

Network News

Fall 2023



Camden Promise Shares Meals and Groceries to Nourish the Community

Rising numbers of people continue to visit food shelves and meal programs.



Six days a week, nearly 100 families come together to share food and community in North Minneapolis at Camden Promise, one of our 224 partner food programs.

Ms. Dorothy offers coffee and donuts, inviting people to share what they're grateful for: "That I can spend the day with my granddaughter." "That my daughter starts college next week—the first in our family!"

The number of daily guests has steadily increased this past year. After enjoying a meal—the menu when we visited was fried chicken with sides—they head downstairs to choose groceries for their household.

"We are very poor and are afraid we'll be kicked out of our apartment," says Corina D. "I don't know what we would do then." Corina lost three family members recently, including her grandmother and newborn niece. With travel and funeral costs, they got behind on rent, so their power has been cut off.

The family comes to Camden Promise for lunch, groceries, and connection.

"The Food Group is generous with delivering fresh produce. They bring reclaimed food from the farmers market on Sundays," says food shelf coordinator Randy Schepker. He says with current food prices and a tight budget, Camden Promise must cut back on what they can offer each day.

"Food is a powerful tool to create life-giving community, to address economic inequities, and so much more"

—Pastor Jeff Nehrbass, Gethsemane Lutheran/Camden Promise

Food needs are rising across the Twin Cities, suburbs, small towns, tribal communities, and rural areas.

Your support continues to make an impact every day, helping our partners, including Camden Promise, share food to create a stronger, healthier community.

Gratitude for a generous community

Fall is my favorite time of year—leaves are turning, we're celebrating the harvest, and almost everything is pumpkin spiced. But amid so many things I love, I'm struck with the challenges we are hearing from community members. Food shelves are continuing to see record high visits while many of the federal resources that supported food purchasing the past several years have ended. The cost of living in the Twin Cities is up 8.7% this year. And as temperatures are falling, families need to find room in already tight budgets for heating costs and warm clothes.

We are grateful for your continued support. The power of our community is strong:

- **Thank you to volunteers who have generously shared their time** reclaiming excess produce at the Minneapolis Farmers Market and packing food at our warehouse.
- **Thank you to supporters who have generously given** to support sharing high quality, culturally connected food with our community.
- **Thank you to community members who have generously shared insight** on how we can continue to provide foods most in demand and build longer term solutions.



Thank you for your continued partnership. With the change of the seasons, I am incredibly grateful to know we can count on the steadfast support of all our community members to meet the challenges ahead.

Sophia Lenarz-Coy

Your Impact

More than
5.2M meals
shared this year
A 67% increase over last year

6.2M lbs
of food distributed
1 million pounds more than
this time last year

7,266 households

served by Twin Cities Mobile
Market since January 2022

833,000+
meals with culturally
connected foods

6x more produce gleaned by
volunteers this year from
local farms and markets



Twin Cities Mobile Market Needs Support

While hunger relief remains vital, our distribution of affordable groceries to communities that lack grocery stores is meeting an urgent need for a large segment of people who have some income for food, but no convenient way to shop for it.

The Twin Cities Mobile Market (TCMM) – currently located on two retrofitted city buses – delivers fresh, culturally connected, and affordable groceries to 23 sites in Minneapolis and Saint Paul. Customers deeply value the access to affordable groceries that TCMM delivers.

Our buses are over 20 years old and ready to retire. Our labor-intensive system of restocking the bus is inefficient, unsustainable, and limits our potential to grow the impact of TCMM. But our customers depend on us to keep going.

The Food Group has identified the need to purchase two new, propane-powered school buses and add a drive-in area in our warehouse for indoor parking and more efficient loading/unloading. The total estimated cost is \$1,705,000. As of August, we have about \$440,000 remaining to reach our goal.

This project will ensure our ability to continue offering reliable service to our existing and future sites. This project will be greener and more sustainable, and most importantly, will **increase access to healthy, affordable, and culturally familiar foods for households across our community.**



Students enjoy fresh produce from Big River Farms

It's harvest season at Big River Farms and Minnesota kids are back in school. Minneapolis Public Schools meals are incorporating organic ingredients into their menu, grown by local farmers like Mario Alvarez.

Mario brings his organic farming skills from growing coffee beans in Guatemala to a very different Minnesota climate. Mario is one of several farmers at Big River Farms, a program of The Food Group, growing 2500 pounds of foods like watermelon, green beans, zucchini, and peppers for school meals this school year.



“Giving through your IRA is a win for everyone!”

-Gary Garrison, longtime donor and volunteer

“Bonnie and I have been supporting The Food Group for 18 years. I trust that my donation is going to a good cause.”

Using your Required Minimum Distribution to make a gift to charity eliminates taxes you would normally pay on the distribution. Work with your financial advisor or IRA administrator to designate funds.

“Using this process doesn’t cost you anything. If you’re already giving, and you qualify, why would you not do it?”

For more information visit thefoodgroupmn.org/ira



Events

New Bus Celebration

October 30, 4:30 – 6:30 pm: Join us at Finnegans Brew Co to celebrate the launch of our first of two brand new buses for Twin Cities Mobile Market.

Emerging Farmers Conference

November 3-4: Designed by farmers and for farmers, the 18th annual conference shares resources and connection for emerging food growers and producers.

Give To The Max Day

November 16: Mark your calendar! Join Minnesotans and help provide food for our community. Your gift will be matched doubling your impact.

TFG Virtual Update

December 14, 8:30 – 9:00 am: Grab your coffee and tune in. We’ll discuss news, trends, and solutions in community food access.

Get Involved and RSVP: thefoodgroupmn.org/events



Volunteer Spotlight:

Shout out to Produce Reclamation volunteers gleaning excess produce from local farms to share with community.

In early September a group harvested eggplant and broccoli at Waxwing Farm. In just one day we distributed 1000+ lbs of locally grown vegetables to food access partners in North Minneapolis.

Businesses and Foundations Make an Impact!

We are grateful for strong partnerships with businesses and foundations that support our mission. **Huge thanks to these partners for their investment!**



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