

Network News

Spring 2023



Let's make it better. Together.

"A lot of places in the metro are doing this deep, thoughtful work. . . but we're still seeing this crazy increase [in food shelf visits] across the board. – Jessica Hauser, Valley Outreach

Valley Outreach is a longtime partner to The Food Group, sharing many of the values that help build a nourishing food system. Located just east of the metro in Washington County, Valley Outreach is Minnesota's first SuperShelf, meaning shoppers can choose from an intentional selection of fresh produce, protein, dairy, and culturally connected groceries.

Food shelf visits this spring are looking very different, says Jessica Hauser, Development and Communications Manager at Valley Outreach. **Just a few weeks ago, the food shelf served nearly 1000 families in one week, more than double their previous pandemic era average of 350 families each week.**

According to recent data from Hunger Solutions, food shelf visits across all of Minnesota have been rising rapidly—well beyond the levels of hunger experienced during the pandemic. This past year, **families made 1.9 million more visits to MN food shelves than the year before**, marking an unprecedented total of 5.5 million food shelf visits.

Jessica shared about a client who recently visited Valley Outreach, traveling from Rochester, MN, nearly 100 miles away. For this person's family, Valley Outreach was a reliable and accessible place where they were able to meet the needs of their household.

This is far from a feel-good story, though. Jessica explains, "We were happy to help that family in the moment but it shows there's a bigger problem system wide in being able to help people get the resources they need."

When you support The Food Group, you support our work across the food system, providing access to quality foods to partners, and strengthening systems and resources that make food accessible to everyone. Together we can build reliable food solutions for families statewide.

"We're really happy to be part of the community in Minnesota working to help address these challenges," says Jessica. "We're all in it together."

Hunger & Hope in our Headlines

As inflation rates stabilized and threats of COVID diminished this past winter, food need has faded from media headlines. Hunger, however, has far from faded in Minnesota. Our network of food access partners continue to experience rising need. They are struggling to keep up with demand and stretch their organizational budgets to provide more food as more and more families' household budgets wear thin.

A report from Hunger Solutions published in February put the stories into numbers, revealing staggering statistics of hunger right here at home: a **53% increase in visits to MN food shelves in just one year**. 5.5 million visits in 2022. Record-breaking hunger—even compared to records set during the pandemic in 2020.

We will not give up. Together in community with our partners, donors, volunteers, and growers, we are doing our best to show up for our neighbors and partners. Already this fiscal year your support of The Food Group has helped:

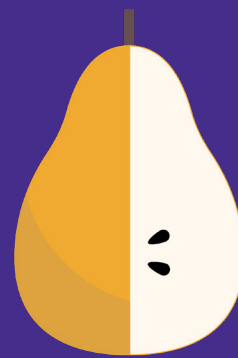
- **Distribute 4 million pounds of nutritious food** to families in MN and WI
- **Share 423,000 pounds of culturally connected food** and **679,000 pounds of fresh produce** – foods our community wants and needs for their health
- **Invest in essential infrastructure for 19 partners**, including refrigeration, shelving, and more
- **Expand access to affordable groceries for 18,000 households** through new Fare For All and Twin Cities Mobile Market sites
- **Equip 200+ farmers with education and resources** at Big River Farms and the Emerging Farmers Conference to provide sustainable food sources for our future

This summer, our work will continue. 4 out of 10 children in MN rely on free and reduced lunches at school, making summer the toughest time of year for many families.

Together we will face these challenges with hope. With your support we are planting the seeds of change that will grow to end hunger tomorrow.

In hope,

Sophie



Local Impact Update as of Spring 2023

1.2M

pounds of free food shared

4 million

total lbs food distributed

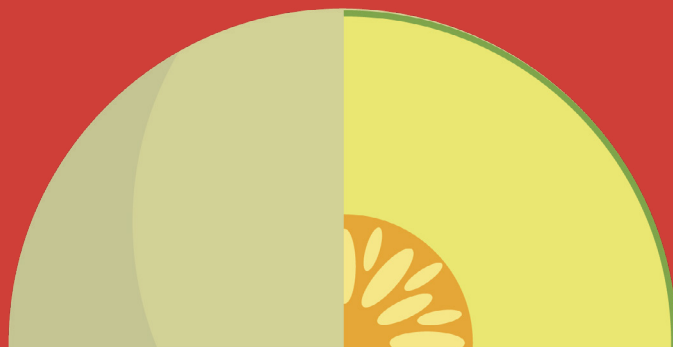
200+

farmers supported

19

 infrastructure mini-grants

4

 new affordable grocery sites



Coming together in North Minneapolis

The north metro food landscape has changed dramatically in the past few months—three major food retailers in the area have permanently shut their doors to community. The Northside is a strong community with more than 70,000 families. At the end of April, residents in the north metro area have had only 2 full service grocery stores to access food.

Recent closures of stores with essential goods and food, like Aldi, Walgreens, and Walmart, worsen inequities for families in the north metro, an area long impacted by grocery flight, 3+ years of pandemic-induced strain, and systemic racism.

Families on the Northside now have fewer grocery options that are nearby and affordable. Pressure on our Northside food access partners to fill the gap is unprecedented.

With your support, we are responding with agility, providing our 15 northside partners with a total of \$45,000 in free food credits to support rapidly growing community need. **Every family should have access to nourishing food.**

In North Minneapolis 77% of residents identify as people of color, compared to 22% statewide. (MN Compass)

This means Minnesotans of color in our community are disproportionately impacted by limited access to food in terms of lasting health, wellbeing, and hunger.

Learn more and support our Northside partners directly:
thefoodgroupmn.org/support-mpls-food

Supporter Spotlight: Volunteer Appreciation Month

1,800 volunteers gave 13,674 hours
—that's equal to 6 full time staff!

Each day incredible volunteers give their time to help build a more equitable food system. In 2022, more than 1,800 volunteers gave 13,674 hours to The Food Group. April was National Volunteer Appreciation Month and we got to celebrate our volunteers! Building a more equitable food system would not be possible without support from you. **Thanks to our volunteers!**



Use this code to see our special thank you video!





Events

Behind the Scenes

Wednesday, June 14, 10–11 am: Tour the New Hope warehouse for an in-depth look at how your support is put into action.

RSVP to lmirafuentes@thefoodgroupmn.org

Big River Farms Tour

Thursday, July 13, 6–7 pm: Put on your boots and head east for a tour of our organic incubator farm.

RSVP to lmirafuentes@thefoodgroupmn.org

Volunteer outside

Beginning in May, join us to glean at local farms, reclaim unsold veggies at the Mpls Farmers Market, or weed with growers at Big River Farms.

Find a session at thefoodgroup.org/volunteer

Give with Confidence

Your support is important and The Food Group is committed to stewarding your gifts responsibly. We are proud to display our giving seals to provide transparency and ensure your trust. Thank you for fighting hunger and nourishing our community for 47 years and beyond.



Local Businesses and Corporate Partners Help Fuel our Work

We rely on strong partnerships with businesses to bring us closer to our vision of an equitable, hunger-free, local food system. Thanks to our partners for their investment in fighting hunger and nourishing our community!



Plant your seed to fight hunger with planned giving



FREEWILL

Grow your legacy today. Name The Food Group in your will or estate plan at: freewill.com/thefoodgroupMN

