



Formerly Emergency  
Foodshelf Network

# Network News

SPRING/SUMMER 2019

## TAKING ACTION AGAINST HUNGER



*Staff and friends of The Food Group attended the 2019 Hunger Day on the Hill in March. They learned about pending legislation related to hunger in our community. Then they visited their senators and representatives to advocate for action!*

### *A message from The Food Group's Executive Director, Lori Thorp*

#### **The Power of Partnerships**

People often thank us for the good work we do. We appreciate the words of support, but we also recognize that we do not do this work alone! We sincerely appreciate the many community partners who help us leverage our resources to do more than we could possibly do in isolation. **Positive change happens through collaboration!**

First, our 150 partner food shelves and meal programs. Their vision for cooperative sourcing, storage and distribution of food inspired our origin. More than forty years later we are still working hand-in-hand to make the most of every dollar to nourish people and strengthen our community.

We also team up with other non-profit agencies and food co-operatives working for food justice and systems change. Two examples: I recently took part in a panel conversation about solutions to food equity and access barriers on a local scale, sponsored by The Wedge and Linden Hills Co-op. And Lakewinds Co-op worked with us to create the Farm to Food Bank project to get kid-friendly vegetables to food shelves and support local organic farmers, such as our own Big River Farms and

our partner farmers. Plus, we collaborate closely with the 38 host sites of our Fare For All program. The synergy and creativity of folks who care about fair access to good nutrition is inspiring.

Dozens of local corporations and employers partner with us in invaluable ways. They host food and cash drives, recruit volunteers, support employee giving (and often match the dollars), provide grants and sponsorships for Hunger Bash through their charitable giving programs and foundations. All of this support keeps our operations running smoothly, efficiently and economically!

We are fortunate to again have media support from KSTP-TV for the Summer Harvest for Kids, scheduled for May 30 this year. They do an awesome job of inspiring support from hundreds of individual donors each year to address childhood hunger during the summer vacation.

Rounding out the list is all of the individuals and organizations who are generous donors dedicated to eliminating hunger in our community every day. Every gift, from \$10 to \$10,000, has an impact by providing nutritious food to hungry neighbors and helping to create a more just food system. Thank you for sharing what you have to offer health and hope to others, and for bringing about positive change by partnering with The Food Group!



Choua's four boys are Big River Farms' cutest farmers.

## Farm to Food Bank: A Creative Partnership to Address Childhood Hunger

*Big River Farms (formerly Minnesota Food Association) has been a program of The Food Group since 2017. Farmers participating in the education program are from historically underrepresented communities (i.e. immigrants, people of color, women, veterans).*

**The challenge:** How to get more fresh produce to children experiencing hunger.

**The response:** A win-win-win collaboration between Big River Farms, Lakewinds Food Co-op and community food shelves.

In 2018 a three-way partnership was forged to move organically grown produce from farms to food banks with the support of Lakewinds. Farmers enrolled in the Big River Farms Farmer Education program grew certified organic "kid-friendly" produce, which was purchased with grant support from Lakewinds Co-op and distributed to four food shelf partners of The Food Group and then made available to families experiencing hunger.

The impact was multi-faceted:

- Local children whose families need foodshelf support had more equitable access to fresh, nutritious, organic produce.
- New farmers learning to build independent businesses had a new market for their produce.
- Four local food shelves received 4,138 pounds of organic produce at no cost.

Farm director Amber Stenson summarized the program's success this way, "Many farmers in our program have expressed a desire to feed people experiencing hunger with the vegetables they grow. But farmers also need to sell their produce at prices where they can make a living. This partnership with Lakewinds Food Co-op allows the farmers to get paid market price for the top quality organic produce while also expanding access to fresh produce for more people."

## Choua Yang: How motherhood led to a life of farming

By Naveena Sekaran

Our mental images of who farmers are might not initially coincide with motherhood, but for Choua, mother of four and farmer at Big River Farms (BRF), these two identities are inextricably connected. When she began farming, her goal was to earn an additional income to support her four sons, and the summer agricultural season fit well into her schedule as a school teacher. As she embarks on her fifth year as a professional organic farmer, she reflects that while the additional income was what had brought her to BRF, the health and wellness which her work provides for her family is why she stays.

As the mother of four boys, Choua is no stranger to the challenges of time management and juggling responsibilities. Health quickly became her top priority when doctors informed her that her first son, now 11, would be premature due to her own high blood pressure. Choua then made the decision to adopt a healthier, more active lifestyle. Over half a decade later, Choua was pregnant with her fourth son. She farmed both before and during that pregnancy, and proudly explains that her health was perfect. Now, all of her children can identify different vegetables and they spend their summers with their parents, learning the importance of healthy, active lifestyles. To Choua, the connection between motherhood and farming is clear: When she farms, she puts her family's health, diet, and business first.

*Thanks to our guest contributor, Naveena Sekaran, who wrote this profile for the Health Foundations Birth Center.*

## Honor gifts

Thank you to these donors making tribute gifts since October 1, 2018. We appreciate your thoughtfulness in making these gifts in honor of a loved one.

