Partner spotlight
Thanks to these donors who are generously supporting our commitment to community-led emerging hunger relief partners.

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Creating better access for BIPOC farmers
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Special thanks to our match donors:…

Satisfy hunger. Start eating.

HOW YOU PROVIDE CREATIVE SOLUTIONS TO MEET EMERGENCY NEEDS
Food has the power to heal. That has never been more apparent than in this past year when we experienced the isolating effects of a world health crisis. We have had to find creative ways to get the right food to people so that they can maintain good health and well-being and know that they are seen and not forgotten.

The crises of COVID-19 and the 2020 uprising exposed longstanding disparities and inequities in the food system—including in the hunger relief network. With your support, team members at The Food Group tuned in even more closely to what was happening in the community and brought collaborative and creative solutions to local hunger.

NEW PARTNERS WITH SHARED VALUES
“The intensity of the events of 2020 triggered a mutual aid movement in emergency hunger relief,” says Maria Bonilla, Agency Relations Specialist. We connected with a new group of hunger relief partners that shared our values of access, equity and dignity in providing food and caring for each other. Maria explains that many grass-roots associations started emergency food programs and broke down barriers that people were experiencing in accessing food. For example, they offered food sanctuaries or “free stores” where no application forms were required.

Your contributions provided groceries and meals to more than forty new partner organizations that lacked fundraising capacity and did not have a budget to purchase food for their visitors. And those partnerships are continuing into 2021 thanks to you.

Equally important was the delivery of both culturally connected and locally sourced foods, including masa flour, fufu flour, wild rice, fresh vegetables, fruits and herbs, eggs, meat and poultry, and much more. “Sourcing and purchasing local foods creates lasting relationships, builds resilience, and boosts the local farm economy,” says Danielle Piraino, Produce Programs Coordinator.

CREATIVE SOLUTIONS IN CHALLENGING TIMES
Another example of the win-win of collaborating was providing labor and transportation to harvest and glean food from the Dream of Wild Health farm and deliver it directly to the Gatherings Café where daily meals are prepared and delivered to Native American elders using culturally connected foods. You fueled this essential nutrition service for a vulnerable community with your generous gifts.

Maria and Danielle agree that they are beginning to see changes in the food system and in emergency hunger relief that make them even more hopeful about the future. Maria says, “We have stayed centered on our values and taken collective responsibility to care for each other and create a stronger, healthier community.”
The arrival of spring holds so much promise—hope for a bountiful growing season, for more time outdoors, and for renewal. This spring marked the one-year anniversary of the pandemic and we reflected on its immeasurable impact. We missed time with loved ones and celebrating milestones. It has been hard, and we still face a long recovery and many unknowns about the future.

The long-term effect of COVID-19 is deeper and broader on those with lower income, and the recovery will be slower. Hit especially hard are communities of color, low-wage workers, those who lost jobs, seniors, and people with health issues.

You continue to inspire me with your generosity in the face of all the challenges. Your commitment to delivering nutritious, culturally connected foods to those who need them most is a sign of hope. You keep us moving forward with equity, access, nutrition, and local foods at the center of our work. You will see those values reflected in the stories in this newsletter.

While we gradually emerge from isolation, now is not the time to rest, thinking all will return to “normal.” Now is the time to instead re-imagine a food system that works for everyone. We cannot go back to how things were before March 2020.

For our whole community to recover and flourish, we need to build more equitable access to good foods, farmland, and capital. We must do better to ensure that hunger is no longer endemic and commit to ending the disparities in Minnesota that have gone on far too long.

Your continued support provides resources for new and emerging hunger relief partners and BIPOC farmers, supplies more culturally connected foods, relaunches the Twin Cities Mobile Market and a remodeled Fare For All and join us in our voices to advocate for a more just and equitable food system.

Together, we will provide food for today as we create change for tomorrow.

Sophia Lenarz-Coy • Executive Director

Your commitment creates a brighter future
A Message from the Executive Director

Your generous donations have provided

11.3 MILLION
EMERGENCY MEALS

to
265 Hunger relief partner organizations since March 2020.

Thank you!

Celebrating our amazing volunteers

April marked Volunteer Appreciation Week, and we have much to appreciate. We are gradually bringing back larger groups of volunteers to our warehouse to resume the larger scale packing events we hosted pre-pandemic. Thanks to everyone who has helped over the past year and watch for more opportunities this summer.

With gratitude and best wishes, we bid a happy retirement to Dan Johnson, Volunteer Program Coordinator for the past five years. Thanks for your incredible dedication, Dan!

Local Fire Department Extinguishes Hunger

Joel Nelson, Assistant Fire Chief at West Metro Fire & Rescue in New Hope, has witnessed a huge surge of people coming to the fire department looking for food resources since COVID hit.

He has learned you don’t know what someone is experiencing just by what you see. “These are people whose world has changed. Their income levels have changed. By helping them with some food maybe they can keep their homes and their automobiles until things turn around. Many of these people would have been donating to a food drive before the pandemic, and now they are receiving from them.”

West Metro Fire & Rescue has partnered with The Food Group for ten years by hosting a food drive every March. Each year they coordinate with six local retailers to collect donations. Since 2011, they have collected and contributed 22,720 pounds of food and $39,638 to local food shelves.

West Metro Fire & Rescue is grateful to every supporter who makes their drive a success, year after year. Thank you, West Metro Fire & Rescue, for your commitment to extinguishing hunger in our community!

Twin Cities Mobile Market update: Back on the road

In spring 2020, the Twin Cities Mobile Market had just come on board with The Food Group when the pandemic required a pivot from retail food to providing free emergency food to impacted neighborhoods. Your support supplied free food through contactless delivery to partner housing sites until we could safely relaunch the mobile market.

We are pleased to share that beginning this May, we have resumed a schedule of weekly visits to a group of apartment buildings in Minneapolis and St. Paul.

This market on a bus (pictured on envelope) conveniently brings affordable and fresh fruits, vegetables, meat, dairy, grains and other high-quality groceries directly into neighborhoods around St. Paul and Minneapolis that don’t have easy access to full-service supermarkets, grocery stores or food shelves.

To set up a Food and Cash Drive for your group or organization, contact Talia at 763-450-3869 or tmiracle@thefoodgroupmn.org.
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Ways To Give
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ONE IN NINE
MINNESOTANS IS EXPERIENCING HUNGER.
Up from one in eleven in 2019.

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