

# Nourishing Change

## Spring 2026



*Community Emergency Service, a food shelf partner of The Food Group, uses creative solutions like food lockers (pictured) to help neighbors access food safely and on their own time.*

## When Fear Became a Barrier, You Helped Families Access Food

For many immigrant families in Minnesota, this year has been filled with uncertainty. Increased immigration enforcement created widespread fear in communities across Minnesota. People stayed home from work, school, places of worship – even grocery shopping or visiting a food shelf began to feel unsafe.

*"It's been very difficult to watch our vibrant community disappear out of fear."  
– Stephanie Lehman, Anoka County Brotherhood Council Executive Director*

**That fear changed how people accessed food.** In January, food shelf visits across Minnesota dipped by 7% compared to last year and visits in Ramsey and Hennepin counties dropped by 17% – not because families needed less food, but because many were afraid to seek help in the usual ways.

**That's when you stepped in.** Thanks to you, The Food Group moved quickly to ensure families could still get the nourishment they needed – safely and with dignity.

One powerful example is our partnership with Dios Habla Hoy (DHH), a church in South Minneapolis with deep roots in the immigrant community. When church leaders posted an online form offering food delivery to families afraid to leave their homes, they expected a few dozen responses. **Within 24 hours, 20,000 families signed up.**

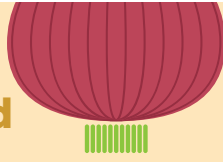
*"We saw that people were going to be afraid to come out of their homes," recalled Pastor Sergio. "The Food Group showed up with two full trucks of food, and that's when our partnership began."*

Together with Dios Habla Hoy, you delivered over **100,000 pounds of culturally connected food to immigrant families.** You also equipped Dios Habla Hoy with the space, equipment and logistical support **to deliver additional food to over 30,000 immigrant families.**

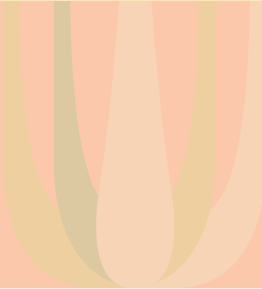
Families across Minnesota have felt supported at a time when everyday life began to feel uncertain and unsafe. **Thank you for ensuring that fear was not a barrier to food.**

# Thank You for Strengthening Immigrant Food Access During Operation Metro Surge

**230,052 pounds of free culturally connected food** (equivalent to over 190,000 meals) delivered to immigrant-serving agencies.



**Warehouse space and volunteer support** helped DHH reach families too afraid to leave their home.



**150+ hunger relief partners** supported through three calls to develop creative, safe ways to get food to those most in need.



*Angel with DHH and Angel with The Food Group, working together to deliver food to families.*

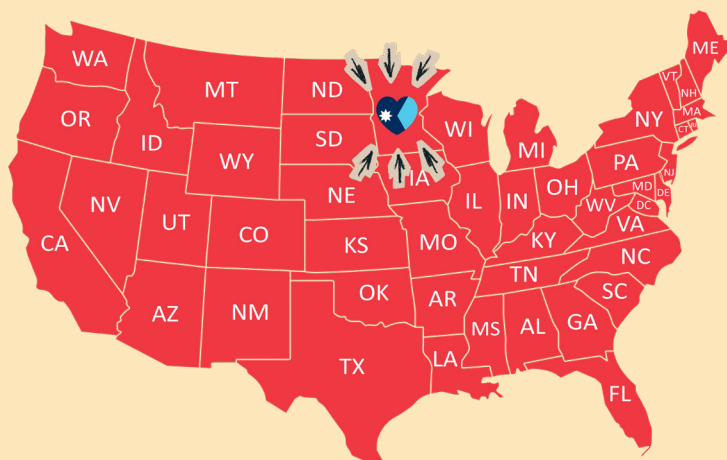
**874,621 pounds of food** (equivalent to over 728,500 meals) distributed in January and February as part of our ongoing, day-to-day efforts to keep the hunger relief system stable for families.



**\$100,000 in grants awarded to 23 food shelves** in greater Minnesota to help sustain innovative distribution methods and long-term food access.



**\$250,000 in food credits were distributed in April to 47 organizations** within our food distribution area who expanded or improved services to better serve immigrant communities.



## You Showed Up from Coast to Coast – for Minnesota Families

Donors from 49 states came together to support Minnesota families during the increased immigration enforcement, helping us **respond quickly to the growing need for food.**  
**THANK YOU!**

## A Legacy of Nourishment

Long-time supporters Marsha and Roger have found a meaningful way to support The Food Group – both today and for the future. As Monthly Nourishers, they provide a monthly gift that **ensures year-round access to nourishing food for families**. They also included The Food Group in their estate plans, helping ensure this work continues for years to come.

