

Nourishing Change

Summer 2026



Because of supporters like you, families can turn to trusted partners like Department of Indian Work (pictured here) for nourishing, culturally connected food during times of need.



Hunger Takes a Toll on Mental Health

3.3X higher likelihood of psychological distress among people experiencing food insecurity.

**Source: BMC Nutrition, 2024 systematic review and meta-analysis.*

The Hidden Stress of Summer Hunger

For Minnesota mom Tasha,* summer means more than sunshine and school break – it means the stress of stretching an already tight food budget even further.

When children are home all day, grocery bills rise. Meals and snacks add up quickly.

For families struggling to make ends meet, the pressure can feel overwhelming.

Several members of Tasha's family live with chronic illnesses and require specific diets. To keep food on the table, she relies on SNAP and local food shelves. But accessing those resources requires time, planning, paperwork and constant worry.

Recent cuts to SNAP have only increased that burden.

Tasha, former member of The Food Group's Lived Experience Leadership Cohort shared,

"With less food support [through SNAP], I will not have enough money to pay for basic needs such as my housing, utilities, and car. I could lose it all and end up homeless."

Tasha's experience reflects the reality many families face. Food insecurity is about more than empty cupboards. It means constantly budgeting, navigating complex systems, and wondering whether there will be enough food to last through the week.

The effects can be profound. Food insecurity is closely linked to anxiety, depression, and disrupted sleep.

Because of your support, families can access nutritious food and resources that help reduce stress and uncertainty. **Together, we are helping families nourish their health, care for their loved ones, and face the future with greater stability.**

**Name changed for anonymity*

Helping Families Stay Nourished All Summer

**\$10 MATCH =
\$2 PER \$1**

Through Market Bucks, SNAP shoppers get a dollar-for-dollar match up to \$10 each market visit.

The Grand Marais Farmers Market (pictured) is one of the 100+ markets across Minnesota where Market Bucks helps families bring home fresh, local food.

When school doors close for the summer, many children lose access to the consistent meals they rely on during the school year. For families already stretching tight budgets, this seasonal gap can quickly become a crisis.

Your support ensures families across Minnesota have more ways to keep food on the table during these critical months.

Through Market Bucks, a program of The Food Group, SNAP participants can stretch their budgets at over 100 participating farmers markets across Minnesota by matching their purchases to bring home fresh, local food for their families.

And when families don't know where to turn, **The Food Group's Minnesota Food HelpLine offers a trusted connection point.** This free, confidential service helps individuals and families navigate food resources in their communities, ensuring they can find the support they need.

Together, these resources help reduce barriers, increase access to nutritious food, and provide peace of mind for families during the summer months.

Thank you for making this work possible.



50 Years of Evolving to Meet Community Needs – Thanks to You

For 50 years, supporters like you have helped The Food Group adapt to meet the changing needs of Minnesota communities. What began as a local response to hunger has grown into a statewide network working to ensure nutritious food is accessible when families need it most.

Thank you for nourishing today and creating change for tomorrow.



1976

- 17 food shelves working together
- Hennepin County food assistance network
- Emergency hunger relief focus



Today

- 500+ food shelf and meal program partners
- Statewide food equity organization
- Advancing equitable food access

Teaming Up to Beat Summer Hunger

Summer can be one of the most challenging times of year for families experiencing food insecurity. That's why community partnerships matter.



The Food Group was honored to welcome the Minnesota Lynx to our warehouse, where players and staff packed food for our community.

Together, they packed more than 700 pounds of food – equivalent to 583 meals for neighbors facing hunger.

The partnership continues through Wings Credit Union's Hoops for Hunger campaign. For every three-pointer made by the Minnesota Lynx during the 2026 regular season, Wings Credit Union will donate \$20 to help provide nutritious food for families experiencing hunger.

Whether packing food, volunteering time, or supporting our work, every effort helps create a stronger community.



Scan to
see the Lynx
in action.

A huge thank you to the Minnesota Lynx for rolling up their sleeves to pack jasmine rice for families in our community.



You Helped Score Big This Summer!

Together, we unlocked our summer match challenge, providing twice as many meals for families facing hunger.

Special thanks to our match partner:



We Need Volunteers Like You

Volunteer support helps The Food Group maximize resources and direct more food to communities across Minnesota.

Explore seasonal volunteer opportunities at thefoodgroupmn.org/volunteer



From Farm Fields to Family Tables

Summer is when Minnesota farmers are busiest – and a critical time for strengthening the local food system that helps nourish our community.

