



Network News

FALL 2022

INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIPS AND SOLUTIONS TO NOURISH OUR COMMUNITY

There are strong headwinds for local food shelves and hunger relief agencies. Inflation is at a 40-year high. Free school meals and other pandemic-era hunger and economic relief programs have ended. As a result, **visits to food shelves are on the rise.**

The Food Group provides tools and resources to meet the needs of today while building towards a stronger future. Here are a few of the ways, beyond providing food, that we are partnering with local food shelves to meet their needs.

Need: High-quality educational opportunities to train food shelf staff and enhance their operations.

Solution: Educational workshops

As part of our quarterly agency meetings, which brings hunger relief agencies together to network and learn, **The Food Group hosted two free educational workshops so far this year** on topics selected by our partners including recruiting a more diverse volunteer base and incorporating storytelling into fundraising.

Need: Funding to expand food shelf infrastructure to meet the growing need.

Solution: Infrastructure grants to build their capacity

The Food Group recently **awarded 19 grants totaling \$90,000 to local food shelf and hunger relief agencies**, with a focus on smaller agencies with less resources.

These grants are being used to purchase new refrigerators, expand freezer space, add more shelving, incorporate new multi-lingual signage, and increase the variety of culturally familiar foods they are offer. The Food Group will offer a second round of grants later this fall.

Need: Opportunities to collaborate with and learn from peer hunger relief agencies to better engage communities using an equity lens.

Solution: Food Shelf Leadership Cohort Program

The Food Group Food Shelf Leadership Cohort Program engaged five hunger relief programs in 2022. Participants gained educational opportunities and collaborated to identify ways to better meet the needs of their community. **The outcome is stronger relationships and innovative actions among rural, suburban, and urban hunger relief agencies.** Cohort member YMCA Camp St. Croix installed a hydroponic growing system to grow fresh produce for camp meals and local food shelves.



"We used our grant to buy a commercial freezer, equipping us to store more food. This grant is helping us with the rising cost of food and equipment and reassuring our patients that there are others in the community who care about them."
-Tou Dy Lee, Director of NorthStar Health's Community Basic Needs Program

Over 5 Million meals distributed so far in 2022 | 220 food shelf and hunger relief partners

AN ABUNDANCE OF GRATITUDE FOR YOU

Sophia Lenarz-Coy,
Executive Director



This is my favorite time of year. Autumn showcases so many things I love about Minnesota. From public green spaces filled with brightly colored leaves to harvest season at local farms, this time of year is one that evokes gratitude and celebration. **At The Food Group, we are celebrating all you do to ensure food reaches those in our communities who need it most.** Because of you, this summer;

- 18 farm teams had a successful growing season, providing thousands of pounds of organically grown, culturally connected produce to our food shelf partners.
- More local foods were made available, strengthening our local economy, and supporting local growers and producers.
- Our affordable grocery programs, Fare For All and Twin Cities Mobile Market, reached even more shoppers who can't easily access groceries.

This community impact is not possible without your continued support.

Inflation has dramatically altered the food landscape. While it has become more difficult for all of us to afford quality, culturally relevant foods, **inflation hits lower income households harder.** According to a recent food equity report from our colleagues at Partnership for a Healthier America, food is 27% of the total budget for those in the lowest income quartile. This is compared to 7% of the household budget for families at higher income levels. **Inflation has made our already inequitable food system worse and your impact even more important.**

We know there is enough food and resources to eliminate hunger in Minnesota. It is your generosity that is creating solutions, bringing an abundance of food into our communities and long-term change to our food system.

As I reflect on the things I am grateful for, you are one of them. Thank you for providing a bounty of hope along with nourishing foods to our partners and the thousands of people who are affected by hunger in our community.

With gratitude,

Sophia Lenarz-Coy
Executive Director



90% increase in food purchased through Fare for All, our affordable grocery program.

Low-income households spend 27% of their income on food.

Higher income households spend 7% of their income on food.

(source: 2020 USDA data)



Food prices surged 11.4% over the last year, the largest 12-month increase since May 1979.

(Source: Reuters)

INFLATION IMPACTING LOCAL FAMILIES

Rising prices continue to impact everyone and especially those on limited budgets.

The Food Group's affordable grocery programs are more essential than ever, ensuring folks have access to quality and affordable foods.

With the rising costs of food, **more local families are turning to our affordable grocery programs, Fare For All and Twin Cities Mobile Market, to put food on the table.**

Laura, a recent Fare For All shopper commented, "What I love about Fare For All is the affordable options of the different food packs available. With costs rising everyday it helps to have something stable to rely on. Also, that there are always different products in the packs so it is easy to have a varying menu."

