

News from Second Harvest Heartland

HEARTLAND CONNECTION

FALL | WINTER
20
24
ISSUE





CONTENTS

Make Hunger History Update 4

We're Making Progress on a Bold Goal: Cutting Hunger in Half for All Minnesotans by 2030

Chefs in the Classroom 6

Preparing Kitchen Coalition Meals at Saint Paul College

Getting What You Need, Sharing What You Can 8

How One Food Shelf Visitor Cares for Herself and Her Community

Hunger is a Policy Choice 10

This Fall, be an Anti-Hunger Voter

A Neighbor's Story 12

Jennifer Shares How Today's Harvest Brings Her Joy

A New Community Market & Resource Hub 14

How Grant Funding is Helping Meet the Needs of Neighbors in White Bear Lake

← COVER PHOTO: Leanne Ashley is a senior, afterschool program assistant, swimmer and food shelf visitor. Read more about her story on page 8.

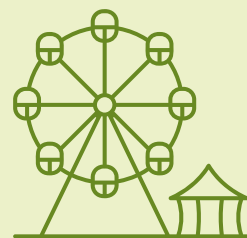
STAY IN THE KNOW with recent highlights from Second Harvest Heartland:

► Save the date for Give to the Max Day on November 21! This special day is Minnesota's biggest giving day of the year and demonstrates the power of our community to end hunger together. Early giving starts November 1, with gifts matched by generous sponsors. Visit zharvest.org/gtmd to donate.

► The 21st annual Dish Gala, presented by Cub, is planned for October 26, 2024. We are grateful for another chance to celebrate and fortify our work to feed our community. The Dish Gala would not be possible without the generous support of our sponsors, table hosts, auction donors, and supporters. Thank you!

MINNESOTA STATE FAIR

► Second Harvest Heartland and our partners had a ball at The Great Minnesota Get Together! We indulged in some classic State Fair treats from partners like the Minnesota Farmers Union, Afro Deli, and the All-You-Can-Drink Milk from the Midwest Dairy Association. We picked up fun swag from our friends at the Minnesota Farmers Bureau, The Oink Booth, and Kemp's Little Farm Hands. And we helped register voters at our very own Hunger is a Policy Choice booth. We are already counting down the hours until next year!



Dear friends,

Sometimes, playing it safe is the riskiest choice.

I'll be the first to admit it was daunting. When we launched Make Hunger History in January, our bold initiative to cut hunger in half for Minnesotans by 2030, I was apprehensive about stating this big public goal. But since the pandemic began, hunger has only increased. Food shelf visits have doubled each year since 2021. Last year, we saw 7.5 million visits to food shelves. That's up from another record of 5.5 million the year before. We can't afford to be patient with hunger anymore—we need to act.

You might ask, "Why are people hungrier today than during the pandemic?" Well, it's a hard time for families right now—inflation, the cost of groceries, ending of COVID-era government supports and minimum wage lagging all contribute. Supporting neighbors during times like these is the reason we come to work each day.

Still, things are going in the wrong direction, and we must do better. The good news is, with the help of our community, we know we can.

In this newsletter, you will read about how we're hard at work alongside our hunger-relief partners

and supporters on this bold goal. How we've reimagined our food sourcing and operations to get more of the right food right where it's needed. And how we're powered by partnerships, like the one we have with the culinary program at Saint Paul College to deliver prepared meals to those who need them. Learn how we're getting hyperlocal with White Bear Lake to create a community market and hub for basic needs. Read about how we are encouraging voters to get out to the polls in November to support hunger-relief policies, and much more.

It means so much that you are part of our work to end hunger. If we get all in—business leaders, policymakers, volunteers, supporters and advocates—we can get out in front of hunger. We can make it a given that in Minnesota, everyone can eat—because there is no time to waste. Thank you for joining us on this journey.

With gratitude,



Allison O'Toole

ALLISON O'TOOLE CEO, SECOND HARVEST HEARTLAND

HOW CAN MINNESOTANS HELP MAKE HUNGER HISTORY?

Cutting hunger in half by 2030 is going to take all of us. Scan the QR code to find out how you can lend your voice, time or financial support to move us one step closer to a Minnesota where everyone has the food they need to thrive. Let's go all in.



MAKE HUNGER HISTORY

We're Making Progress on a Bold Goal: Cutting Hunger in Half for all Minnesotans by 2030

To combat today's surge in hunger, we need bold new solutions, stronger connections and a way to measure progress so we can understand what's working.