Food security begins long before food reaches a shelf or table. It starts with supporting farmers, strengthening local food systems, and creating opportunities for growers to succeed.

Many begin in our **Grower Training Program**, where they learn sustainable farming practices, business management, and marketing skills.

"I have changed the way I see and understand the process of organic agriculture and farming as a result of classes." – Janet, Grower Training Participant

From there, growers apprentice with experienced organic farmers before advancing to our **Incubator Program**, where they gain access to farmland, equipment, mentorship, and technical assistance.

"The Big River Farms Program has taught me almost everything I know about farming. I was a complete beginner coming into the program." – Nicolette, 3rd Year Incubator Farmer

One of the greatest challenges for new farmers is securing affordable, long-term land. Our Agrisolar Farm, in partnership with U.S. Solar, is a solution to this barrier. This year, **three former incubator farmers secured long-term land leases**, creating the stability needed to grow their businesses and plan for the future.

The impact extends beyond the farm. The Food Group also purchases produce from local growers, creating reliable markets for farmers while increasing access to fresh, culturally connected foods for families experiencing food insecurity through local food shelves and affordable grocery programs.

Together, our Sustainable Farming Programs create a pathway from learning to land access, helping farmers succeed while expanding access to fresh, culturally connected food across Minnesota.



You are creating opportunities for farmers like Manela (pictured here) while providing fresh, local food for our community.

Pathway to Sustainable Farming



Grower Training



Apprenticeship



Incubator Program



Long-term Land Access



YOUR IMPACT SO FAR THIS YEAR

13 grower training participants

14 incubator farm teams

3 long-term land leases secured

A Summer Message of Gratitude



Every day, I see the impact of people coming together to ensure our neighbors have access to the food they need.

It shows up in volunteers packing food, drivers making deliveries, farmers growing fresh produce, and advocates and policymakers working to end hunger. And it's made possible by supporters like you.

Because of your generosity, families can turn to food shelves and meal programs for nutritious food. Shoppers can purchase affordable groceries through programs like Fare For All and Twin Cities Mobile Market. Emerging farmers can build successful businesses while helping increase access to fresh, locally grown food across Minnesota.

At a time when demand for food assistance remains high and many families continue to face financial pressure, **you are creating stability, opportunity, and hope.**

I'm continually inspired by what we are accomplishing together. Whether you've donated, volunteered, advocated, or shared our mission with others, **thank you for being part of this community.**

You are helping families access the food they need today while building a stronger, more equitable food system for the future.

Wishing you a joyful summer,

Sophia Lenarz-Coy
Executive Director



DEMAND REMAINS AT RECORD LEVELS



859,076

visits to Minnesota
food shelves in
March 2026.

Highest month ever
recorded.



ADVOCACY IN ACTION

\$10 Million

secured for food
shelves and food banks
across Minnesota.

Strengthening
Minnesota's hunger
relief network.

Strengthening Access to Affordable Groceries



As grocery prices remain high, more Minnesota families are seeking affordable ways to put healthy food on the table. With your support, The Food Group continues to expand and adapt its affordable grocery programs to **meet growing demand across the state.**

Guided by insights from shoppers, volunteers, site hosts, and community partners, we are deepening our impact in the communities we serve. **Fare For All is expanding its focus in rural areas where access to grocery stores is limited, while Twin Cities Mobile Market continues to serve neighborhoods across the metro** where fresh, affordable food is needed.

By aligning our programs with community needs, we are helping more Minnesotans **access healthy, affordable food close to home.**

From rural communities to urban neighborhoods, your support is strengthening access to affordable, nutritious food.

Agrisolar Open House & Tour



Discover The Food Group's Agrisolar Farm in partnership with U.S. Solar.

Join us for an open house and tour where you'll meet the farmers cultivating land beneath solar panels and hear directly from The Food Group team about what we've learned so far, the challenges we're navigating, and the opportunities ahead.

When: August 5th

Where: Big Lake, Minnesota

Time: 3-6 p.m., including an open house with learning stations from 3-4 p.m. & tours at 4 and 5 p.m.

RSVP to info@thefoodgroupmn.org

Supporter Spotlight

A big thank you to these partners for helping fight hunger and nourish our communities across Minnesota!



GENERAL MILLS FOUNDATION



Sit Investment
Associates

