

Special report: Your COVID response



Sophia with Minneapolis Mayor Frey at Powderhorn Park

Moving forward together with hope

Now that we have experienced a year and a half of living in a pandemic, we want to show you the impact of your response to both the COVID-19 emergency and the death of George Floyd. The effects of both crises continue, but it is important to pause and tell the story of how you made and continue to make a difference.

This report chronicles how we are stronger going forward because of you. You have shown through your support that you understand that **equity, access, culturally connected** and **locally grown** foods are important for the health of the whole community.

You have helped transform how we nourish those in our community who don't know where their next meal is coming from. You are helping us rebuild the hunger relief system in a way that makes it better for everyone going forward. Community-driven change and collaboration are happening in hunger relief, made possible thanks to you.

As the delta variant reminds us, we are still not where we want to be. As the death of Daunte Wright reminds us,

trauma can arise on any given day, and we must respond. Emergency needs *by definition* are unpredictable, but we know we can count on you to provide hope during our most trying times. We thank you for being attuned to hunger in our neighborhoods, and for offering care and compassion through your support.

This report shares the voices of our partners in the community and spotlights what a few of them have done through 2020 and 2021 to offer solutions for the individuals they serve. Each one of our 250 partners represents thousands of people who you have reached with the gift of nutritious food. You have stepped forward with financial support and volunteer time and energy.

I hope you will take time to browse through this report and feel a sense of accomplishment for what we have been able to do together. Much more remains to be done, but we are committed to a vision of something better than before. I thank you sincerely for continuing with us on this journey.



Sincerely,

Sophia

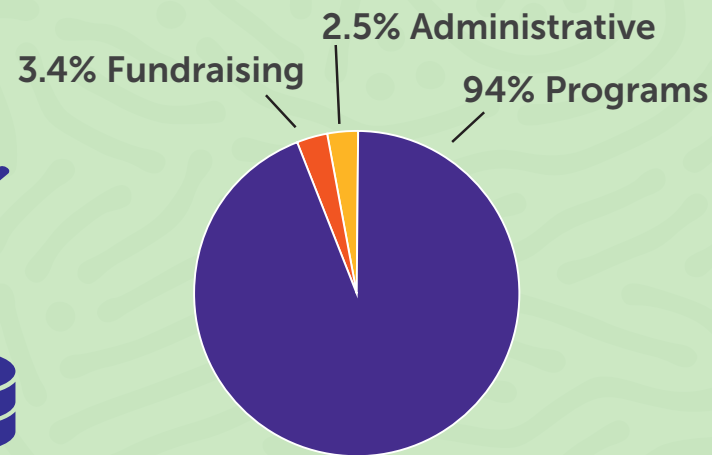
Sophia Lenarz-Coy
Executive Director

Stewarding your gift

Every dollar you contribute provides two essential meals to neighbors who need them most.



In FY20 our administrative and fundraising costs were less than 6% of our operating budget, compared to a charity rating standard of 10%.



FY2020 EXPENSES

Our partners appreciate you



"We've seen an increase in families we're serving exponentially. Since March 2020, we have served 151% more families than this time in 2019. We've also seen almost 1,000 new, first time visit families. **This is 340% more than last year.**" -Kendre Pust, HopeBridge Food Shelf, New Hope

"Recognizing the vulnerability of our seniors and those facing health risks who are homebound, we've increased our home deliveries by forty percent, keeping our vulnerable neighbors healthy and safe." -Patti Sinykin, ICA Food Shelf, Minnetonka



"We have helped more families than we could have ever dreamed of or thought we would have to. All the products we receive were distributed so quickly and received with such gratitude. We are so grateful to all the wonderful donors of The Food Group for all you have done." -Lynette Dzwonkowski, Church of the Incarnation Food Shelf, Minneapolis

