

Nourishing Change

Summer 2024



Your support is creating partnerships with local healthcare companies that fight hunger and increase access to healthy foods, thank you.

Food As Medicine: Partnering with Healthcare to Increase Food Access

Supporting our community members and neighbors needing access to food cannot be done without key partnerships and collaboration. It's an important, critical mission that requires cross sector collaboration. At The Food Group, we're proud to team up with a wide network of partners — farmers, wholesalers, advocates, donors, volunteers, anti-hunger agencies, and more — to ensure everyone has easy access to healthy and culturally connected foods.

"The Food Group...was really the leader in improving the quality, not just the quantity, of food in the supply chain." — Mama Canterbury, Vice President of community health and partnerships, HealthPartners

One especially important partner in this network are our healthcare partners. **The Food Group is proud to be a leader at addressing the importance of nutrition and the intersection between health and hunger.** As part of our commitment to health, we

collaborate with a number of healthcare organizations. M Health Fairview and HealthPartners are two of those amazing partners.

Our relationship with HealthPartners came about more than a decade ago as part of their organization's commitment to nutrition and physical activity. We partnered with them on SuperShelf, a collaboration that **transformed food shelves into welcoming environments so communities had better access to appealing, healthy food** — especially communities who faced barriers when it came to consistently feeding themselves and their families.

"We knew the partner we needed to create a healthier food supply for hunger relief was The Food Group," said Mama Canterbury, vice president of community health and partnerships for HealthPartners. "The Food Group has been our partner for decades and was really the leader in improving the quality, not just the quantity, of food in the supply chain. Their approach was to partner

The cost of a healthy diet for a family of four is \$6.00 more per day— \$2,200 more per year—than the cost of an unhealthy diet. —*Harvard Public Health Magazine*

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You are creating partnerships that help people in our community transition out of food insecurity and improve their health and wellbeing, thank you.

with SuperShelf to get better, healthier food, and better culturally connected foods, for our food shelves. And they made it happen.”

As part of our relationship with HealthPartners, patients who are positively screened as experiencing food insecurity or barriers to access are referred to the Minnesota Food HelpLine, a program of The Food Group. This is part of our SNAP Rx **efforts to strengthen the connection between healthcare and anti-hunger organizations.** That patient is then connected to the food resource that’s right for them.

“When we refer patients and members to The Food Group, we’re giving them broader connections than only a local food shelf,” Canterbury told us. “They’re going to get high-quality resources and connected to other food programs. They’re going to get connected to SNAP and hear about all the community supports available for their family, instead of just meeting an emergency food need. This matters to improve the health and well-being of our patients and members.”

M Health Fairview has a menu of patient-facing

programs designed for community members dealing with food insecurity and other diet-related medical conditions. When a food need is recognized, their provider team has an array of options to offer the individual, two of which The Food Group helps to provide. Their Market Rx gives participants a monthly stipend to spend at our Fare For All and Twin Cities Mobile Market programs, and their Fresh Food Prescription Program **“prescribes” patients with weekly food boxes filled with produce and pantry staples,** which The Food Group helps to source and supply.

“We want to acutely impact someone’s food insecurity ... and do it in a way that recognizes the organizations that already do this,” said Terese Hill, supervisor of community advancement food system strategy at M Health Fairview. The organization operates under a “food as medicine” strategy and looks at healthy food access as just one component of the kind of health care they offer their patients. “It’s not just about distributing calories to individuals that aren’t getting enough. There are ways we can do it to be intentional about supporting a healthy, vibrant, local food system so people can transition out of food insecurity.”

One of our newest Twin Cities Mobile Market locations is right outside the doors of an M Fairview Clinic in Saint Paul, bringing the food even closer to families being referred through the partnership.

We’re grateful for the opportunity to team up with healthcare partners who share our same goal: to make healthy, culturally connected foods easier to access for everyone. Special thanks to organizations like HealthPartners and M Health Fairview for collaborating with us to bring that goal closer to reality, one patient at a time.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Tour our warehouse and volunteer space

MONDAY, AUGUST 19TH • 5-6PM
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 26TH • 10AM-11AM

RISING TIDES

A celebration in support of Hunger Solutions Minnesota’s victories in assuring food security for all Minnesotans!

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17TH
5-8PM AT PINSTRIPES IN EDINA

TOUR BIG RIVER FARMS IN MARINE ON ST CROIX

Visit our 150-acre organic farm and experience harvest season.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 9TH • 10-11AM

RSVP TO
MYANG@THEFOODGROUPMN.ORG
OR BY CALLING 763-450-3860.

CHILDHOOD HUNGER IN MINNESOTA

An estimated **36%** of visitors to food shelves in Minnesota are children.

The Food Group distributed an estimated **1.8 MILLION** meals to local children last year.

The number of children visiting food shelves in Minnesota has **INCREASED 28%** from the same time last year.

