



Formerly Emergency
Foodshelf Network

Network News

WINTER 2020



How the Market Drives Our Mission

Twin Cities Mobile Market brings affordable and fresh fruits, vegetables, meat, dairy, grains and other high-quality groceries directly into neighborhoods.



8,500 customers served at 26 sites throughout Saint Paul and Minneapolis



84% report eating more fruits and vegetables



89% say they have greater access to healthy food

Source: 2019 customer survey by Melissa Horning, PhD,
University of Minnesota School of Nursing

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and follow us on social media.

NEW WAY TO NOURISH OUR COMMUNITY

Twin Cities Mobile Market Joins The Food Group

A grocery store on a bus. That's how we'll continue to bring affordable food to communities with the most need.

Twin Cities Mobile Market will become a program of The Food Group in March. "We already have a strong track record of offering quality, low-cost groceries through Fare for All," said Sophia Lenarz-Coy, executive director of The Food Group. "Twin Cities Mobile Market allows us to be even more effective and strategic as we respond to this rising community need."

Need for Affordable Grocery Grows

Twin Cities Mobile Market started five years ago as a program of Amherst H. Wilder Foundation. Wilder often acts as an incubator for new program models that have the capacity for greater impact beyond the organization and find somewhere new to flourish.

That's exactly what the Mobile Market did, thanks in large part to founder Leah Porter. "We are thrilled to call The Food Group home," Porter said. "Our missions and impact are so aligned—it's the perfect fit for the next phase of the market. This move will give our stakeholders, funders, partners, donors and volunteers even more great work to support."

The Mobile Market is stronger than ever, and so is the need for it. "Everyone grocery shops, including people who visit food shelves," said Lenarz-Coy. "The need for nutritious food that is both affordable and accessible is growing, and this program strengthens The Food Group's innovative approach to fighting hunger and nourishing our community."

The Food Group and Twin Cities Mobile Market teams began planning and integration this winter and expect the transition to be complete in March.



"Twin Cities Mobile Market allows us to be even more effective and strategic as we respond to this rising community need."

**Sophia Lenarz-Coy
Executive Director,
The Food Group**

Food for Today. Change for Tomorrow.

Food shelves are agents of change. To grow this potential, The Food Group is rolling out new curriculum supporting our partners. The goal? Feed people while leading long-term solutions to hunger.

"This is a really cool opportunity for us to show up in partnership in a different way," said Lyncy Yang, The Food Group's program manager. "Together, we can create systemic change—for us, by us."

The Food Group is collaborating with Marnita's Table, a Minneapolis nonprofit that helps boost equality through community engagement. The approach is called intentional social interaction or IZI. For The Food Group, that includes community discussions over a meal and trainings to help our staff and partners connect with those affected by hunger-related problems and make sure they are part of the solutions.

Fun Fun Cheng and Maria Bonilla, both agency relations specialists at The Food Group, are driving this work. "Food shelves have a voice, and they can be an advocate for a more equitable and just food system," Cheng said. "It's important that we provide food and are part of lasting change. This is the start of that."

More Community Foods Leaders

For the last three years, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has funded The Food Group's Community Foods Leadership Program, a project helping people learn about Minnesota's food system and carry out projects in their communities.

Bonilla completed the program. Last year, she founded a farmers market in an area previously without access to good food. "If it wasn't for The Food Group, this would have never happened," she said. "I'm really proud to be working with an organization that is making projects like this possible."



Join Us for a Community Feast

Cultivate!

You help us create change. Here's another way you can be a part of the solution. Join us for a feast and conversation on creating cross-cultural food systems that honor farmers while making local foods available to everyone in our communities.

Thurs., Feb. 13, 6-9 p.m.

Maplewood Community Center
2100 White Bear Ave., Maplewood, MN 55109

Thurs., Feb. 20, 6-9 p.m.

Rambling River Center
325 Oak St., Farmington, MN 55024

Families welcome | Free and open to the public |
Dinner provided | Wheelchair accessible

RSVP to sammie@marnitastable.org or
612-928-7744

Your Support Makes Positive Change Possible

A Message from the Executive Director

By Sophia Lenarz-Coy

Our supporters make possible real work to get good food to folks who need it most. About five months into my role as executive director of The Food Group, I remain truly inspired by the passion and generosity of our donors, volunteers, staff and community partners. Thank you for advancing our mission of fighting hunger and nourishing out community.

