiracle@thefoodgroupmn.org](mailto:tmiracle@thefoodgroupmn.org).



"Equity vs Equality" by MPCA Photos is licensed under CC BY 2.0

## Racial Equity and Hunger: What is the connection?

**Q: What do we mean by equality and equity?\***

**A: Equality** is providing the same level of support, regardless of circumstances, need and historical trauma. This results in unequal outcomes. **Equity** provides targeted support to communities by acknowledging these realities, therefore achieving equitable outcomes.

**Q: What is racial equity?**

**A:** Racial equity focuses on achieving equitable outcomes for communities of color by providing support proportionate to the historical trauma and structural racism that each community of color has experienced.

**Q: How are racial equity and hunger related?**

**A:** The BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) community is disproportionately impacted by hunger. According to the Racial Equity and Hunger Network, Communities of color are consistently 2-3 times more likely to experience hunger than their white counterparts. This disparity has only grown during COVID-19.

**Q: How is equity woven throughout The Food Group's work?**

**A:** The Food Group focuses on distributing culturally specific and connected foods and working with partner agencies to increase cultural competency. The staff participate in equity and anti-racism training and development and have formed the IDEA Council to advance ongoing goals and strategies for Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Action both within and outside the organization. Our complete equity statement is posted at [thefoodgroupmn.org/who-we-are/mission-and-vision](https://thefoodgroupmn.org/who-we-are/mission-and-vision).

\*Definitions from Racial Equity and Hunger Network: [racialequityhunger.org](https://racialequityhunger.org)

## Hunger Bash and COVID-19

We made the difficult decision to not host in-person or virtually the Hunger Bash this year due to COVID-19 and the importance of your safety. We appreciate your support and attendance in past years. The collective impact of your generosity has provided millions of nutritious meals in our community!

We will miss gathering with you this September but we appreciate your support "in spirit." We hope you are staying safe and healthy and we look forward to meeting in person again when it is safe to do so.

## The Food Group In the News

Do you want to hear more stories about our work?



Scan the QR code or search online for any of the following news stories or visit [thefoodgroupmn.org/news/pressmedia](https://thefoodgroupmn.org/news/pressmedia) for more links.

*July 21, 2020* KARE 11: Minnesota food banks, shelves prepare for hunger surge

*June 25, 2020* Star Tribune: New data project a Great Depression-level surge in hunger by fall in Minnesota

*June 19, 2020* Star Tribune: Minneapolis organizations, groups transition to meet neighborhoods' needs after George Floyd death

*May 18, 2020* MPR News with Angela Davis: Combating food insecurity during the pandemic

**THANK YOU, CORPORATE AND FOUNDATION PARTNERS FOR YOUR COVID-19 RELIEF!**



Sit  
Investment  
Associates

