



# Network News

SUMMER 2022



Your support provides Juanita, a long-time volunteer and shopper, an opportunity to be a community connector. She volunteers almost every Saturday, working a double shift when most of the Spanish speaking shoppers come. She says, "I come here, I have fun. It's good for me, emotionally and psychologically. Here, we are a family. People know they are welcome and that this is their house."

## Founding partner woven into the fabric of the neighborhood

Before food shelves were a standard neighborhood resource, **Joyce Uptown Food Shelf** made its mark as a safe place for families to access food when they needed it most. As a founding partner of The Food Group, fifty-three years later, Joyce is busy as ever. Minnesotans made 3.6 million visits to food shelves in 2021. **That's why your support is vital now—so all of our partners are equipped to handle the current food crisis.**

Since 2020, the number of families seeking help from Joyce has increased exponentially. The rising costs of living have become unmanageable for some. "I heard from a father having to choose between paying his mortgage, feeding his family, and putting gas in his car. That's an impossible decision. It's not an easy time to be a middle-class citizen. It's difficult for everybody. We're all feeling the pressure," says Anna Vogt, food shelf coordinator.

**Joyce feeds the community through a variety of channels designed to eliminate barriers and make it easy to access food.** They host community distributions, deliver groceries, offer choice model shopping, grow their own produce, and offer emergency food help to anyone who comes to their door.

Even with the overwhelming need, **Joyce ensures the food they provide is accommodating to all.** They focus on the individual needs and experiences of each shopper. People

experiencing homelessness receive canned food that doesn't require a can opener and fresh salads and deli items that don't require cooking. Culturally connected foods such as jalapenos, tomatoes, and maseca flour are always stocked for the large Latin community they serve. **Your support ensures people can access the types of foods that make the most sense for them, no matter what.**



Matthew Ayres, director at Joyce, describes their close-knit connections with shoppers, "We recognize and remember people by name. It's a tight group. We do our best to make this experience relational and community based, not transactional."

Today, Joyce has gained recognition in the community as an inclusive, community-based, and trusted source of relief and stability, feeding thousands of Minnesotans every year. Anna remarks, "We love working with The Food Group. They offer a wide variety of food that is specific to the different cultures we serve in our community, and they're very reliable and consistent. Our numbers have grown immensely over the last year, and in order for us to keep up with that demand we must be able to rely on The Food Group and their generous supporters." **Thank you for ensuring our partnerships have remained steadfast and strong over the years and for equipping us to meet this record-breaking year of hunger.**

# Food creates change and builds community

Sophia Lenarz-Coy,  
Executive Director



**Food is powerful. Food bridges and unites. Food heals.** Sharing a meal with others creates an instant and real connection. It is in these moments that I've learned just how deep food inequity runs in Minnesota.

Injustice continues to impact our food system. Unjust systems, including the current food system, are designed to benefit some at the expense of others. **People who identify as Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) are most often those who bear that expense: inequitable access to nourishing food resources like grocery stores, food education, money, and time.**

Minnesota has one of the worst food access disparities. Here, race and zip code directly impact your access to fresh, affordable food. We cannot accept this.

This summer, inflation reached a 40-year high of 9.1 percent, with food prices leading the way. The **cost of groceries is up 14%** in the Twin Cities from last year. This affects all of us yet continues to hurt BIPOC communities most.

## At The Food Group, with your partnership, we are:

- **Working to build a more equitable food system for everyone**, from land access, to production, to distribution.
- **Educating and partnering with emerging farmers** at Big River Farms to sustainably grow fresh food and farming practices.
- **On the road with Twin Cities Mobile Market to offer a neighborhood market** in places without nearby access to food.
- **Packing fresh, locally sourced food with Fare For All**, our pop-up grocery stores offering 40% off retail prices.
- **Connecting with our network of anti-hunger partners** to ensure people in all places and at all income levels have access to nutritious, culturally connected foods.

## You have the power to create change.

You can contribute toward change by offering **financial support** of organizations like The Food Group to help those most in need and develop long-term solutions. Or by inviting your neighbors over for a **meal**, since we know food really has the power to heal. **Or you can simply take the time to understand why food injustice exists** and make individual changes to your food habits.

We won't solve food inequity overnight, but I believe our commitment to uniting communities and healing injustices is **powerful** and an equitable food system is **possible**. Let's do this together.

In gratitude,

Sophia Lenarz-Coy  
Executive Director



**10,000**  
Minnesotans visit a  
food shelf every day.



**Grocery prices in  
the Twin Cities are  
higher than the rest  
of the nation.**

P.S. Read Sophia's full article, which was featured in MinnPost on 7/18/22. View the full article here <https://bit.ly/3QswtwM>



# Impact, quality, and innovation connect these legacy donors to the mission

August is Make-a-Will Month. Here's a look at Bob and Kathy's story of philanthropy for today and the future.

