

PLENTY

Fall 2020

MEMBER OF
**FEEDING
AMERICA**

food gatherers
fighting hunger where we live

Ready for the Challenge

Food Security Network Partners



Food Gatherers and many community partners sprang into action to address the sudden rise in food insecurity as a result of COVID-19. From Ypsilanti to Chelsea, Manchester to Ann Arbor, and Whitmore Lake to Milan, food pantries that once served 100 people in a month, now served that many in a week.

As challenging as it has been, it's not the first time our community faced a dramatic uptick in food insecurity. During the Great Recession (2007-2009), the number of people seeking emergency food increased by more than 130%. In response, Food Gatherers embarked on a community-wide assessment and developed The Food Security Plan of 2009, a blueprint to create greater capacity to respond to food insecurity in the future. During the last decade, we invested in the infrastructure of high capacity pantries in every part of Washtenaw County — The Food Security Network (FSN) — to serve more food to more people more often. The FSN includes partner agencies strategically located throughout the county, who are ready and able to efficiently distribute large amounts of emergency food. This spring and summer, our FSN partners stayed open, scaled up, and efficiently distributed food while adapting to the public health challenges caused by COVID-19.



Volunteers load backpacks and food during back to school event.

Food Gatherers joined our community partners' response, increasing the frequency and size of food deliveries. Since April, we have increased the amount of food distributed each month by nearly 30% over an average month, even when challenged by declining food donations and supply chain disruptions.

And, to better support our community partners, Food Gatherers absorbed the increased cost of food and delivery, so their resources could be directed toward their emergency response. **This year marked the largest annual total in our 31-year history: 7.8 million pounds distributed, and since March, almost 100% of the food was distributed at no cost to our partners.** These record highs were also echoed in our Summer Food Service Program, which distributed 40% more meals than last summer.

After the 2008 recession, it took years to return to pre-recession rates of food insecurity. Today, the number of people facing hunger where we live is greater than ever and **we expect there to be a real need for food for a very long time. But there is hope.**

This newsletter highlights our dedicated and tenacious community members, including partner human service agencies, volunteers, and beneficiaries. Food Gatherers is leading the fight against hunger where we live, thank you for joining us, we couldn't do it without you!

Donate now to help families facing hunger in our community - www.foodgatherers.org/fall

Working Together to Feed Washtenaw County



Visitors to the Summer Food Service Program pick up free meals for kids.

Summer Meals

This year, the Summer Food Service Program looked very different, but we fed more kids than ever before through Meet Up and Eat Up sites and our mobile meals program. With significant support from Toyota and the Michigan Department of Education, Food Gatherers distributed 75,507 meals — a 40% increase over last year — and 25,252 pounds of groceries and fresh produce to help families at 24 locations.



New van delivers free summer meals at mobile food sites.

Expanding Partnerships

One of Food Gatherers' long-time partner agencies, Aid in Milan, hosted their first summer meal site as part of our Summer Food Service Program, and distributed a total of 16,982 meals to kids and teens — amazing!



Summer meal site in Milan.



A member of the Air National Guard sorts produce at Food Gatherers' warehouse.

Making a Difference

“This food saved us through the whole summer. After our food stamps ran out, it helped us get through the rest of the week.”

Sarah*, Mom & SFSP guest

*Name has been changed.

Working Together

“We are grateful to have 10 members of the Air National Guard back at our warehouse packing emergency food boxes, sorting produce, and sanitizing regularly. Thank you to Governor Whitmer and the State of Michigan for making this critical support possible.”

Eileen Spring, President & CEO, Food Gatherers.

Reaching Those in Need

To meet the needs of homebound and medically vulnerable community members, we supported several partner agencies in the implementation of food assistance delivery programs. These programs bring boxes of nonperishable food items and fresh produce directly to beneficiaries' homes.



Each food box provides one week of meals for one person.



Supporting Health

“My experience with Food Gatherers has really been great. I appreciate all that they do to help the community. I, for one, benefit hugely from it. My children benefit hugely from it and it has helped us maintain a healthy lifestyle.”

Healthy School Pantry participant (Estabrook)



Student enjoys healthy summer meals.

Feeding Hope

“Things like this {food distribution} make the world a little bit better. Not only does it help the children in need, it helps others to see that there are people doing good things.”

Ryan, Dad & SFSP guest



Family picks up healthy summer meals.

Investing in our Network

In September, Food Gatherers distributed \$50,000 to support partner programs that serve homebound clients and to help pantries winterize their operations in order to continue providing socially distant food distributions. This follows up on an earlier investment of \$50,000 made in June in partnership with the United Way. Unrestricted funds enable agencies to adapt and adjust as needed to continue providing emergency food as safely and as efficiently as possible.



Groceries at SOS Community Services.

“I'm 75, low income and I get \$16 a month in food assistance. If it weren't for deliveries from Food Gatherers and Jewish Family Services, I wouldn't have enough to eat and no way to get to the store during this pandemic.”

Sue, food delivery recipient

Michigan Medicine Fights Hunger!

For three years, Michigan Medicine has partnered with Food Gatherers in the Health Care and Food Bank Partnership Initiative to help our neighbors struggling with food insecurity access the fresh food they need to support their health. At the start of the pandemic, Michigan Medicine stepped up to host a no-contact food drive, and last month they launched another drive encouraging their staff to support Food Gatherers. In total, donations of food and funds raised the equivalent of 108,000 meals.



Janet Martinez and Tony Denton at donation drive.

"I am continuously humbled by the generosity of our Michigan Medicine team, reaching out to step up and make a positive difference to address food insecurity in our community. Despite facing challenges of their own at home or work, the pursuit of team solutions is so impressive to me. Whether it's donating food, dollars, toiletries or time, I am extremely proud of the compassion for others."

T. Anthony Denton, Senior VP & Chief Operating Officer, U-M Health System

Upcoming Events

Season of Sharing November 16th-29th

Busch's food and fund drive to support Food Gatherers and our community partners; please visit any Busch's store to participate.

Rockin' for the Hungry December, 2020

Rockin' may look a little different this year but we are still going to raise lots of meals to feed people in need. Mark your calendars for early December and stay tuned for details!

Give Today and Get a Tax Break!

The CARES Act passed in March 2020 made several changes to tax law, increasing both individual and business eligibility to deduct charitable contributions. And, unlike past charitable donations, donors don't need to itemize to support their favorite nonprofit and secure a tax benefit. To learn more visit, www.foodgatherers.org/give. Please note, the law may impact you differently depending on your individual tax situation, always consult your tax advisor for specific advice.

Advocating for Food Security

For the second year in a row, Food Gatherers has been inducted into the Feeding America Advocacy Hall of Fame. To be included, food banks must complete a year-long challenge that includes educating community members and policymakers about the realities of food insecurity. Food Gatherers is proud to be recognized as a leader in anti-hunger advocacy! You can join us by signing up for our advocacy alerts: www.foodgatherers.org/advocacy

Washtenaw Coordinated Funders

Ann Arbor Area
Community Foundation

ST. JOSEPH MERCY
ANN ARBOR
SAINT JOSEPH MERCY HEALTH SYSTEM



United Way

United Way of Washtenaw County

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