GROWING PLANTS, CULTURE, & CONNECTION

Your generosity is creating a space for the Sudanese Farming Group to learn and practice organic farming methods on a plot of land at The Food Group



"We are so happy and grateful to The Food Group and its Big River Farms education program. It has been truly transformative to our community. We didn't just grow plants, we grew lifelong relationships, amazing memories, and intergenerational connections that are essential to our collective culture."

- Khalid Elhassan, Sudanese Farming Group Founder



The space in front of The Food Group's warehouse in New Hope is no ordinary industrial park lawn. Instead, during the growing season, you'll find half an acre of lush Egyptian spinach, rows of ripe tomatoes, arugula, okra, and Armenian cucumbers crawling to the top of a 30-foot hoop house. On evenings and weekends, you might also run into Sudanese farmers busy tending their crops or attending a class on farm food safety.

Over the past several years, **The Food Group and community members have converted our front lawn into a diversified urban garden and farm**, but this was the first year we partnered with the Sudanese Farming Group to turn it into a site for small farm business incubation. This urban plot of land exists for emerging farmers who want to be part of our Big River Farms education program without the barrier of driving to our land in Marine on Saint Croix. Over the summer, **more than 50 Sudanese community members, including youth, adults, and elders, participated in the Big River Farms education program**, and put their skills into practice on this urban plot in New Hope.

Khalid explains their focus was to cultivate "ethnically relevant crops that enrich not just our dining tables but also the heritage, cultural & technical farming skills associated with those crops."

Using this space as an incubator site helps address the lack of available urban farmland and eliminate the transportation barrier that prohibits many aspiring growers – like the Sudanese Farming Group – from getting started farming.

By supporting these small farmers, you are helping **create an ongoing supply of local food for every table, today and in the future.**



50,000

Pounds of food and produce have been supplied by local producers to our hunger relief partners and affordable grocery programs, in just August!



18

Farm teams are learning organic and regenerative farming practices through our Big River Farms education program.



775,000

Pounds of fresh produce have been distributed to our hunger relief partners, so far, in 2022.



A WINDOW INTO THE NEEDS OF OUR COMMUNITY



Andersen Corporation hosted a volunteer project in partnership with The Food Group this August at their campus in Oak Park Heights. The Food Group worked with several of our hunger relief partners to determine what was most needed in the community. **Two needs emerged – healthy snacks for kids and hygiene items.** Andersen Corporation employees packed two kits – kid packs with healthy snack foods and hygiene kits filled with shampoo, soap, and toothpaste (which are often expensive and ineligible for families to purchase with benefits).

Altogether, this amazing group of volunteers assembled 4,000 kid packs and hygiene kits for the community!



A group of Andersen Corporation volunteers packed healthy snack packs for kids and hygiene kits to distribute via food shelves across our community.

"The entire Customer Experience Leadership team greatly enjoyed it (and worked hard)! So glad we could incorporate it into our session. Thank you!" ~ Dave Schmiechen, Andersen Corporation Vice President Customer Experience and Board Member of The Food Group

Send us a note at volunteer@thefoodgroupmn.org to learn how your company or community group can host a volunteer event this holiday season!



Upcoming Events

Save the Date: Give to the Max Day

November 17th

DOUBLE YOUR IMPACT ON NOVEMBER 17th!
\$100K Matching Gift Opportunity



Minnesota's annual day of giving returns this year on Thursday, November 17th. The Manitou Foundation is offering a **\$100,000 match** for donations to The Food Group!

Give to the Max is a statewide giving event that raises millions each year for more than 6,000 causes across Minnesota and beyond. Considered Minnesota's holiday for generosity, donors have given more than \$225 million since the inaugural Give to the Max Day in 2009.

Visit Givemn.org/thefoodgroupmn to make your gift.

Walk to End Hunger

November 1 - 30

The Walk to End Hunger is a fundraising walk taking place the entire month of 'No Hunger November' with an event held on Thanksgiving Day at the Mall of America.



100% of the net proceeds are distributed to local hunger relief organizations.

Registration for this year's Walk to End Hunger opens October 1st. You can register to walk, create a team, or donate to The Food Group team at www.walktoendhunger.org.

Tour The Food Group

Tuesday 11/15 5-6pm
Wednesday 12/7 10-11am

Tour & Volunteer at The Food Group

Thursday 10/27 5-7pm

Virtual Update

Thursday 12/15 8:30-9am

A virtual update on how inflation is impacting hunger relief efforts.

Please RSVP to info@thefoodgroupmn.org or by calling 763-450-3860 to attend any of these upcoming events or for more details.

CORPORATE & FOUNDATION PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

Thank you to our generous partners for joining us in fighting hunger and nourishing our community.



GET DIGITAL UPDATES AT THEFOODGROUPMN.ORG AND [@THEFOODGROUPMN](https://twitter.com/THEFOODGROUPMN)