Kathy Cooney and Bob LaBombard have been active supporters of The Food Group for over thirty years. "We received a letter from TFG around 1990, liked the mission and started giving. Addressing food insecurity has always been a core issue for us," says Bob.

As they learned more about the organization and The Food Group's impact on our community, they decided to make monthly donations. **They found that monthly giving is a great way to make an impact consistently throughout the year.**

Now all these years later, they have created an estate plan to continue supporting their most cherished non-profit organizations after they pass. They have identified The Food Group as a key part of this plan.

"Through my service on The Food Group board of directors and coordinating some volunteer events, I have had the opportunity to learn a lot about the organization. **What stood out for me was the quality, commitment, and dedication of the team.** In addition, as a retired entrepreneur, I really like the innovation of programming such as Fare For All, Twin Cities Mobile Market, Big River Farms and other programs," says Bob.

For Bob and Kathy, the decision to include The Food Group in their estate planning was a "no brainer." Kathy says, "They are excellent stewards of our donations and make a huge impact on our community every day." To plan your legacy go to [www.freewill.com/thefoodgroupmn](http://www.freewill.com/thefoodgroupmn) or reach out to us directly to talk more about leaving a legacy gift.



Scan the QR code to begin making your will.



## Gleaning & Farmers Market Rescue—Join us!



Thank you for equipping The Food Group to glean excess produce from local farms and farmers markets to reduce waste, which ensures more people across our community can access high quality produce. **Sign up for a volunteer shift today, visit [thefoodgroupmn.volunteerhub.com](http://thefoodgroupmn.volunteerhub.com)**

# Key Partnership to Promote Community Health



Partnership For A Healthier America (PHA) donated \$50,000 to The Food Group to be spent on approximately 100,000 lbs of local produce that will go out for free to our hunger relief partners this year. "PHA's Healthy Hunger Relief partners serve as the foundation of our mission to transform the food landscape in pursuit of food equity," said Nancy E. Roman, President & CEO, Partnership for a Healthier America.

**"Through our work together, we're ensuring that communities and families all across the country have access to healthier, high-quality, culturally relevant, and nutritious foods."**



At Big River Farms we grow food and grow farmers! We provide land and resources for farmers to learn sustainable practices, grow organic foods, and build strong businesses. Your generosity equips emerging farmers like Pearce and Eleanor of Strong Heart Farms (pictured here) to participate in our Big River Farms education program and grow nourishing food for our community.

## Save the date: Doing Good with Beer and Food

Thursday, October 6th, 4:30-6:30 PM. Visit the Finnegan's Taproom for an event centered on our collaborative work bringing local food to every table. Includes brewery tour, snacks, market stand and a panel with local farmers and a food shelf.



## The Food Group's founding partners. Thank you for relieving hunger in our communities for 46 years.

The Food Group was founded in the 1970's by this core group of food shelf partners. We are proud to continue partnering with all that remain in operation today and are proud of our roots and founding partnerships.

### Founding partners (1976)

Basilica Food Shelf\*  
Catholic Charities  
Community Emergency Assistance Program (CEAP)  
Community Emergency Services (CES)  
Division of Indian Work (DIW)  
Groveland Food Shelf  
Inter Community Emergency Food Shelf\*  
Inter-congregation Communities Association (ICA)

Joyce Uptown Food Shelf  
Minnehaha Pantry\*  
NorthPoint Health and Wellness Center  
People Responding in Social Ministry (PRISM)  
People Reaching Out to People (PROP)  
Sabathani Community Center  
Salvation Army  
St. Louis Park Emergency Program (STEP)  
Volunteers Enlisted to Assist People (VEAP)  
\*Not active/no longer operating

## Fall Events

### StrongHeart Farms tour

Thursday, September 15th  
3:00-6:00 pm

Visit StrongHeart Farms, located at Big River Farms, to learn about regenerative farming practices.

### Tour The Food Group

Tuesday, September 20,  
5:00-6:00 pm

### Tour & Volunteer at The Food Group

Thursday, October 27,  
5:00-7:00 pm

RSVP to [info@thefoodgroupmn.org](mailto:info@thefoodgroupmn.org) for any of these events or for more details.

## Corporate & Foundation Spotlight



Helping the world thrive



Center for Prevention

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota and Blue Plus are nonprofit independent licensees of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association



GENERAL MILLS FOUNDATION