

Nourishing Change

Fall 2026



Your support is easing the burden of hunger for local families through partners of The Food Group, like Kriana visiting ICA Food Shelf.



Why More Neighbors Are Turning to Food Shelves

Across Minnesota, more of our neighbors are walking through the front door of their local food shelf than ever before, and your generosity is helping meet that need. **You've provided over 6.4 million meals so far this year – up 8% from the same time last year.**

For Kriana, it means trying to make her grocery budget stretch far enough to feed her two children.

"When you have a bunch of mouths to feed, sometimes things just don't stretch."

Kriana visits ICA Food Shelf, a partner of The Food Group, to fill the gaps between paychecks and make sure her children have the nourishing food they need.

"It's really hard to get fruits and veggies sometimes because that's where the cost comes in. [The food shelf] helps me fill in the food groups that are missing, especially when it's harder to get between paychecks and I want to give my children full meals."

Thank you for providing food for today and creating change for tomorrow.

On the following pages, see how your support is: bringing affordable groceries directly to neighbors through mobile markets; growing fresh, local and culturally connected food our communities want through sustainable farm programs; and strengthening food access through partnerships and advocacy.

WHAT'S DRIVING THE NEED?

27.4% ↑ Gas prices

2.2% ↑ Grocery prices
Year-over-year

23,643 ↓ Minnesotans
receiving SNAP
Since July 2025

\$244M ↓ Estimated lost
wages in Minneapolis
& St. Paul during
Operation Metro Surge

Sources: Consumer Price Index, Aug. 2026; MN Department of Children, Youth & Families, SNAP Food Assistance Data Dashboard (MAXIS); Tom K. Wong, U.S. Immigration Policy Center, UC San Diego, March 24, 2026.



Your support is reaching two additional communities, which previously had limited grocery access.

Meeting Neighbors Where They Are: Two New Mobile Market Stops

The Food Group's Twin Cities Mobile Market (TCMM) recently added two new sites at the University of Minnesota and Fairview Uptown Clinic. At each stop, shoppers can choose the foods they need while maintaining the dignity, choice and quality everyone deserves.

Thanks to your generosity, University of Minnesota students now have affordable, nourishing groceries right on campus. In partnership with Boynton Health's Nutritious U Food Pantry, TCMM is the only campus grocery market where students can use SNAP, giving them more choice in what they bring home.



Nearly **2 out of 5** Minnesota college students experience food insecurity.

Source: MPR News

For students facing food insecurity, having access to food can mean more than a full refrigerator. It can mean dignity and a sense of relief. One student recently shared,

"Being able to access groceries and basic supplies without shame made me feel like I could breathe again."

The Fairview Uptown Clinic is our second TCMM site with Fairview, where patients experiencing food insecurity can use monthly vouchers to purchase fresh, affordable food.

"[This new site] increases access to affordable, high-quality groceries in a convenient location with public transit and bike access, supporting our patients, staff, and the broader community."
— Kate Henschel, Fair Table Program Manager at Fairview

Whether it's a student choosing between rent and groceries or a patient managing a tight budget, **you are helping close that gap.** With these two new stops, TCMM now reaches 31 locations across the Twin Cities. **That's 31 neighborhoods where your generosity shows up as a full cart of groceries. Thank you for making this possible.**

Affordable Grocery Programs like TCMM help close the food access gap.

Farmer Spotlight: Growing Roots in Big Lake

Winifred and mother-son duo Bao and Bai are graduates of The Food Group's Incubator Program at our Big River Farms. **Now, they hold ten-year leases at our AgriSolar Farm in Big Lake**, where they are growing food between solar panels and building their farm businesses.

Winifred grew up helping her grandmother grow food in a one-acre garden in Sierra Leone. Frustrated with buying food she knew she could grow; she found her way back to farming through the Incubator Program.

"I learned so much...Big River Farms really prepared me for what I'm doing now on my own. If not for people in the program, I would not be the farmer I am today." – Winifred

Bai, who runs the regenerative vegetable farm BaoBai's Harvest, took every learning opportunity Big River Farms offered.

"Those three years at Big River Farms taught me a variety of things I'm now applying here at the AgriSolar Farm." – Bai

FROM THEIR FIELDS TO YOUR NEIGHBORS' TABLES

The impact of their work doesn't stop at the farm gate. It reaches food shelves and shoppers at our affordable grocery sites across the community.



Winifred with peppers grown on her plot at our AgriSolar Farm.

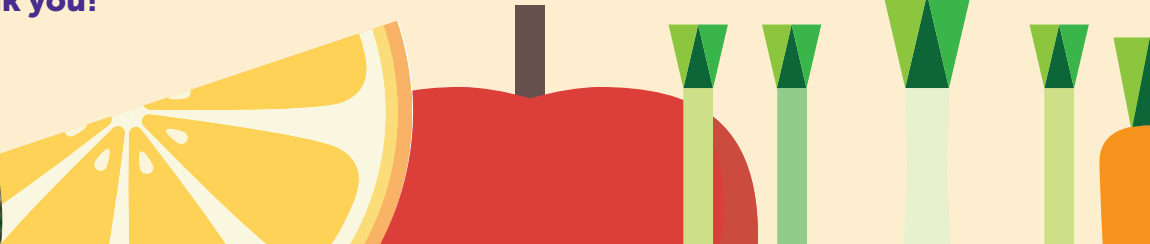


Thank you for helping emerging farmers like Bai access land, resources, and markets!

Supporting local farming creates a more robust local food system and local food access.

