



# Network News

FALL 2021



Stuart Iseminger (right), NorthPoint Health & Wellness Center Food Programs Manager, with driver Alec Garcia, and food shelf assistant, Annette Brown.

## PARTNER SPOTLIGHT: A COMFORT TO THE COMMUNITY DURING CRISIS

In the crisis mode of a pandemic, staying healthy is the number one goal. NorthPoint Health & Wellness Center's mission is "partnering to create a healthier community." Core to their work is to serve the North Minneapolis community as a food resource, supported by their partnership with The Food Group.

"We could not live out our crucial mission without The Food Group -- and your supporters!" says Stuart Iseminger, Food Programs Manager.

A long-time participant named Bonnie appreciates the quality of food. "I'm vegetarian so it's harder to find affordable foods that meet my nutritional needs. I can eat poorly on a limited budget; just surviving is tough.

**The produce I get here is lifechanging."**

The pandemic led to a new home delivery program, ensuring food gets to their most isolated neighbors. Stuart tells us they identified an unmet need in their community. "We were struggling with how to get food to our clients who couldn't safely come to the food shelf. We would tell people they could send a neighbor or a friend but that was a challenge for many. It's a reflection of the isolation so many people have experienced during the pandemic. NorthPoint secured funding, procured a delivery vehicle, and hired additional staff to ensure home delivery will remain a permanent program.

### Many new families and faces

Another recent change is the mix of neighbors they serve.

- First time visitors increased from 10% to 25%,
- Number of seniors served doubled,
- Average household size for home delivery participants increased from 2.5 to five or six because of families doubling up on housing in the economic crunch.

In addition to the food shelf, NorthPoint also hosts a **popular free wellness market called Free Fresh Food Friday**. Stuart describes how their partnership with The Food Group lends to the success. "We love it when the Big River Farms truck arrives. They always bring the highest quality stuff, we're so excited. They bring onions, radishes, beets, herbs, kale, green onions, tomatoes.

**It's the best and highest quality produce we've ever been able to offer our participants. I've been in this field for a long time, and this year it's been the best I've ever seen."**

**The Food Group is proud to contribute to the wellness mission of the NorthPoint community and the holistic approach they lead with.** You make this long-time partnership possible in a way that contributes to health and wellness for all 250 partners in our network. Thank you!

# Your response relieves the strain on families

A Message from the Executive Director



The fall of 2021 includes many of the mile markers we come to expect of the season – leaves turning, kids back to school, pumpkin-spiced everything. But this fall has several aspects unique to this moment in time – dramatically rising food costs, heightened community need, and uncertainty around COVID variants. All this puts additional strain on so many in our community who are already wondering where their next meal is coming from.

We have said it many times, but food needs in our neighborhoods **remain at high levels**. This has been true for the past eighteen months and, unfortunately, changes at the federal level mean that supports are decreasing. Enhanced unemployment benefits have expired, shrinking many household incomes. **Rising food costs** at the grocery store mean that the benefits folks do receive don't stretch as far. This often leaves healthy, culturally relevant foods out of reach.

**Fortunately, thanks to you, The Food Group remains ready to continue meeting the challenges of the moment.** We prioritize nutrition – ensuring that the food we carry includes many fresh produce and lean protein options. We emphasize local foods when possible, deepening partnerships with farmers who play an important role in a thriving local economy, and paying them fair prices for food. With your support, we work hard to get healthy, culturally connected foods to those who need them most.

The stories in this newsletter show how you are delivering high quality, nutritious, and culturally connected foods to partners like NorthPoint Wellness Center and how those foods **not only relieve hunger, but also create better physical and mental health and build a stronger community.**

With gratitude,

Sophia Lenarz-Coy  
Executive Director



## Hunger still higher than in 2019: Your impact by the numbers



# RESOLVING HUNGER TAKES MORE THAN FOOD



KaZoua Berry, Big River Farms Program Manager.

KaZoua Berry's life mission is to resolve hunger by doing more than just filling people with calories. As a certified health coach, she taught people how to prepare and cook nutritious food. As a community organizer, she helped people start community gardens. As a collaborator with Frogtown Farms in St. Paul, she began the practice of seed saving. Now, as the Program Manager at Big River Farms, she educates urban farmers how to grow food and manage farm businesses.

To resolve hunger, we need to center the conversation around food access. KaZoua explains, **"Food is at the center of who we all are.** I don't want to just end hunger; I want people to eat nutrient dense food that nourishes their bodies and minds. It should be culturally relevant to them. Food should also heal the land rather than cause further damage."