The name of each honoree is listed first in **bold**, followed by the name of the donor/s. Memorial gifts will be listed in a future newsletter.

**Shelbie Beckstead**/Susanne Magill  
**Jackson Bina**/Sonja Tengblad  
**Susan Bordson**/Amy Mettlach  
**Betty Cater**/Mark Cater  
**Mike Cooley**/Patrick Cooley  
**Michael Daley**/Tom and Merri Daley  
**Sam DiPasquale**/Sarah DiPasquale  
**Paul Garding**/Nicholas Jordan  
**Marsha Fille and Roger Raina**/Carol Osiecki  
**The Food Group**/Courtney Barrette  
**Victor Goede**/Louise Goede  
**Government workers**/Anonymous  
**Pamela Hussell**/James Kiehne  
**Arlene Joynt**/Mary Nick  
**John Karr and Pat Russo**/Mildred Karr

**Donna Killian**/Pamela Killian  
**Erin Oliver**/Nora Collins  
**Mary Olsen**/Joan Donohue  
**Tamara Root**/Michael Root  
**Naomi Scheman**/Michael Root  
**Lori and Greg Thorp**/Bob Amico/ Dijana Ceric/ Anne Christenson/  
Katie Croxdale/ Carolyn & Mark Foreman/ Randall & Ellen Hanna/  
The Johnston Group/ Sophia Lenarz-Coy & John Moret/ Peggy &  
Scott Lord/ Tom & Beth Lorentz/Chris & Cathy Manlove/Maureen  
McDowall/ Annette & Bill Miller/Aaron & Kindra Munson/ Ben &  
Caylee Munson/ Jodi & Phil Munson/ Linda Reinhardt-Sondrall &  
Steve Sondrall/ Michelle & Brett Swensen/ Karen Routt-Rogers &  
Ken Rogers/ Rand & Dianne Thorp/ Colby & Emily Eddy White  
**Margaret Tjesvold**/Lucia Newell  
**Jacqueline Uglow**/Health Partners Community Relations

### Ways To Give



### We Accept IRA Charitable Rollover Gifts

In recent months, we have received an increased number of gifts made through IRA plans. These gifts can be advantageous to donors as well as helping The Food Group!

If you meet certain guidelines, you may use your IRA to make a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) to The Food Group. QCDs can be counted toward satisfying your required minimum distributions (RMDs) for the year, as long as certain rules are met.

Contact your IRA plan administrator to designate a gift to The Food Group. If you have any questions, contact Gay Gonnerman at 763-450-4219 or [ggonnerman@thefoodgroupmn.org](mailto:ggonnerman@thefoodgroupmn.org). Thank you!

### Employer Matching Gifts: Double your impact

Does your employer match contributions of money or volunteer hours to charitable organizations? Now you can look up your employer on our website to find out if they do and access their guidelines. Go to [www.thefoodgroupmn.org/donate/matching-gifts](http://www.thefoodgroupmn.org/donate/matching-gifts) to look up your company.

The impact of your gift to The Food Group may be doubled or possibly tripled! Some employers match gifts made by retirees and/or spouses, too.

Matching gifts from employers are an important source of support for The Food Group. The Food Group will gladly complete matching gifts forms as needed. Contact [info@thefoodgroupmn.org](mailto:info@thefoodgroupmn.org).

**THANK YOU TO THESE GENEROUS PARTNERS FOR THEIR SUPPORT**





## 2018 Annual Report is Available

Our Fiscal 2018 Annual Community Report is now available and posted on our website. Go to [www.thefoodgroupmn.org/about-us](http://www.thefoodgroupmn.org/about-us), click on Publications and Resources and select the 2018 Annual Report.

## Upcoming events—join us!

### Summer Harvest for Kids Campaign

**Thursday, May 30, all day**

The Food Group, in partnership with KSTP-TV and Matter Help feed thousands of local kids nutritious lunches this summer with your gift of \$25, \$50 or \$100. Participate by tuning in to 5 Eyewitness News to follow the live phone bank from the Mall of America, and give by phone or online.

### Big River Farms Summer Open House

**Saturday, July 13, 10am-4pm**

Family-friendly activities, tours, refreshments, and fun!  
14220-B Ostlund Trail N  
Marine on St Croix, MN

### 2019 Hunger Bash Gala

**Friday, September 13, 6 pm**

University of Minnesota McNamara Alumni Center  
Live and silent auction/games/food and beverage/live music/program  
Join us for the 8th annual Hunger Bash gala benefitting The Food Group.

### CSA Shares Available, But Hurry!

You can still purchase a share of fresh organic produce! Deliveries begin soon and continue through the growing season.

Sign up today at:  
[www.mnfoodassociation.org/2019-share-information](http://www.mnfoodassociation.org/2019-share-information).  
Convenient payment plans available.



*Celebrate summer with family, friends and farmers!*



*CSA shares are packed with fresh produce!*