The Food Group hosts a summer program called “Community Food Leaders” that engages people with the food system and deepens their understanding of the role food plays in building stronger communities. This year, our six Community Food Leaders have spent time exploring the ways in which they want to be leaders in their food communities. Each participant is motivated by their own histories with food, and with the way that they see food impacting their lives now.

Val Barnes was one of the participants this summer. She lives in a senior high rise. We asked her how the program benefited her. Val said the program transformed the way she thinks about food. She met many people who are dedicated to producing and serving healthy food. Here are some of her comments:

ABOUT HER RELATIONSHIP WITH FOOD
I have a relationship with people and with things I love like art and music, but I hadn’t thought about my relationship with food. But it is the most important relationship you have, besides with air and water!

I was separated from food, and the program reconnected me to the earth and food. The grocery store takes out that connection. If you have a respectful relationship with food, then you’ll put the right things in your body and your body will treat you better.

ABOUT VISITING BIG RIVER FARMS AND OTHER FOOD PRODUCERS
We learned about the need for farm workers and all the challenges of farmers. How do people who need the healthy food get it? Workers and transportation are two big challenges.

Everybody knows organic food is good, but actually going to the farm is a different experience. You’re surrounded by the great environment and the scenery. The environment contributes to how people feel when they’re out there. Breathing the air and smelling the grass and seeing the insects and chickens. It’s a beautiful experience. It connects you to the earth. It’s easy to forget we are humans and we come from the earth. It felt so good.

ABOUT FOOD AND COMMUNITY
Food is contagious. I shared food from the Open Arms cooking class (using Fare For All meat & produce) with my neighbors and we had a wonderful meal. We had a community supper and we were able to make potato salad and cole slaw from that box of food. It was the best!

When you bring good food, people feel so blessed and they want to share what they have.

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT
Thank you for supporting our work to fight hunger & nourish our community!
The Food Group hosted our seventh annual Hunger Bash event on September 14. We filled the room with the spirit of giving and a shared concern about local hunger. I want to share with you the essence of my message that night so you can get a glimpse of what is on the horizon for The Food Group.

HUNGER IN MINNESOTA
Minnesota has seen over 3 million visits to food shelves for seven consecutive years. It’s not acceptable that in 2017, we broke a record for the number of food shelf visits when our unemployment rate is below four percent.

The cost of living has gone up, and wage increases have not kept up. Hunger involves multiple factors, but the root cause is poverty.

OUR RESPONSE
The Food Group is committed to equitable access to nutrition to strengthen communities.

The outcome we want is fewer people living with hunger and more people eating healthy, nutritious foods, because that strengthens communities in countless ways.

What does this mean in practice? First, we’re continuing to educate ourselves on equity issues. Second, we’re partnering with experts to reach out, convene, and listen to people experiencing food insecurity because we believe community-driven solutions are the most effective. Third, we need to invest in policy advocacy that tackles the root causes of hunger.

OUR GOAL
The need for hunger relief won’t be eradicated anytime soon. The work of sourcing and distributing nutritious foods remains at our core. It’s not only our foundation; we’re really good at it!

Our goal is to become less necessary as an emergency food bank, and more relevant as an agent for change. We are serious about getting off the treadmill when it comes to hunger. That is energizing for me, and I hope it is for you, too.

Thank you for your continued partnership in our mission and vision!

COUNTY CUTS IMPACT THE FOOD GROUP
I want to share recent news with you, as a trusted supporter of The Food Group.

Our contract with Hennepin County, which goes back 15 years, has been significantly cut due to an unforeseen situation where a court-ordered mandate dramatically altered the 2019 Health and Human Services budget. This action has affected all Hennepin County funded hunger agencies, including The Food Group. With very short notice prior to the end of our fiscal year, we had to make difficult decisions to accommodate funding losses. These cuts come at a time when the demand and need for our services continues to grow.