Food Justice Summit

In November, I had the honor of co-chairing The Food Justice Summit in Duluth. The room was full of more than 450 food champions from across the state. We heard keynote speakers Amani Olugbala of Soul Fire Farm and Sean Sherman of The Sioux Chef share powerful stories about reclaiming African and Native food and life ways to build community health. We welcomed attendees from tribal communities and every region of our state, representing food shelves, meal programs, public health, government, agriculture, healthcare and more. Through cross-sector partnerships and innovative new programming, together we can feed more people.

Announcing a New Program

On that note, I am thrilled to tell you that Twin Cities Mobile Market is joining The Food Group. The Mobile Market brings affordable, healthy groceries to low-income neighborhoods without grocery access in Minneapolis and St. Paul. The Mobile Market started as a program of The Wilder Foundation five years ago. It will be coming to The Food Group as a program in March of 2020. Frequently an incubator for new models, Wilder has decided to move the market so the program can continue to grow and become more efficient.

The Food Group is well-positioned to take on this program. We have strong expertise in discount retail through our Fare For All program. With the Mobile Market, we can align our retail work so that we have a program model that fits a variety of customer needs for good, affordable foods.

Local Hunger Remains High

Looking ahead to 2020, we see that visits to food shelves throughout our region remain at record highs. Despite historically low unemployment rates, we know that finding enough healthy food to feed a family can be a challenge. And changes to SNAP this spring will keep much-needed food help from thousands in Minnesota. Through innovative program expansions like Twin Cities Mobile Market—in addition to our work at Big River Farms and partnerships with local food shelves—we remain committed to making sure we provide food for today and change for tomorrow.



Your Impact in 2019

8.1 million pounds of food delivered to our food shelf partners = 6.8 million meals for local families

1.76 million pounds of fresh food delivered

Stay tuned for our full 2019 Annual Report later this month.

Board of Directors Hosted Conversation

Please join The Food Group's Board of Directors and Executive Director Sophia Lenarz-Coy for a conversation about our vision, mission and plans to address the local food needs of our community. Light breakfast will be served.

Friday, Feb. 21, 2020, 8-9 am.
The Food Group's Offices and Warehouse
8501 54th Avenue North
New Hope, MN, 55428
RSVP to info@thefoodgroupmn.org
or 763-450-3860

Legacy Donor Profile: With Appreciation to Chuck

Charles "Chuck" Frisch was a donor to The Food Group for more than 30 years. After he passed away in August, The Food Group received a bequest—a distribution through a person's will—from his estate.

Frisch found his calling in working to protect employees' rights. He retired in 1999 after a 43-year career as a federal employee and veteran, serving as an attorney for the National Labor Relations Board and as an administrative law judge for the Social Security Administration. He enjoyed his retirement years and was a "sweet and generous soul who was most proud of his family," according to his son, Ben.

We are grateful to Chuck Frisch for his many years of contributions and for generously designating a portion of his estate to support our mission of fighting hunger and nourishing our community.

Interested in legacy giving?

Visit thefoodgroupmn.org/legacygiving for more information and an FAQ.

New Year, New Website

We recently rolled out a new website that's easier to use and integrates our programs Fare for All and Big River Farms. This was also a big step in updating the name of the farm from Minnesota Food Association to Big River Farms. Check it out at thefoodgroupmn.org.

Feedback? Contact us at info@thefoodgroupmn.org.



Events

Warehouse Tours at The Food Group

Thursday, Feb. 13, 10 a.m. and 5 p.m.
Tuesday, March 17, 10 a.m. and 5 p.m.

8501 54th Ave. N., New Hope, MN 55428

Get a behind-the-scenes look at the work of The Food Group at our New Hope warehouse. RSVP to Gay: 763-450-4219 | ggonnerman@thefoodgroupmn.org

Save The Date Summer Harvest for Kids April 28



You can help make sure no Minnesota kid goes hungry over the summer. Tune in and donate during the 5 Eyewitness News Summer Harvest for Kids campaign. The Food Group teams up with 5 Eyewitness News and MATTER each year to raise funds for local hunger relief. Learn more and donate at thefoodgroupmn.org/summerharvest20.

Thank you to our generous sponsors:



The Beverly Foundation
Hugh J. Andersen Foundation
Morton and Merle Kane Philanthropic Fund

Sign Up for Our CSA

Enjoy 18 weeks of certified organic fruits and vegetables. We offer customizable shares in different sizes, as well as payment plan options. Subsidized shares are available for customers who utilize SNAP/EBT. The profits from CSA memberships are used to purchase produce directly from farmers. Additionally, a percentage from each share helps fund shared resources that support the growth of local farm businesses—access to land and infrastructure, training, marketing support and distribution channels.

Visit bigriverfarms.org/csa to learn more and sign up.

