



Network News

SPRING 2022



Angel Maldonado, affordable grocery program driver, with featured foods.

Mobile food programs grow access and affordability

by Jadea Washington

It's Saturday morning and I'm waking up my friends after a cozy night IN. The smell of green peppers and sausage, cooked to near perfection on an old cast iron pan, makes the wakeup a little easier.

Thirty dollars got our family of five a fresh and delicious meal with food to share. Nearly unheard of these past few months as inflation has impacted gas and grocery access everywhere. **Energy and labor have raised food prices 7.3% in Minnesota this March alone. For many, this means stretching budgets and cutting out, fresh and nutritious foods.**

"People are forced to choose between essentials and often grocery budgets get cut first."

Fare For All is built on keeping prices affordable. For more than 30 years, the program has offered sustainably low prices. The program works similar to a co-op, buying quality foods in bulk, packing with volunteer help, and distributing savings to customers. Anyone can shop at one of the 32+ pop up markets across the Twin Cities and Greater MN.

**Free &
affordable
food for
all**

Grocery choices include packs of fresh produce, frozen meats, and a special Hot Buy that changes each month.

The Hot Buy this spring is the Brunch Box, a full meal pack offered as our community members begin observing spring holidays like Ramadan, Easter, and the coming of the sun (albeit spotty).

I checked the Fare For All schedule for a location and day that worked for me and picked up a Brunch Box, complete with hash browns, cheddar and green bell peppers, turkey and breakfast meats, and cinnamon rolls.

I needed fresh fruit and vegetables so I paired this with the produce pack for \$10.

The Food Group believes everyone should have access to food that nourishes and supports healthy lifestyles. This means the packs are filled with quality, locally sourced, and fresh foods at nearly 40% off of retail price.

With Fare For All I was able to share connection and a lot of food with my household for the day. We started the morning with a meal for the entire family under \$40.

Your support of the Food Group keeps Fare For All prices low. Together we are ensuring nutritious food is accessible.

Optimism Outshines Challenges

Sophia Lenarz-Coy,
Executive Director



It's spring! The greenhouses at Big River Farms are brimming with seedlings ready to be planted. The weather this spring has been unpredictable at best yet it's the time of year where we know summer is on its way. The sun is shining longer and I can't help but be filled with renewed optimism for our farmers and the growing season.

My optimism comes alongside the global challenges and uncertainties our community faces. Inflation is soaring and we haven't seen food and gas prices this high in decades. These costs impact all of us, especially those already feeling the stress of budgets not going as far as they did even months ago. Moments like this are when our work at home is even more important.

With your continued support, Fare For All and Twin Cities Mobile Market are sharing fresh, affordable, and nutritious groceries with people and in places that need them most. **We continue to meet more families who need food access programs as their budgets are stretched for essentials and food.**

We are also working at the policy level to support the **Hunger-Free Schools Act**, a statewide initiative that would ensure all students in MN public schools continue to receive free breakfast and lunch next school year. This would be a major step forward in easing building pressure from the emergency food system while ensuring all kids have the nutrition they deserve to learn, grow, and thrive.

Thanks to you, our supporters, for continuing to invest in a more just and equitable food system. Together we can continue to expand our mobile markets, enrich farmers, grow more crops, and share nourishing food with people in our community.

In gratitude,

Sophia Lenarz-Coy
Executive Director



IN THE NEWS

As grocery costs rise, buying food in bulk and at a discount through Fare For All and the Twin Cities Mobile Market gets more popular across Minnesota.

See the story on Good Morning America, WCCO, Star Tribune, and the Pioneer Press. thefoodgroupmn.org/press

Food System Impact

75

affordable
grocery sites

8.2%

rise in inflation,
a record high in the
Twin Cities

7.3%

increase in grocery
cost this March

40%

jump in gas prices
in March alone

50
acres

of organic
farmland
grown and cover
cropped by BRF
farm teams

Celebrating Our Volunteers

"Whether it's packing beans and rice into bags or sorting food, I can confidently say I have loved my experiences at The Food Group."

- Matthew, Wayzata High School Student



Get involved!

Scan for more
volunteer
opportunities.



Matthew has volunteered at The Food Group for three years. This spring he organized a neighborhood food drive and helped provide 521 meals for community members. Thank you, Matthew!

Growing Season Begins at Big River Farms

As 18 farm teams prepare their seedlings and soil for the growing season, we are reflecting on the history of our ancestors who farmed the land. This spring a member of the Dakota community offered truths on ownership and justice at our first land acknowledgment at Big River Farms.

We are working toward a more equitable food system. Beginning this year, anyone with Indigenous roots who joins the program will have free access to farm on the land.



Yawelyahsi-Yó- Farm

Generational Generosity:

Giving through an IRA makes sense to long-time donor

"I don't spend a lot of money on myself. I prefer to share!"

Margaret's grandmother was widowed with four children yet she *always* set an extra place at the dinner table in case someone showed up who needed a meal. Margaret grew up in a low income household yet her mother continued to be generous to others. From them, she says she learned **"generational generosity."**

Margaret recently started making contributions to The Food Group through her retirement fund. Once reaching age 70 ½, she is required to take annual distributions from her IRA. Margaret is a retired social worker who believes deeply in providing essentials like food and shelter. "It's in my blood and it's reflected in the charities I support."

"It makes sense to designate gifts 'off the top' from our IRA distribution to send to charity. We live comfortably off our retirement income." She gives to local, national, and international causes. She has supported the work of The Food Group for more than 25 years and has been able to increase gift amounts by using her IRA distribution as a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD).

"It has allowed me to give more to benefit our community." Margaret encourages others who qualify to take advantage of the QCD and its tax benefits.

Contact your financial advisor or IRA administrator to start growing your giving with QCD today.

thefoodgroupmn.org/ira

Twin Cities Mobile Market

Your neighborhood market on a bus is doubling our stops this summer! Fresh produce, frozen meat, dairy, proteins, and grocery staples sold at affordable prices will be available at 52 spots across MN.

Visit thefoodgroupmn.org/groceries for Mobile Market schedule.



Summer Events

Virtual Program Updates: Inflation & Community Solutions

Thursday, June 16, 8:30-9 am

Join us online for our semi-annual program update!

Volunteer Appreciation Party

**Friday, June 17, Noon-3 pm
New Hope**

Outdoor activities and ice cream truck! Open to all our volunteers.

Tour & Volunteer Opportunities

**Thursday, June 23, 5-7 pm,
New Hope**

**Tuesday, July 19, 9-11:30 am,
New Hope**

**Tuesday, August 2, 10-Noon, Big
River Farms, Marine on St. Croix.**

RSVP for any of these events to info@thefoodgroupmn.org and we'll provide you with more details.

Local Co-op Farm Tour

**Saturday, July 16, 10am-4pm, Big
River Farms, Marine on St. Croix**

More info at thefoodgroupmn.org/coopfarmtour



IRA GIVING

**Twin Cities
Mobile Market
accepts Market
Bucks and EBT
payment to help
stretch food
budgets!**