A retired educator, Marsha, saw firsthand how hunger affects a child's ability to learn. She shared,

*"Our monthly donation means that families who would otherwise go hungry will receive food. Their children will have the energy to do well in school. Parents will be well enough to work, if needed or desired. **Healthy food makes life easier for the entire family** – and that means a lot to both of us."*

Beyond their financial support, Marsha and Roger **stay closely connected to the mission**. They have volunteered, visited Big River Farms, and even participated in our affordable grocery program, Fare For All.

They're also **enthusiastic ambassadors of the work**. As Roger explained,

*"We even ask our friends and relatives to donate to The Food Group instead of giving us birthday or Christmas presents. What a great feeling for us!"*



Scan to learn more about planned giving.



Scan to notify us of your legacy gift.



## Plan Your Legacy of Nourishment

You can ensure future generations have access to nourishing food by including The Food Group in your estate plans. A legacy gift allows you to **extend your impact far into the future**, helping local families access the food they need for years to come.

## Ways to Give

- Include The Food Group in your **will or trust**
- Name The Food Group as a beneficiary of your **life insurance policy, IRA, or retirement account**
- Designate a gift from a **brokerage account**

When you share your intention to make a legacy gift, you'll be **welcomed into our Cultivator Circle** – a community of supporters who are helping ensure a future where everyone in our community has access to nourishing food.



## Thank you for helping us unlock the spring match!

Together we provided over 50,000 meals for families across our community.



# From Food Access to Nutrition Equity

Adults in households with very low food security were **15.3% more likely** to have a chronic illness compared to high food-secure households.

*\*National Health Interview Survey*



For more than 25 years, a simple but powerful belief has guided The Food Group's work: **everyone deserves access to nutritious, culturally connected food that supports long-term health and wellbeing.**

For Marna Canterbury, Vice President of Community Health & Partnerships at HealthPartners and a volunteer Board Member at The Food Group, this belief is grounded in decades of experience. She has seen firsthand the gap between having enough food and having the *right* food.

*"Food insecurity is related to access to enough food. Nutrition insecurity is a higher bar. It is about the quality and desirability of foods for individuals and families." – Marna*

**Without consistent access to nutritious food, families face serious long-term consequences.** Poor nutrition is linked to higher rates of chronic disease, increased healthcare costs, and challenges for children in school. As Marna shares, children who do not have nourishing food to start their day are less likely to succeed in the classroom. At the same time, the most health-promoting foods are often the most expensive, putting them out of reach for many families.

**This is why advancing nutritional equity has been central to The Food Group's work.**

*As Alison Babb of the Minnesota Department of Health shares, "Kudos to The Food Group for being at the cutting edge when the emergency food system began emphasizing the healthfulness of the food they were providing."*

**Today, you are investing in long-term solutions that increase access to healthy, culturally connected food by:**



Sourcing nutrient-dense foods to better meet community needs.



Strengthening the link between healthcare and hunger relief.



Increasing affordability of nutritious foods through our Market Bucks, Fare For All and Twin Cities Mobile Market programs.

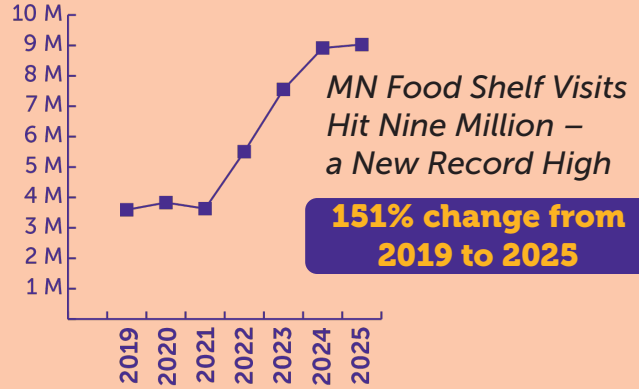


Developing inclusive nutrition standards that reflect the diverse communities we serve.

**A special thank you to these key supporters for ensuring our neighbors have the food they need for health:**



# Staying Grounded in Our Values in a Time of Increasing Need



Lately, I've been reflecting on the deep commitment of our community of supporters – *you*. For five decades, we have come together around the belief that everyone deserves access to nutritious, culturally connected food. That commitment matters even more when times are uncertain, and **I can't thank you enough for standing alongside us.**

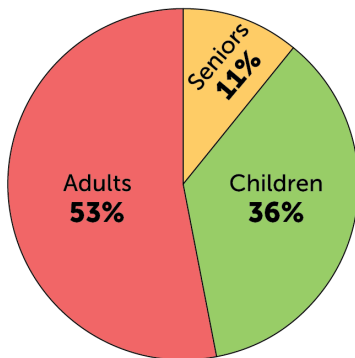
Food shelves across Minnesota are seeing record levels of need. In 2025, there were **9,026,843 visits to food shelves statewide** – the fourth consecutive year of record highs. Rising grocery, gas, and healthcare costs and cuts to federal food assistance programs are pushing more families to seek help.