Thanks to you, The Food Group has purchased and distributed **11,081 pounds** of fresh produce grown by farmers enrolled in the program at Big River Farms that **reached 40 food shelves and 31 Twin Cities Mobile Market stops so far in 2026**. Fresh, culturally connected zucchini, cabbage, corn, okra, cucumbers and grape tomatoes made their way from local fields to community tables.

Every pound represents more than food. It's a farmer building a sustainable business and a neighbor putting fresh, culturally connected produce on their table. **Your support goes full circle: from soil, to farmer, to family. Thank you!**



Make Your Year-End Gift Go Further

Your generosity fights local hunger today while creating lasting change for tomorrow. As you consider your year-end giving, there are several ways to make a gift, and some may offer **benefits beyond simply writing a check**. Explore these options to find the one that works best for you and your charitable goals.



Donate appreciated **stocks** or other securities, which may offer tax advantages.



Recommend a grant through your **Donor Advised Fund**.



Your employer may **match** your charitable gift, multiplying its impact.



If you're age 70½ or greater, you may be able to make a qualified charitable distribution (QCD) directly from your **IRA**.

A QCD can generally be excluded from taxable income when the applicable requirements are met and may count toward your required minimum distribution (RMD).

Could One of These Options Be Right for You? Talk with your financial or tax advisor to determine which giving method may be the best fit for you and your charitable goals.

PLAN AHEAD FOR YEAR-END GIVING

Don't wait until December 31st to make your gift. Some giving methods may take additional time to process.

Starting early can help ensure your gift reaches The Food Group by year-end and provides healthy food to our neighbors most in need.

WHY THESE DONORS GIVE WITH A QCD

"Food for today yields change for tomorrow."

For the past several years, Lee and Liz, donors of The Food Group, have chosen to fight hunger through a **qualified charitable distribution (QCD) from their IRA**.

As a former teacher, Lee is especially passionate about The Food Group's commitment to healthy food access and about the opportunity to help local families live healthier lives today while creating change for tomorrow.

"We donate annually to The Food Group because we agree with their belief: 'food for today yields change for tomorrow.'"

For donors age 70½ and older, a QCD can be an efficient way to give directly from an IRA to a qualified charity. When the applicable requirements are met, the distribution can generally be excluded from taxable income and may count toward a required minimum distribution (RMD).

In Lee's words, ***"A QCD gets the job done, efficiently and in a tax-savvy way."***

For Lee and Liz, a QCD is a meaningful way to give in a way that works for their financial goals while supporting a mission they believe in.

Read a blog post by Lee to learn how he combines his charitable goals with a tax-smart giving strategy.



50 Years, One Mission – A Message From Sophia



As leaves fall and the chill in the air grows stronger, I'm thinking about community members who are facing a difficult season ahead. For too many, **putting enough food on the table is becoming a growing challenge.**

Rising costs, reduced federal food support and the long-term impacts of Operation Metro Surge are making it harder for households across our community to afford the food they need and deserve.

That's why your partnership is so important. Together, we are meeting rising needs today, while strengthening our local food system for tomorrow.

Through our recently launched Food Shelf Innovation Council and Partners in SNAP Defense Coalition, we are bringing together partners across Minnesota to develop community-driven solutions, strengthen food access, and help Minnesotans navigate SNAP cuts and ongoing uncertainty.

Fifty years ago, 17 Hennepin County food shelves came together with a shared belief that we could do more by working together. The Emergency FoodShelf Network (EFN), now The Food Group, was born from that idea: food shelves could connect, innovate, and share resources to better serve their communities.

Today, that same spirit of collaboration drives our work. We've grown into an organization working across the food system with a network of over 400 food shelf partners, sustainable farming programs, affordable grocery programs, and advocacy.

As we look ahead, we are grateful for the community that is helping build a stronger foundation into the future. **Thank you to everyone who has contributed to our campaign to retire the mortgage on our New Hope facility.** Together, we are making meaningful progress toward our goal, and we look forward to sharing more as we close out the campaign. **Your support will help free up more resources to invest in fighting hunger and nourishing our community for years to come.**

Thank you for showing up for our neighbors and community for 50 years and counting. You have been foundational to the impact we've made and will help shape what comes next.

We couldn't do it without you!

With gratitude,

Sophia Lenarz-Coy
Executive Director



THANK YOU!

We are feeding our neighbors today while building a more just and equitable food system for tomorrow. Together, we are doing this by helping food shelves meet their communities' needs, bringing fresh food to neighbors through new Twin Cities Mobile Market sites, supporting farmers building sustainable businesses, and advocating for policies that strengthen food access for all Minnesotans.

Here's how you can help keep the momentum going as we head into the holidays:



Scan to get involved!

Ways to Get Involved



Volunteer With Us

Join a shift - on your own or with a group - packing culturally connected staples at our New Hope warehouse or gleaning produce from local farms.



Schedule a Tour

Visit our New Hope warehouse to experience the impact of your support. For more information, reach out to: info@thefoodgroupmn.org



Host a Food & Cash Drive

Rally your workplace, group of friends or family to collect food or funds for your local food shelf.



Sign up for Advocacy Action Alerts

Get updates on policy efforts and ways to contact your elected officials to make a difference.



Ways to Give This Holiday Season

Thursday, Nov. 19th is Give to The Max Day!

More ways: Page 4



EXPLORE OUR NEW WEBSITE

Visit thefoodgroupmn.org to get involved, learn more about your impact and check out our Find Help Map, now available in multiple languages so more neighbors can locate nearby food resources.

A big thank you to the following corporate partners for their generous support:



And a special THANK YOU for helping us meet the fall match – providing **40,000 meals** for community members who need them most. Thank you to our match partner:

