



Network News

SEPTEMBER 2021



A shopper steps off the Mobile Market at Ravoux Hi-Rise. Some of our newest inventory includes local items like tortillas and mushrooms, and will continue to evolve with the seasons.

HOW YOU INCREASE ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE GROCERIES

The Food Group's newest program, Twin Cities Mobile Market (TCMM), is a market on a bus that brings affordable and fresh fruits, vegetables, meat, dairy, grains, and other high-quality groceries directly into neighborhoods that don't have easy access to full-service grocery stores.

Every week our mobile market stops at Ravoux Hi-Rise, a public housing apartment building located in the Rondo area of St. Paul. Ravoux is made up of 220 apartment units, most of which are occupied by low-income seniors and adults living with disabilities.

Transportation is a significant barrier to food access for the residents of Ravoux. Keith, a long-time resident, resorts to paying a neighbor for a ride to the grocery store. "I pay someone ten dollars for a ride to Target or Walmart. That adds up really quickly." Thanks to TCMM, Keith can purchase a variety of groceries every week without leaving the grounds of the building. He has utilized the program since its first visit to Ravoux six years ago.

Andrew Carlson, housing manager at Mt. Airy Homes, says residents love the mobile market. "It's important here because we don't have a reliable grocery store

nearby and a lot of our residents don't have cars or transportation. It's especially nice because of the nutritious options offered, including fresh fruit and vegetables. **It's the best outreach program that comes to Ravoux."**

By shopping the Mobile Market, residents bypass transportation and mobility barriers to healthy food access. They can purchase groceries right where they live on a weekly basis. The bus is stocked with over 200 items, accepts Market Bucks and SNAP as payment and provides a feeling of community between TCMM staff and shoppers. The market improves the quality of life for the people who utilize it for their food needs.

TCMM will expand service in 2021

Thanks to funding from local foundations, our community partnerships will continue to expand, **reaching an additional eighteen sites in the Metro area**, including the North side of Minneapolis and the East side of St. Paul. We are creating new partnerships that focus on children and youth, so no child goes without the nutrition they need this summer and as they prepare to return to school.

(continued on page 3)

Moving forward in solidarity with the community

A Message from the Executive Director



In many ways, this summer feels different than last summer. Kids are back at summer camps, we can gather with friends and family to celebrate milestones, and national guard troops aren't stationed around our cities. Yet I am reminded every day that **things remain deeply uncertain as the economy begins a slow recovery**. The pandemic continues to spread, many neighborhoods continue to experience a lack of public safety, and **far too many people in our community remain unsure about where their next meal is coming from**.

Because of your generous support this past year, The Food Group has expanded our partnerships, developing new relationships with organizations who had not previously distributed food, such as the Phoenix Care Center, featured in the enclosed COVID-19 Special Report. Many of these groups have trusting community relationships and are led by individuals experiencing food insecurity. As some of these partners move back to their core missions, **The Food Group is working hard to ensure that individuals with food needs do not fall through the cracks**. We are thinking about new ways to create welcoming spaces, diversify our volunteer base, and ensure that community voice shapes how food is distributed in the community.

This isn't fast or easy work, but it is incredibly important, and you make it all possible. Thank you for continuing to partner with us as we work **to build a better food safety net**. Even as we continue to focus on **free food distribution**, we know that supporting farmers and creating additional access to **affordable groceries** remains a top priority. Twin Cities Mobile Market (featured on page 1) is a great way to link our programs – we can source food grown by Big River Farms farmers, offer it affordably, and reach neighborhoods that lack access to grocery stores. Connecting efforts at multiple points in the food system leads to impactful change.

Food needs remain at record highs, but with your help, we continue to rise to meet the challenges before us. **Thank you for your investment** as we work to build a more equitable food system.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sophia".

Sophia Lenarz-Coy
Executive Director

You have delivered almost
15 MILLION
EMERGENCY MEALS



Since 2020

ONE IN SIX CHILDREN
is hungry today



COUPLE CHOOSES BENEFICIARIES WITH CARE



From left: John and Lydija Tschumperlin paused from packing food in the warehouse to get a photo with volunteer coordinator Colette Illarde.

"If you value your money, and worked hard your whole life toward financial security, then why give it up and let someone else decide what happens to it after you're gone? Put your wishes in writing!" This is the advice of John Tschumperlin, Cargill retiree, long-time volunteer, and legacy donor to The Food Group.

"One of Cargill's corporate pillars is 'Feed the people,' and the importance of giving back was ingrained in us," says John. His heart goes out to people who for whatever reason experience hunger and food insecurity, especially noticeable over the past year.

Retired in 2007, John took the initiative to coordinate a team of Cargill retiree volunteers and matched them up with The Food Group. John describes himself as "a competitor" and likes his team to achieve as much as possible in each shift. "We're driven to do the most we can and produce the best results each month." John's wife

Lydija, also a Cargill retiree, is on the team as well.

"Who are we passing our estate along to?"

John and Lydija's financial commitment through their estate flowed from their investment of "time and sweat" over the years. "When we looked at our wills, we asked ourselves, who are we passing our estate along to?" John researched charity ratings for how non-profits use their donations to invest directly in the mission. The Food Group was among the organizations that rose to the top.

"The Food Group is a good match with our values. Growing up on farms, we had just enough and no extras. We never went hungry, and we see how difficult it is today. We're pleased to be able to leave something that will impact future needs." John says. To other friends of The Food Group he says, "Don't wait until you're 80. Do it now!"

(How you increase access to affordable groceries - continued)

In addition to expanding access to families with children, TCMM will feature even more fresh produce. We are partnering with farmers in our growing program at Big River Farms, and with Appetite for Change (a North Minneapolis non-profit) to stock the bus with organically and locally grown, in-season produce.

We continue to experience an increased demand for food across our community due to the economic effects of the pandemic. Your commitment to our mission provides equitable access to affordable, nutritious food that is vital to the health and well-being of all Minnesotans.

FREEWILL

Free estate planning tool now available.

A legacy gift made through your estate plan is a meaningful way to provide long term support and make a lasting impact on alleviating hunger.

As a friend of The Food Group, you have access to **FreeWill**, an online estate planning tool. It's 100% free to you, and most people complete the process in 20 minutes or less. You can care for your loved ones and create a legacy for the causes you care about. Go to freewill.com/thefoodgroupmn to get started.

If you are planning a legacy gift to The Food Group, have added The Food Group as a beneficiary, or have already created a legacy gift, we would appreciate hearing from you. Please contact Gay Gonnerman at 763-450-4219 or ggonnerman@foodgroupmn.org.

VOLUNTEER WITH US

Volunteer opportunities are available now! Pack food at our warehouse, rescue produce at farms and markets, or help distribute food at a Twin Cities Mobile Market site.

Visit thefoodgroupmn.volunteerhub.com to learn more and sign-up. Or contact Colette Illarde, our new Volunteer Coordinator at cillarde@thefoodgroupmn.org or 763-450-3889. We'd love to connect with you!



TCMM staff and shopper on board the Mobile Market

SUPPORT HUNGER FREE SCHOOLS



Our friends at Hunger Solutions are putting out a call to contact your representatives in Congress on behalf of school families.

When schools closed in response to COVID-19, millions of children lost access to school meals overnight, and food insecurity among families with children skyrocketed. Schools and community organizations have been able to offer meals to all children at no charge during the pandemic through child nutrition waivers.

We cannot afford to go backwards, and instead must make school meals for all a permanent investment in the wellbeing and success of all students. Go to www.hungersolutions.org/get-involved/hhfsminnesota and follow the "Federal Efforts" link to ensure Congress includes school meals for all in their budget reconciliation deal.

Local foods go to local families

We partner with local farmers to rescue fresh, local produce, which we distribute to our hunger relief partners.

In just one month, volunteers visiting the Minneapolis Farmers Market have rescued over 10,000 pounds of produce. Thank you to the farmers who increase families access to high-quality produce! To volunteer with us at the farmers market, visit thefoodgroupmn.volunteerhub.com

Drought impacts Hmong farmers

An interview with Mhonpaj Lee, formerly a farmer and staff member of Big River Farms, is included in a StarTribune story about the challenges for Hmong farmers during the drought. Go to tinyurl.com/8vwschy8 to read the full story.

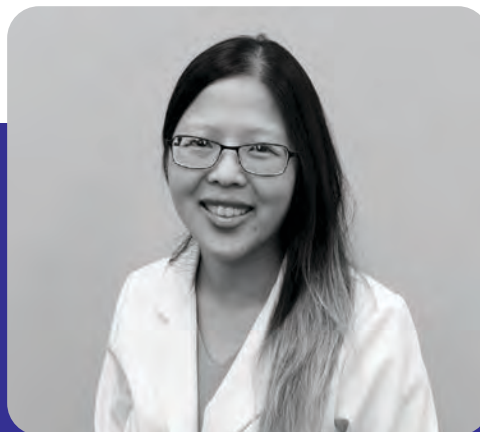
MINNESOTA CHILDREN MADE OVER 1.3 MILLION VISITS TO FOOD SHELVES IN 2020



a 7% increase over 2019



A volunteer collects produce from the Minneapolis Farmers Market to deliver to food shelf partners.



CORPORATE SPOTLIGHTS



THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

Tour our warehouse & farm

Please join us for a tour at either or both of our locations. For all our safety we follow recommended health protocols.

TOUR DATES/ LOCATIONS

The Food Group Warehouse, 8501 54th Ave N, New Hope
September 13, 10-11 AM

Warehouse Tour & Food Packing Event,
October 28, 5-7 PM

Big River Farms, 14220-B Ostlund Trail North, Marine on St. Croix
September 20, 4-5 PM
October 14, 10-11 AM

RSVP or Questions to Emily Eddy White, 763-450-3868, ewhite@thefoodgroupmn.org