

# Network News

Winter 2023



## Local foods fill the hunger gap

"The items we provide, that's what people told us they needed. We listened to them, we had an ear." – Miss Bettie and Dr. Russell Pointer Sr.

**The Food Group is proud to provide our partners with locally grown and sourced foods. Thanks to our supporters, local foods are becoming a staple at food shelves.**

In the summer The Food Group loads our trucks with the lush, green produce picked from farmers fields. In the winter we collaborate with local producers to provide proteins like meat, beans, and fish which supply vital nutrients and are often the base of a hearty meal. **Your investment in this work ensures that our food shelf partners always have nourishing food to share with the community, no matter the time of year.**

Our partner, Minneapolis Central Church of Christ (MCCC) in North Minneapolis recognizes the need for more nutritious foods in the community. MCCC is in an area where full service grocery options have been historically unavailable. Many families with kids and seniors in the neighborhood need a reliable source of nourishing and comforting food.

Dr. Russell Pointer Sr, pastor at MCCC, explains that **"just because you're having a hard time doesn't mean you shouldn't enjoy all of the seasons. This year we gave away**

**local turkeys, ham and all of the sides to complete a meal during the holiday season."**

MCCC serves a diverse population, so offering a variety of food choices is most welcoming. Hmong, Indigenous, and African American community members are welcomed with proteins that they are familiar with preparing, like chicken, bison, ground beef, or eggs. All of these foods have increased significantly in price over the last couple years, becoming inaccessible for families on a budget.

**Miss Bettie, food shelf director at MCCC, says "The number of families we serve has gone up 150%. They come here because we choose items that we know our community wants."** The Food Group and our partners value making local and culturally connected food a resource for everyone in the community year round. With your generous support, The Food Group distributed 240,372 pounds of local food in 2022

**A strong local food system is a key piece to empowering communities, improving health, and it lays the foundation for a future without hunger.**



## Local Impact in 2022

**53**  
local farm  
partners



**25,000lbs**  
fresh produce reclaimed  
at the Mpls Farmers Market



**5,000lbs**  
organic produce gleaned  
from local farms and orchards



**289%**  
more local produce reclaimed  
this year



**240,372lbs**  
local food  
shared with our community

## Independence & Equity

Sophia Lenarz-Coy,  
Executive Director



Since 1976, The Food Group has been bringing together a network of people and organizations to fight hunger and nourish our community. We are proud to be the first independent food bank in our 30+ county service area. Independence allows us to be creative and flexible in our programs, growing and responding to what communities want and need.

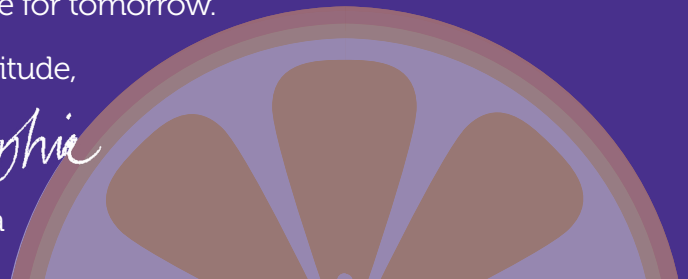
### Your support to an independent food bank provides:

- **Variety and choice for anti-hunger partners.** We leverage your gifts to provide culturally connected foods—often more expensive and harder to obtain—fresh local produce, and pantry staples to 200+ food access partners.
- **Nourishing food for community health and wellbeing.** Our Food Policy at The Food Group ensures nutritious food is at the center of our programs. We prioritize using our resources to source and distribute quality, fresh, and culturally connected food.
- **Flexibility to prioritize the diverse needs of food access partners.** We can partner with emerging food access organizations to meet needs in critical moments and build long term food security. Relationships like this keep us supporting community-led change.

Our independence has opened doors for more than 47 years of innovation at The Food Group. We have evolved beyond food banking to proudly be a food equity organization. The Food Group is providing food for today through our essential hunger relief services, and expanding into new types of programming to build change for tomorrow.

In gratitude,

*Sophia*  
Sophia





# Preparing for the growing season

Farmers in the Big River Farms education program have started preparing for the summer growing season. By attending weekly courses taught by local farmers and experts, farmers build their skills, business, and plan for the season. This year has started with classes on vegetable crop planning, how to enter the produce market, and organic soil maintenance.

Farmers will begin field work this March in greenhouses and continue lessons outdoors as the Minnesota weather warms.

Follow the farm at [@bigriverfarms](#)



## Supporter Spotlight

Matching gifts maximize your impact



“If you believe that everyone deserves access to nutritious food and want to help people local to Minnesota, **The Food Group is the best option.**”

Kurt Johansen, board member at The Food Group, is VP & Group Counsel at Ameriprise Financial. Kurt takes advantage of his employer match program when he gives to The Food Group—doubling the impact of his gift.

“Donating to The Food Group makes a meaningful difference to people facing hunger in our communities. It is very easy for me to make a gift through my employer which is matched to make my donation twice as big!”

Scan the QR code or visit [thefoodgroupmn.org/match](https://thefoodgroupmn.org/match) to see if your employer offers gift matching for current employees or retirees!



“I think volunteering is so important –there are a lot of people who cannot afford food, especially in the times today, and The Food Group is a good place to start. You know, I just love what it’s all about.” -Pam Bachelder, office volunteer

To get involved or learn more about volunteer opportunities, visit: [thefoodgroupmn.org/volunteer](https://thefoodgroupmn.org/volunteer)



1.8 million meals donated

## Meeting the Match

THANK YOU for helping us meet our holiday match! Combined with matching funds from Luther Auto, Ameriprise, and Medica during the holiday season, together we shared 1.8 million meals with families across our community.

**Luther**  **Medica**

**Ameriprise**   
Financial

## Events

### Minnesota FoodShare Month

Feb 27th-April 9th: Let's keep food shelves statewide stocked all year. Find out if your local food shelf is participating at: [gmcc.org/march-campaign](http://gmcc.org/march-campaign)

### National Volunteer Month

April 1st-30th: Celebrate The Food Group volunteers who bring our mission to life with gifts of time and talent. Stay tuned for special events and get involved at: [thefoodgroupmn.org/volunteer](http://thefoodgroupmn.org/volunteer)

### Tour The Food Group Warehouse

March 23rd & April 11th: Join us at our warehouse in New Hope to tour our facilities, meet a few of our staff and learn how we're providing food to those who need it most in our communities. To RSVP for a tour email [lmirafuentes@thefoodgroupmn.org](mailto:lmirafuentes@thefoodgroupmn.org)

### Soil Health Field Day

June-July: Join us for a field session at Big River Farms! Learn about the building blocks of nutrient rich soil and sustainable organic farming.

Get Involved: [thefoodgroupmn.org/events](http://thefoodgroupmn.org/events)

## Twin Cities Mobile Market Brings Groceries Where They're Most Needed

The Twin Cities Mobile Market is a traveling market offering fresh, locally sourced produce, frozen meat, dairy, proteins, and grocery staples below retail price. We build access to affordable groceries for more than 10,000 households in Minneapolis and St. Paul.

More at: [thefoodgroupmn.org/groceries](http://thefoodgroupmn.org/groceries)



"I take two buses to get to the grocery store. There's nothing in this area. **We appreciate the mobile market here like you wouldn't believe.**" -Tammi, market customer



Get digital updates: [thefoodgroupmn.org](http://thefoodgroupmn.org) | [@thefoodgroupmn](https://twitter.com/thefoodgroupmn)