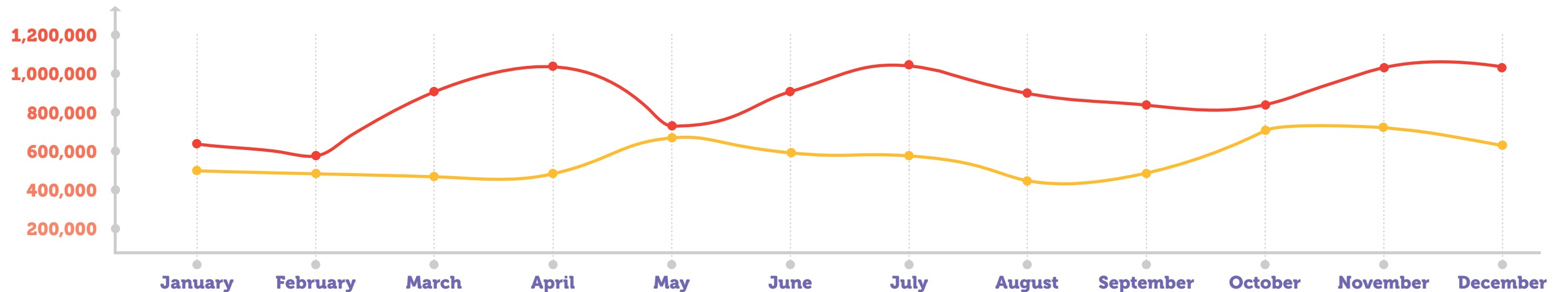
"COVID has disproportionately impacted the Latino community with significant layoffs in industries that employ many Latinos, limited access to public benefits, and some of the highest rates of infection. The demand for access to food has increased and CLUES is now serving nearly three times as many households per week as we were prior to the pandemic." -Faith Clark, CLUES, Minneapolis/St. Paul



MEALS DISTRIBUTED



2019 2020



2020 TIMELINE

January 2020

COVID-19 arrives in the U.S. March 2020

- World Health Organization (WHO) declares Pandemic.
- The Food Group is designated as an essential organization. Quickly adopts new safety standards, adjusts volunteer and food distribution models.
- Donors begin sending emergency relief contributions.

May-June 2020

- George Floyd is killed while in custody of the Minneapolis Police.
- Community protests result in the closure of hundreds of businesses in Minneapolis and St. Paul, including grocery stores, convenience stores and restaurants.
- Donor support continues in response to the spike in hunger.

June-July-August 2020

- The Food Group partners with organizations to respond to emergency needs, including culturally specific food.
- Begins pop-up food distributions, drive-through food pick-ups, food delivery.
- Donors generously support The Food Group's partnerships with emerging programs and mutual aid organizations.

Sept-Oct-Nov-Dec 2020

- Emergency food distributions continue in cities, suburbs, and greater Minnesota.
- The Food Group hosts a virtual community conversation to provide updates to donors and friends.
- Donor support continues at highest level ever.

Meet an emerging partner

Preserving the health of elders is essential



Kristina Kwan (right) with some of the Phoenix Care Center participants (note the laptop for senior participants via Zoom).

“It’s important to keep seniors healthy the older they get and that they have a desire to eat. Providing culturally connected foods ensures they’ll eat a meal.” Kristina Kwan, director of Phoenix Cove Adult Day Care.

At the height of the pandemic care centers and supportive service organizations had to cease their work, including **Phoenix Cove Adult Day Center**. This senior center is a place for Asian elders of the Twin Cities to receive care and to be nurtured. Experienced staff empower these seniors and support their care providers so that they may continue to live independently, in their own homes and preserve their dignity with the many services and programs offered. They were closed for total of 16 months and recently re-opened in July 2020.

Although all regular services were suspended during the time they were closed, director Kristina Kwan, created a plan to maintain their goal of providing “a cove for connection and community” for Asian elders. She was determined to keep their needs met at a time when everyone’s physical, mental and spiritual health was most at risk.

Kristina’s top priority was to continue providing elders an opportunity to access nutritious and culturally connected foods. During regular operations, Phoenix provides daily, fresh, home cooked meals at the center using familiar ingredients. Mealtimes are opportunities for socializing and eating foods that provide essential nutrients - key for stimulating the health and wellbeing of elders. Kristina knows that when elders are isolated at home, they don’t feed themselves

nutritious foods. **“What we’ve learned over the years is that when they come to the center they eat really well. When they eat at home, they don’t eat or don’t eat well. Sometimes it’s just a slice of bread all day.”**

Just one week after Phoenix closed, seniors began to receive their groceries delivered to their homes. The elders reported that they were scared to go to the grocery store. They were seeing reports of people fighting over necessities like rice and toilet paper. In addition to the large-scale scarcity we were experiencing, there was also anti-Asian rhetoric emerging and, in some cases, devastating violence that followed. They simply felt unsafe shopping on their own. Food access and safety were threatened.

Phoenix staff and volunteers packed bags of groceries that contained healthy and culturally familiar staples. The Food Group supplemented these deliveries with brown and jasmine rice, noodles, Siracha, soy and fish sauce. Elders and their care givers were grateful to receive the deliveries. One care giver explained, “the deliveries are great. I care for my grandmother and I wouldn’t know what types of foods to buy for her.”