That's why Second Harvest Heartland, alongside business leaders, policymakers, food shelves and hunger relief partners, came together in January to announce Make Hunger History. This new initiative unites these communities in an ambitious goal to cut hunger in half for all Minnesotans by 2030.

We hit the ground running this spring on the first pillar of Make Hunger History—getting more of the right food right where it's needed. We're reimagining our food sourcing and operations in various ways to make that happen.

"There's a lot of different partnerships and a lot of different ways that food makes its way here," explains Director of Sourcing and Demand Planning Lindsey Ochmanek. "We need to be really thoughtful about making sure that we are meeting the needs of our neighbors."

Through a new partnership with Fresh Connect Central, a low-cost distributor in Indiana, Second Harvest Heartland has begun sourcing meat at a lower price. During our 2024 fiscal year, we sourced over a million pounds of protein and distributed almost 20 percent more protein to date than the previous year. We are also sourcing eggs from HATCH,

a nonprofit that connects farmers to hunger relief partners, so we can distribute large quantities of this highly sought healthy food.

Corporate partners are also stepping up. Second Harvest Heartland received large donations of hard-to-source protein, including two full truckloads of turkeys from Cub and a load of donated protein from Jennie-O.

"We're out there all the time looking for different opportunities and partnerships to increase protein," Lindsey continues. "It's one of the most in demand [items] at our partners."

Second Harvest Heartland is also considering ways we can change our processes to get food into the community as quickly and safely as possible.

"As we work to Make Hunger History, a big piece of my role is to transform our supply chain to ensure that we can continue to deliver against the growing need in Minnesota," says Senior Director of Supply Chain Toni Scott.

By using process mapping and optimizing our food storage strategies, Second Harvest Heartland's warehouse teams are assembling food shelf partners' orders faster and getting 20 percent more pounds of food out the door each day. We have also cross-trained our warehouse staff to increase flexibility and maximize the power of the team to keep up with record demand.

On the transportation side, we are leveraging data to optimize capacity, delivering food directly from farms to food shelf partners, and increasing route

efficiency. With these changes in place, we are getting more food into the hands of neighbors who need it most.

In the past couple of years, we've seen a 15% increase each year. It takes more people, more equipment, more of everything.

Since 2018, we have doubled the number of pounds of food through our warehouse, and in the past couple of years, we've seen a 15% increase each year. It takes more people, more equipment, more of everything to meet that demand.

Significant adjustments to Second Harvest Heartland's operations and sourcing methods have already impacted the effort to cut Minnesota's hunger in half by 2030, but there are many more pieces to the puzzle. Stay tuned for future progress updates on the Make Hunger History initiative, and consider ways to get involved, because one thing is certain: If we're going to achieve this goal, it's going to take all of us! ■



Order assembly rate (pick rate) has increased by

20%



Protein sourcing rate is up

20%
over last year



All food streams are up over last year, bringing in

28%
more lbs overall



CHEFS IN THE CLASSROOM

Preparing Kitchen Coalition Meals at Saint Paul College

“238 Every other number is dictated by 238.” It is meal preparation day for Chef Jason Ross’ Contemporary Cuisine classroom at Saint Paul College. As one would expect, a food service practicum course is not held in a standard classroom. Instead, Chef Jason’s classroom is a full-service kitchen, complete with a massive array of pots, pans, mixers and other types of cooking equipment. Chef Jason’s 17 students don’t resemble your classic college students either. Instead, they are dressed in their white coats and black caps, trading in their writing utensils for chef’s knives and dough cutters.

In this course, students explore various aspects of food production in a fast-paced, high-volume food service setting. Most students are in their second semester of culinary arts studies, with a few courses in culinary foundations under their belt. Despite being at the relative beginnings of their culinary education at Saint Paul College, many students have worked in commercial kitchens, and most of them have had a lifelong love of cooking and food.

238. The number of pieces of chicken available. Which means 238 meals need to be made, packaged in a Kitchen Coalition-branded container, and distributed here on campus through the Saint Paul College

Food Pantry to students, staff and community members.

From this number, Chef Jason composes a menu and the amount of each ingredient needed to divide into 238 serving-sized portions of food. He decides on a meal consisting of fried chicken, mashed potatoes and gravy, coleslaw and a dinner roll. While some students are making mayo from scratch, others are fast at work cutting dough and rolling the pieces into balls before they are ready to go into the oven. Others are preparing the coleslaw, chopping up giant heads of cabbage provided by Second Harvest Heartland and sending the wedges through a massive food processor.