KaZoua believes hunger is a food justice issue. "Food justice is when people can walk less than one mile and access affordable, nutrient dense, healthy fresh foods. It means that people can grow foods that are relevant to them and their community. It means farmers don't have to compromise the food that they grow based on the income they will make."

Providing food that is a culturally connected and nutritious is a crucial step towards strengthening and empowering our communities. KaZoua reminds us, "When people can connect to their culture through food it moves away from processed food and a conventional, commercial way of eating."

**By supporting local farmers, growers, and producers, together, we are closing the gap on food inequities and creating better health outcomes for all.**



## GIVING FOR TODAY AND THE FUTURE.

Marsha Gille has a long history of contributing to The Food Group and for the last several years, she has inspired others to give, too. Marsha feels strongly about providing hunger relief in her community. And she says The Food Group, "does such a great job!"

Marsha became a regular donor more than thirty years ago. The later she became a **Monthly Nourisher** to provide a steady stream of support through an automatic gift each month.

When she and her husband wrote their wills, they each chose a favorite charity to receive part of their estate. Marsha chose The Food Group to receive her legacy.

In addition, Marsha has a group of friends from her teaching career who continue to socialize. They get together a few times a year to catch up and to celebrate birthdays. Several years ago, they decided to make **charitable gifts in honor of each other's birthdays.** "We didn't need any more 'stuff,'" Marsha says. So, they each chose a favorite cause and Marsha of course, chose The Food Group, where she has had a long relationship.

Thank you, Marsha, for your dedication to hunger relief!



## Volunteer spotlight: Takeda

Takeda Pharmaceuticals, a local company specializing in the manufacturing of cancer and Crohn's disease drugs, partners with The Food Group to achieve their corporate mission of achieving "better health for people, brighter future for the world." A member of our staff spoke on a panel to Takeda, inspiring ways to get involved which resulted in Takeda employees hosting a food and cash drive, and sending employee volunteers to pack 4,200 pounds of locally grown produce for food shelves. This is just the beginning. Thank you, Takeda!



**The Food Group has selected 31 agencies as Cultural Equity Partners for the coming year. These agencies will receive free culturally connected foods for distribution to households.**

## UPCOMING EVENTS



**Walk to End Hunger: November 1-30** The Walk to End Hunger is back for its 14th year celebrating the entire month of 'No Hunger November.' Instead of a Thanksgiving Day event, a Walk to End Hunger walk route will be featured at the Mall of America for the entire month of November, inviting participants to "walk to end hunger" any time the **Mall of America** is open during the month. **You can register to walk, create a team, or donate to The Food Group team at [www.walktoendhunger.org](http://www.walktoendhunger.org).**

### DOUBLE YOUR IMPACT ON NOVEMBER 18! \$100K Matching Opportunity

Minnesota's annual day of giving returns this year on Thursday, November 18. A generous foundation is offering a \$100,000 match for donations to The Food Group! Once again, the participating organizations will be eligible for bonus cash prizes throughout the 24-hour event. To visit The Food Group's GiveMN site go to [givemn.org/thefoodgroupmn](http://givemn.org/thefoodgroupmn).

Watch for information about matching gifts and prizes. You can even create your own peer-to-peer fundraiser. Give to the Max Day 2020 raised \$30.4 million for 6,114 nonprofits and schools.



- Asian Media Access
- Bois Forte Tribal Government
- Brian Coyle Community Center
- CAC- Little Free Market
- Community Emergency Assistance Program (CEAP)
- Community Emergency Service (CES)
- CLUES
- DuNord Foundation Market
- Francis Basket Food Shelf
- Glendale Food Shelf
- Hallie Q. Brown Community Center
- Iman Hussain Islamic Center
- Interfaith Outreach & Community Partners (IOCP)
- Joyce Uptown Food Shelf
- Keystone Community Services
- MCCC
- Monticello Help Center
- New Creation Baptist Church
- Neighborhood House
- NorthPoint Health & Wellness Center
- Oromo Resource Center of MN
- People Serving People
- PRISM
- Rescue Now Services
- RiverBank Food Shelf
- Salvation Army, Central
- Salvation Army, Burnsville
- Salvation Army, Temple
- Scott Carver Dakota CAP
- Southside Family Nurturing Center
- St. Paul Division of Indian Work
- Waite House

Thank you, Luther Automotive, for your many years of support and for inspiring others to give!