Through support of impactful donor gifts and partnership with The Food Group, Phoenix Adult Cove Adult Care Center was able to continue their services through the pandemic by implementing a new model of food access. Kristina expressed her gratitude, saying “This support made our programming more affordable. We were funding everything on our own prior to this. I found a way to do it but would worry about financial matters after. Thank you to the donors for what you’re doing to support programs like ours.”

Crises brought new solutions

A crisis can be a two-sided coin, bringing opportunity for change during difficult times. You may have heard us say that the pandemic has brought about change in hunger relief. What do we mean by that? Some of these changes may be for the short-term, and others may last far into the future. The key is that we stay open to doing things differently in order to reach more people, including those who have not had access or felt fully welcome in the traditional hunger relief model.



Volunteers with boxes of food at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church emergency distribution



Sanneh Foundation staff with Maria Bonilla from The Food Group at Corcoran Park food distribution



The Department of Indian Work "Indigevan" distributes food to elders.

Your support has provided resources and removed barriers to create change and innovation.

Here are a few examples:

- **Your quick response in 2020** allowed us to distribute food to our food shelf partners, to emergency food distributions, and to community-based organizations in greatly increased amounts—as much as double the 2019 levels per month. This allowed hunger relief partner to eliminate paperwork, remove geographic boundaries, and allow multiple visits per month per family unit.
- When food shelves had to shut down their spaces and lost their volunteer corps, they reached out to us and to other hunger agencies to collaborate on **outdoor and drive-through food distributions**. For example, Keystone hosted food distributions at Allianz Field and Holy Trinity Church, Minneapolis, moved their food distribution outdoors.
- Many agencies, especially those serving seniors who could no longer access groceries, started **food delivery**. As food shelves have gradually re-opened with new safety practices, some of them have continued delivery as well.
- We have been able to collaborate with more **"emerging partners"** which are community-based organizations that didn't previously provide food but reached out to The Food Group to help with their specific community food needs, including culturally connected foods. For example, Phoenix Adult Care Center, Sanneh Foundation, and One Minnesota adapted new models to keep their participants healthy, safe, and connected.
- The desire and **demand for local foods reached an all-time high**. Our CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) shares at Big River Farms sold in record numbers and very quickly.
- Our long-time commitment to **affordable groceries** through Fare For All, and now Twin Cities Mobile Market, transitioned first to emergency free food distributions to isolated people and families, and then to drive-through food pick-up.

What you should know about hunger

Survey Results:



Minnesota's Hunger Solutions and SuperShelf conduct regular surveys of food shelf visitors and staff to track data relating to hunger and hunger relief. Below are a few highlights of what we know about food shelf use in 2019 and 2020.

Our farmers at Big River Farms participate in the partnership. "It's amazing to have funding from our donors to get healthy food to lower-income families who need it and still pay the farmers a fair price," says Laura Mirafuentes, Big River Farms director.

Healthy foods, especially fresh fruits and veggies, continue to be in demand. More than half of food shelf clients are at a high risk for chronic disease, so providing them with essential nutrients is key to living a longer, fuller life.

FOOD SHELF VISITS

3,813,793 VISITS IN 2020



SENIOR VISITS HAVE INCREASED



45% over 18 yrs OF HOUSEHOLDS INCLUDE CHILDREN

33% 65+ yrs OF HOUSEHOLDS INCLUDE SENIORS

FOOD SHELF USERS WANT & NEED HEALTHIER FOODS TO FEED THEIR FAMILIES

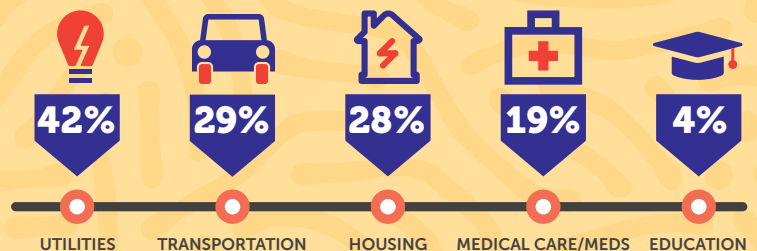
93% said they would like to provide more fruits & veggies for their family.

96% said they know how to prepare many fruits & veggies

60% of food shelf clients reported getting **HALF or MORE** of their total fruits and vegetables from the food shelf in the last 6 months.

BUDGET TRADE-OFFS

IN THE PAST YEAR, FOOD SHELF CLIENTS SAID THEY HAD TO CHOOSE BETWEEN FOOD AND...



Readers should note that **some of the above data were collected prior to the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) pandemic** and do not reflect the potential impacts of COVID-19 on food shelves in 2020. Evidence from national data suggests that food insecurity has increased since the start of the pandemic