1 IN 7 CHILDREN in Minnesota face food insecurity in Minnesota.



Fighting Childhood Hunger in Partnership with Local Schools

In March 2022, The Food Group and Robbinsdale Area Schools began a partnership **to increase food access for approximately 200 students who are highly mobile or at risk of experiencing homelessness.**

This is a year-round partnership but particularly important throughout the summer when kids are not receiving free breakfast and lunch at school.

How the partnership works

Robbinsdale Area Schools utilizes grant funding from the Minnesota Department of Education to help fund vouchers to ensure eligible students and their families have access to nutritious food. **The vouchers allow students and their families to purchase groceries through The Food Group's affordable grocery programs, Fare For All and Twin Cities Mobile Market.**

Fare For All is a traveling grocery store that buys fresh produce and frozen meat in bulk from wholesalers, manufacturers, and growers. Volunteers bundle it into \$10-\$30 packages that are sold at more than 30 locations for up to 40 percent off regular retail prices.

Twin Cities Mobile Market is a market on a bus that brings affordable and high-quality groceries into Twin Cities neighborhoods that lack easy access to healthy foods. Stops are located at 26 sites in low-income neighborhoods.

Your support is connecting local students with healthy and culturally familiar foods that support their learning and success, thank you.



Thank you for supporting partnerships with local schools that fight childhood hunger in our community.

"When families have accessed Fare for All for the first time, they are surprised by the quality and quantity of the food they are able to receive. **In a time where the price of groceries has increased, Fare for All is allowing our families to provide meals to their children,** which is especially important during the summer months when students are not accessing breakfast and lunch at school."

- Anne Grui, Assistant Director of Student Services with Robbinsdale Area Schools

We Met the Match!

Thank you to the many donors who helped The Food Group unlock two matching gifts, which will provide nourishing food to local families with children this summer.

And a special thank you to our match partners:



Tackling Childhood Hunger with Healthy Food, Partnerships, and policies



It's summer! I always feel like a kid again this time of year, trying to soak up all the time I can playing outside, enjoying later sunsets, backyard barbecues and time in the water. While summer can make me feel young at heart, it's also a time I think about all the kids in our community that are struggling to access the food they need to grow and thrive.

The good news is that we've made real progress in Minnesota when it comes to feeding our kids.

- All school children in Minnesota can have free breakfast and lunch at school thanks to the Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act.
- The child income tax credit gives low-income families more money to spend on the basic things they need for their kids, like healthy, quality, fresh foods.
- New this year, summer EBT will give eligible families extra SNAP dollars to offset the free school meals they will not have access to while school is out of session.

These policy wins are having a real impact on local households. This is why we recently joined forces with Hunger Solutions' and added their advocacy team into The Food Group. Already, we can see the powerful way that our programming will inform our policy efforts in the future. With your help, we will continue to deepen our engagement with the community through all our programs to learn what important issues folks experiencing food insecurity want us to tackle next.

In the meantime, **we are continuing to watch closely and respond as food shelf visits remain at record levels.** We are seeing more new families use our affordable grocery programs to access healthy foods. With grocery prices still incredibly high, the need for our work remains urgent.

Thank you, your support is providing food for today and creating change for tomorrow.

Sophia Lenarz-Coy
Executive Director

Thank You for Stamping Out Local Childhood Hunger!



Thank you to our Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive partners, Penske, United States Postal Service (USPS) and the National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC) for working with The Food Group to collect nearly 32,000 pounds of food for our community partners on May 11th! This will stock local food shelves and equip them to **serve the growing number of households relying on their services – especially while kids are home for summer** and not receiving free breakfast and lunch at school.



Farming & Food for the Future

The Food Group staff recently accepted an Environmental Initiative award for its work in agrivoltaics – farming under and around solar panels

The Food Group was recently recognized for our innovative work to explore agrivoltaics with an Environmental Initiative award. This is new work our farm team at Big River Farms is undertaking to **explore and support emerging farmers to farm under and around solar panels**. We are excited to be a part of this national movement and a leader in Minnesota exploring vegetable production on solar fields. As we learn more through the pilot, we believe there could be **positive impacts on land access for emerging farmers**. We are deeply grateful to be doing this work in collaboration with US Solar, Connexus Energy, NREL, Great Plains Institute, MN Department of Agriculture, and farm partners Simion and Stephen and Sarah Woutat.



Click the QR code to view a video featuring our Big River Farms Director, KaZoua, discussing this project.

"This is about building a fair, green system that can last generations. Together, we are laying groundwork for a world where farming benefits our communities, our environment, and the future."

-KaZoua, Farm Director, Big River Farms



Agrivoltaics is the dual use of land for solar energy production and agriculture. Your support is creating innovative partnerships that explore and advance the use of agrivoltaics – both to produce green energy and nourishing food for our community.