A message from The Food Group’s Executive Director, Lori Thorp

The New Year usually offers me a prompt to look brightly at the year ahead. The darkest days are behind us and the lightest are yet to come. It is hard not to be optimistic! This year, that optimism is clouded by the gloom of the recent prolonged government shutdown.

As I write this, the government has arrived at a tentative agreement to reopen for 3 weeks. During the shutdown, as many as 800,000 federal workers did not receive a paycheck for weeks. Paychecks they rely on to support their families.

What our elected representatives do impacts the people who elected them, and they need to be held accountable. Americans working in our government—and many more who support their work—are facing a situation they never imagined. Just a few weeks ago they were enjoying the holidays with their families. Now they are wondering how they will pay their mortgage and put food on the table for their families.

All of this is leading to an increased need for food support in our community. More individuals struggling and more visits to local food shelves. Not the New Year we had imagined.

Until a permanent solution is reached, our elected leaders need to hear from us. I urge everyone to write, email or call your Senator or Congressperson urging them to keep the government open. With your help and encouragement, we will continue to do our best to support the increased need for nutritious foods.

Lori Thorp

For recent media coverage about the impact on local food shelves, go to: http://thefoodgroupmn.org/shutdown
Community supported agriculture (CSA) is far more than just a weekly delivery of locally grown fruits and vegetables. It is one of the easiest and most powerful ways that you can support and participate in the exciting transformation happening in our local food system! Becoming a member of Big River Farms CSA is an investment in a more equitable and just food system. We are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, so the dollars from your CSA share support beginning farmer education program costs and go directly to farm businesses owned by immigrants, refugees, people of color, and women.

Big River Farm’s history, being established as the Minnesota Food Association 1983, is deeply rooted in the food advocacy movement in Minnesota. In the spirit of this legacy, and now as a program of The Food Group, our CSA aspires to be another innovative path to greater food accessibility. In addition to shares at various price points, we also offer the option to donate towards shares – increasing the accessibility to locally grown, nutritious produce and building deeper partnerships with farmers in our programs. We also recognize that purchasing organic CSA shares can feel like an expensive investment all at once, so we also allow members to pay for their shares in monthly installments and with SNAP benefits.

Last but not least, to celebrate national CSA sign up day on February 22nd, we are offering a $15 discount on your CSA share if you sign up before February 28! Simply use the coupon code: isupportlocal

More questions about our CSA or Big River Farms? Visit our website at www.mnfoodassociation.org or contact Eric at ewilson@thefoodgroupmn.org or 651-433-3676
Freezer funding complete! Thanks to generous donations from corporations, foundations, government and individuals, we have reached the fundraising goal for additional freezer storage space!

The freezer will be operating by early February. The Food Group believes strongly in the importance of fresh foods such as meat and produce in building community health. Nutritious, affordable food is the focus of our Fare For All program. The new commercial freezer, installed in our warehouse in New Hope, provides 3200 square feet of additional capacity. According to Lisa Sabourin, Fare For All program coordinator, the new space will allow us to develop and test new models for managing our inventory of fresh foods. We will have the flexibility to pilot some new products for our customers. We can expand our food sources to include more local food producers and entrepreneurs with products such as frozen wild rice patties. "We’re really excited about the possibilities for more variety and increased access to affordable frozen foods for our shoppers,” she says. The next year will bring planning and new initiatives for Fare For All. With the new capacity the freezer brings, Fare For All will be looking to expand to reach more rural communities and building partnerships to source and provide local foods at affordable prices.

We thank our lead freezer donors for making this capital project a success: The Richard M. Schulze Foundation, Otto Bremer Trust, Allina Health, Hugh J. Andersen Foundation, Custom Refrigeration, Tech Electric, Rocket Crane and many generous individuals.

THANK YOU TO THESE GENEROUS PARTNERS FOR THEIR SUPPORT
CONSIDER MONTHLY GIVING FOR COLLECTIVE IMPACT

As the recent government shutdown reminds us, emergencies can happen at any moment and we need to be ready to respond. The Food Group is fortunate to have many individuals who make regular monthly contributions to our work to help ensure a steady stream of funds so we are prepared to meet the need. That’s one of many reasons sustaining donors make a big difference.

Vani Karun has set up a monthly donation. Here’s why it’s important to her: “The amount I contribute each month may not seem significant, but I firmly believe that drops make an ocean. I decided to become a Monthly Nourisher to remind myself of families who need help; to make conscious food choices and reduce food waste; and to continue to stay motivated to do good with like-minded people.”

Vani is right! Monthly Nourishers give the amount they choose once each month. Those gifts have an impact every single day. Fifteen dollars a month results in $180 dollars, providing 360 meals! That’s like providing a year’s worth of dinners for one person.

To become a Monthly Nourisher, go to thefoodgroupmn.org/donate and choose recurring gift. You can have your gift withdrawn from a bank account or use a credit or debit card. If you prefer, call Gay at 763-450-4219 to set up your gift.

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

Ways to get involved with The Food Group

Join us for a Community Conversation on Aging, Isolation & Hunger featuring: Martin Wera, Bush Fellow, The Food Group Board Member, and Ameriprise Community Relations Director and Sophia Lenarz-Coy, Program & Operations Director, The Food Group.

Hear reflections from Martin’s Bush Fellowship on supporting older adults in our community and their growing need for community and food solutions. Additionally meet The Food Group’s new Program & Operations Director, Sophia, and her vision for how The Food Group is responding.

Thursday, April 11 at 4 to 5:30 pm at the Wedge Table
(2412 Nicollet Ave, Minneapolis, MN 55404)

Light refreshments provided. Free & open to the public. Please RSVP to info@thefoodgroupmn.org

Warehouse Tours

Come tour our warehouse and operations. Get an up-close glimpse into our work in action.

Thursday, March 28* and Tuesday, April 23
Tours take place at 10 am & 5 pm

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

*On this date take a tour with our new Programs & Operations Director