The hunger agencies have fully lived up to our promises to provide services. It is simply a situation where there aren’t enough resources to go around and the court ordered increased financial investment for another purpose that is desperately needed.

We need your support now more than ever as we continue our mission to nourish our community with nutritious, accessible food. We are rallying to manage the challenge, confident and grateful that we have a broad base of community support for our mission. Thank you for your continued commitment to our mission and for your partnership.

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Lori Kratchmer, Executive Director, addresses Hunger Bash attendees

THE FOOD GROUP ● WWW.THEFOODGROUPMN.ORG ● 763.450.3860
Help us make Give to the Max Day 2018 our best year ever! Join thousands of Minnesotans in contributing to the causes of your choice during the 24-hour day of giving. Your gift of any amount can help us win cash prizes! You can even schedule your gifts beginning on November 1 to count toward Give to the Max. Follow our social media and website for more information and details. www.thefoodgroupmn.org

This Thanksgiving morning, join our team. Walk to end hunger.

Thursday, November 22 • 7 to 10 am
Mall of America • Join our team: bitly.com/wteh4tfg

Warehouse Tours
An opportunity for an inside look at what we do, why we do it and how we do it!
-Tuesday, October 23 • Monday, November 12 • Thursday, December 13
-Tours take place at 10 am and 5 pm

Contact Emily Eddy White to reserve a spot at ewhite@thefoodgroupmn.org or 763-450-3868.

Host a Food & Cash Drive
Gather a group and we’ll supply the barrels to collect nutritious shelf stable foods for our neighbors fighting hunger. Contact Amber Mayer for more information: amayer@thefoodgroupmn.org or 763-450-3869.

Holiday Donations
Watch for our annual holiday letter in your mail in mid-November. Your tax-deductible contributions help us provide nutritious, healthy foods to our partners so hungry kids, families and seniors in our community can have good food on the table through the holiday season.

Volunteer
Coordinate or join a group to pack and sort food in our warehouse or volunteer to glean, harvest, and rescue produce. Contact Dan Johnson to volunteer: djohnson@thefoodgroupmn.org or 763-450-3889.

Purchase a CSA Share
Big River Farms 2019 Community Supported Agriculture shares go on sale this month! Enjoy certified organic produce while supporting local farmers from highly diverse backgrounds. Visit www.mnfoodassociation.org/our-csa to learn more.
Summer at The Food Group is filled with non-stop activities related to planting, tending, harvesting and distributing fresh produce. This work depends on partnerships between staff, farmers, grocers, and volunteers.

Produce programs include:
- Farming at Big River Farms and the micro-farm in New Hope
- Local farm, orchard, and garden partnerships
- Farmers market produce rescue and retail rescue

So far this year The Food Group has supplied our foodshelf and meal program partners with **twenty truckloads of fresh produce at no cost to them!** They in turn pass this nutritious food along to their program participants.

Since last spring, 300 volunteers have contributed 780 hours of time to support produce programs.

A huge, heartfelt thank you to everyone from growers to distributors to volunteers who helped with our produce programs this summer!

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**7th Annual Hunger Bash Fundraising Gala**

The Food Group’s seventh annual Hunger Bash fundraising gala took place on September 14 at McNamara Alumni Center in Minneapolis. Together with over 350 attendees from the community, we raised more than $190,000 for local hunger relief. The event continues to grow in support making this our most successful fundraising event yet.

The night featured live auction, silent auction, games, great food, live music & a program featuring emcees Chris Egert and Megan Newquist from 5 Eyewitness News, a moving and hopeful personal story from a volunteer, and a heartfelt musical performance by local Minneapolis middle school students.

We are grateful and humbled by the generous outpouring of support from sponsors, donors, guests, committee, and volunteers at Hunger Bash. Thank you to everyone who contributed to the success of this event!

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Thank you to our extremely generous Hunger Bash sponsors:

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THE FOOD GROUP ● 8501 54TH AVE N, NEW HOPE, MN 55428