*20,000 more households visited food shelves in October and November 2025 compared to 2024.*



SNAP benefit delays last October and November created additional stress and uncertainty for families already struggling to afford groceries.

## Who Is Visiting MN Food Shelves?



This past winter, fear created new barriers to food access for immigrant communities. Many families stopped visiting food shelves altogether – not because they didn't need food, but because they were afraid to leave their homes. It will take time for impacted communities to re-build trust.

Because of you, The Food Group is **responding quickly to meet this moment.** From partnering with trusted community organizations to adapting how and where food is distributed, we are ensuring families can access nutritious, culturally connected food safely and with dignity.

**Thank you for standing with communities across Minnesota.** Your generosity ensures that when challenges arise, our response is guided by dignity and a shared belief that everyone deserves to eat well and be nourished.

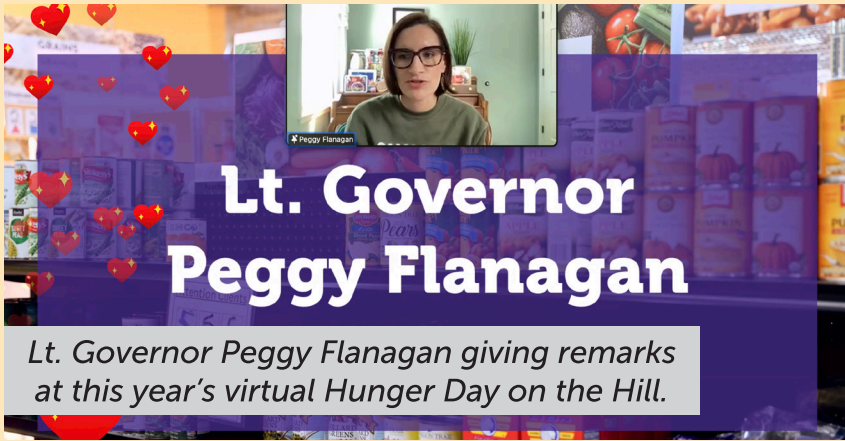
With gratitude,

Sophia Lenarz-Coy, Executive Director



Scan the QR code to view the full report on 2025 food shelf visits in MN, or visit: [qrco.de/bfqVvz](https://qrco.de/bfqVvz)

# Standing Up for Food Access – Hunger Day on the Hill 2026



In March, The Food Group brought together **300 food access advocates** at our annual Hunger Day on the Hill in collaboration with the Minnesota Partners to End Hunger Coalition. A mid-March snowstorm forced the event – originally planned to take place in person near and at the Minnesota state capitol – to pivot quickly to a virtual gathering and meetings with legislators.

Despite the change in plans, the day was filled with energy and purpose. Advocates, community members, and partners from across the state came together to speak with legislators and champion policies that move Minnesota closer to ending hunger.

Guest speakers included Representative Steve Gandor and Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan. They shared inspiring words before attendees met with their legislators.

*“Every one of us is closer to a point of unusual need than we realize. Remembering how good it feels to get help when we need it, we can have even greater joy in helping others.”*  
– Rep. Steve Gandor

*“We [Minnesotans] believe in taking care of our neighbors and standing up when our communities need us most.”*  
– Lt. Gov. Flanagan

**Thank you to all the advocates, supporters and sponsors who made the day a success!**

*“It was inspiring to see so many others from our state show up for Hunger on the Hill Day to learn about hunger relief legislation and urge their legislators and leaders to take action on these important issues.”* – Cindy Erickson, Volunteer and Attendee at Hunger Day on the Hill



Scan the QR code to learn more about statewide food access policy priorities.



## Calendar of Events

**Agrisolar Tour – Save the Date**  
August 5 | *More details to come.*

Spring is in full swing at Big River Farms and our Agrisolar Site! Join us in the fields this season – explore outdoor volunteer opportunities: [thefoodgroupmn.org/volunteer](https://thefoodgroupmn.org/volunteer)

Please reach out to [info@thefoodgroupmn.org](mailto:info@thefoodgroupmn.org), if you'd like to schedule a tour of our warehouse in New Hope, Big River Farms in Marine on St. Croix or Agrisolar Site in Big Lake.