

PLENTY

summer 2017

MEMBER OF
**FEEDING™
AMERICA**

food gatherers
fighting hunger where we live

Let's Squash Hunger!



A Hubbard squash can weigh as much as 40 pounds. The thick skin is bluish and warty and difficult to cut. What to do with two tons of Hubbard squash? Thanks to our Fresh Produce Conversion Program (FPCP), created to increase the availability of fresh, ready-to-cook produce to low-income residents, Food Gatherers has transformed the ungainly Hubbards into family size packages of ready to cook squash, unlocking its tasty sweet potato, pumpkin-like flavor for folks to enjoy.

Our volunteers wash, peel, cut, weigh, and bag fresh vegetables in our dedicated food safe area, so that at-home meal preparation is easy. Pallets of beets and squash are cut into cubes, and misshapen carrots are sliced.

Two-pound portions are bagged and labeled with basic cooking instructions, making meal preparation easy for busy seniors and families.

The FPCP builds upon Food Gatherers' Food Security Plan, created in 2009, which prioritizes distribution of fresh fruits and vegetables throughout Washtenaw County. Today, Food Gatherers distributes 6.4 million pounds of food each year to a network of 150 partner agencies. More than 60% of the food we distribute is fresh produce, and proteins.

Food Gatherers volunteer Mary takes on the task of peeling Hubbard squash.

Food Gatherers is grateful to the **Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan's Healthy Food Connect Initiative** for

a grant that funded the FPCP for the first year. "With the program up and running, the initial feedback from partner food pantries is very positive," says Markell Miller, Food Gatherers Director of Community Food Programs. Our partner agencies report that the prepared vegetables are some of the first foods that people choose when they visit a pantry.

At Food Gatherers' warehouse, Produce Production Pioneer Scott Strzempke oversees a cadre of volunteers who prepare the produce for distribution. "We are currently focused on processing vegetables that can be challenging for people to prepare at home, that have high nutritional value, and that are abundant in our inventory" explains Scott. "To date, we have completed one hundred volunteer shifts, taking 7.5 tons of produce and making it easy to prepare in home.

From the President/CEO ~

In the U.S., we throw out close to 40% of all the food we produce. At the same time, one in seven of our neighbors struggles with hunger! There's more than enough food to feed everyone, which is why Food Gatherers launched Michigan's first food rescue program.

Since 1988, Food Gatherers has rescued food that would otherwise have gone to waste from area grocery stores, food service organizations and farms. Last year alone, 82% of the foods we rescued were distributed to over 150 partner agencies. That amounts to an annual distribution of nearly 3 million pounds of wholesome food that was destined for a landfill.

It is estimated that food waste is the single largest component of most landfills in the U.S. and a significant source of methane gas. Despite our best efforts, some rescued food is unfit for human consumption. We do our best to compost and recycle, but are challenged by excessive packaging and the lack of year-round composting offered by the City of Ann Arbor. Sorting the food is also incredibly labor intensive. Including disposal fees and staff and volunteer labor costs, it costs Food Gatherers approximately \$500,000 annually to dispose of unusable rescued food. We simply could not provide this public service without the help of 7,000 volunteers willing to roll up their sleeves and sort tons of food every day, and your generous financial support.



Gathering with you,

Eileen Spring
Eileen Spring,
President/CEO

Together, we provide good, safe food to people in need,
while the burden of waste in our landfills is reduced.
Cheers to YOU for fighting hunger where we live!

Outstanding Supporters Awarded at Spring Gathering

Food Gatherers supporters, volunteers and staff celebrated the work of outstanding supporters at the Spring Gathering Awards Ceremony, held in early May at the Food Gatherers warehouse. Each year, we honor individuals and groups who support us in exceptional ways.

More than 100 attendees enjoyed great food donated by the Kroger Co of Michigan, live music from the Community High School Jazz Band, and a fun-filled evening.

AWARDEES for 2017

- Gatherer of Plenty** – Trader Joe's and Windy Acres Farm
- Community Gatherers Award** – Rotary Club of Ann Arbor
- Great Gatherer Award** – Amy Diehl and Emily Diehl
- One of a Kind Gatherer Award** – Francine Alexander
- Gatherer of Distinction** – Irene Fast

SFSP participants share what the program means to them by writing and drawing on paper plates.

Summer Food Service Program addresses child hunger through the long summer months

Summer hunger is a challenge. During the school year, children from low-income families receive free or reduced-price meals through the National School Lunch or School Breakfast Programs. But when the school year is over, that safety net is put on hold.

The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), run by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Michigan Department of Education (MDE), provides funding to help ensure children from low-income families receive nutritious meals during the summer vacation when free school meals aren't an option.

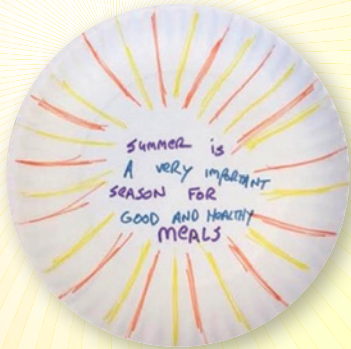
Food Gatherers is the largest sponsor of the SFSP in Washtenaw County. To underwrite the program, we receive partial funding from the USDA and MDE, a generous grant from the Conagra Brands Foundation, as well as donations.

“Last summer, Food Gatherers served 35,991 meals to children in Washtenaw County, and this year we hope to increase that number,” said LeRonica Roberts, SFSP Coordinator for Food Gatherers.

New to the program this year was a kick-off celebration at each site. Studies have shown that offering on-site activities helps increase meal participation, so for each kick-off event we donated a fun-tote that included activities and supplies. The kids got to play with sidewalk chalk, jump rope, coloring books and markers, and sports balls. Streamers and balloons decorated event sites, and each child received a special meal.

“I especially love the positive energy the program generates during start up,” said Roberts. “Providing food makes kids feel loved and valued, and it’s special being part of that. For some children, a SFSP meal is the most nutritious meal they’ll eat all day,” she added.

Also new this year is a mobile app that tracks the number of meals distributed in a day. “This makes tracking the program easier. It allows us to save paper, and go green,” said Roberts.



Left to right: Rick Easterbrook, Rotary Club of Ypsilanti; Todd Kephart, Rotary Club of Ann Arbor; Eileen Spring, Food Gatherers President/CEO; Norman Herbert, Rotary Club of Ann Arbor



Back row, left to right: Trader Joe's Mates Holger, Luke, Adrienne; Food Gatherers Board President Fran Petonic. Front row, left to right: Trader Joe's Mates David, Tyleen, Chloe and Rachel; Food Gatherers President/CEO Eileen Spring.



Planning consultant Fran Alexander (left) with Food Gatherers President/ CEO Eileen Spring.



A Grillin' Legend Celebrates 26 Years

Volunteer Steve Popp has legendary status at Grillin' for Food Gatherers, our June special event. Known among staff and fellow volunteers

as the Grill Master, Steve has volunteered his services at Grillin' for more than 26 years.

"I started when Grillin' was run out of Zingerman's," says Steve. At that point Grillin' was held at Casey's Tavern and featured just two grills and one salad bar. Steve's role has grown over the years just as Grillin' has grown. Today, he is the Lead Griller, overseeing close to 40 volunteers.

"I wanted to set a high standard for volunteering," said Steve. "It's good to give back to the community, and I'm glad to do it every year."

Thank you, Steve! We appreciate your ongoing support and dedication to the Food Gatherers cause!

Upcoming Events:

Wolverine State Brewing Co. Summer Party

Saturday, July 29, Noon-11pm
2019 W Stadium Blvd., Ann Arbor

This summer bash features a Wolverine State Brewing Co. Staff Brew-Off, live music, a pig roast and outdoor games. Join us for a fun-filled day that benefits Food Gatherers.

Produce Donations

As peak harvest time approaches, please consider donating fresh produce from your garden. We accept donations at Food Gatherers, 1 Carrot Way, Ann Arbor. M, Tu, Th & F 9a-4:45p; W until 6:45p

Mow Down Hunger September 12 – October 10

See your new or upgraded online monthly donation matched dollar for dollar during the Weingartz Mow Down Hunger campaign.

Rockin' for the Hungry November 28 – December 3

Ann Arbor's 107one radio personalities broadcast live from Kroger on South Maple Road at our largest annual outdoor food and fund drive. Gifts made during Rockin' are matched by lead community members.

foodgatherers.org/rockin



SNAP facts

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the largest anti-hunger program in the USA, and provides a safety-net for low-income families and individuals.

SNAP helps nearly one in seven Americans – that's more than 46 million people - and is available through the USDA Food and Nutrition Service.

SNAP helps more than 26,000 Washtenaw County residents put food on the table each month. The overwhelming majority of SNAP participants are children, seniors, and people with disabilities. Nationwide, nearly 90 percent of participants are in households that contain a child under age 18, an elderly person 60 years or older, or a disabled individual.

SNAP is one of the most effective forms of economic stimulus during a downturn. Economists estimate that even in a weak economy, every SNAP dollar used expands the economy by about \$1.70. SNAP benefits in Washtenaw County alone generate more than \$5.5 million each month in economic activity.



Washtenaw Coordinated Funders



www.foodgatherers.org

www.facebook.com/foodgatherers

<https://twitter.com/FoodGatherers>

www.instagram.com/foodgatherers

info@foodgatherers.org

Food Gatherers Main Office:
1 Carrot Way, Ann Arbor, MI 48105