For some of our neighbors, preparing a meal for one person is a difficult task—not only because of the time and labor involved. A lot of people simply do not have the equipment, kitchen or the ability. Students like those in Chef Jason’s course do the work so that people with barriers to cooking can receive a freshly prepared meal.

“Their commitment to both nourishing our community and providing educational opportunities is truly inspiring.”

Students develop valuable problem-solving and critical thinking skills as they work creatively to craft delicious meals from recovered ingredients. This partnership has blossomed, and Kitchen Coalition was awarded Saint Paul College’s 2024 Community Partner of the Year award. “This program’s success is a testament to the dedication of Chef Jason Ross and Joe Kunitz of Second Harvest Heartland’s Kitchen Coalition,” says Chef

Sara Johannes, Culinary Arts Faculty at Saint Paul College.

Chef Jason’s students learn meal preparation skills while feeding their fellow students who are experiencing hunger. There are also opportunities for these students to weave elements of their own heritage into their culinary creations, fostering a sense of cultural exchange.

“To me, food is so important. I spent some time living out of my car eating ramen. So to be able to eat—to be able to make food for myself and others to eat, it’s everything,” says Lonny, a student and aspiring chef.

After a short break to allow the dinner rolls to finish baking, Chef Jason’s students begin the process for plating. Lonny has painstakingly adhered Kitchen Coalition labels that list the ingredients, allergens, preparation date and let neighbors know that the meals were prepared by Saint Paul College.

As the final pieces of chicken are delicately placed in Kitchen Coalition containers, Oscar, one of Chef Jason’s students, marvels at the work that has been done. “Man, that’s really cool. It makes sense because if we’re cooking it, people might as well eat it.” ■

↑ Students are involved in every step of preparing Kitchen Coalition meals. This includes not only the preparation of the food but plating and labeling the finished meal.

GETTING WHAT YOU NEED, SHARING WHAT YOU CAN

How One Food Shelf Visitor Cares for Herself and Her Community

Leanne Ashley might be one of the youngest 70-year-olds you will ever meet.

A single senior, Leanne lives a very active life in Chanhassen with her dog, Suzy. Her job as a program assistant with Minnetonka Public School's aftercare program keeps her busy. "It's like being an air traffic controller," she jokes. She's a passionate swimmer who gets her laps in each day in her community center pool or a nearby lake, depending on the weather. She also relies on her local food shelf to keep her fridge full.

The first time Leanne needed to reach out for food help was in 1992. Her family had just moved back to the Twin Cities and, due to layoffs, her husband was unable to find work. Someone at their church suggested they visit a food shelf in town, People Reaching Out to People (PROP). "I can still remember going," she says of her first visit to PROP. "You got some food, and then when Christmas came, they had their children's Christmas gifts program, and my daughter got a lot of stuff from that. So that was my first [time] tapping food support."

More recently, Leanne started visiting PROP again following some big life changes, including losing her income and home. Despite working again and having a small pension and Social Security payments, she still visits PROP once or twice a month to help make ends meet. "I went yesterday," she explained. "With just having a car and having a car payment and gas and regular expenses like rent, often I'm short on food."

Leanne regularly cooks and bakes from scratch and enjoys sharing what she's made with friends and neighbors. When she moved out of her previous subsidized senior housing complex, many residents said they would miss her generosity. "I would often go to the 80-year-olds and the 90-year-olds and knock on their door, and I'd say, 'You want some dinner?' And I would share whatever it is that I made. I've heard that they really miss me."

During the pandemic, Leanne also stepped up to help others in her senior apartment building receive food. Alongside another resident, she distributed food dropped off by PROP to other residents, many of whom had difficulty lifting the heavy bags of food and experienced different kinds of mobility issues. "We gathered in the community room, we got the tables up, and we organized it," she explained. "We all had to wear masks, and [residents] came in one by one, and we had to help them get their stuff. And we did that for months."

Although currently in good health, Leanne is thinking ahead to her twilight years and how she can keep cooking for herself as she ages. She recently purchased a big slow cooker and has been enjoying trying it out with ingredients from PROP. "I just think it's really important to have food support for yourself and for your family. To figure out how to cook and figure out how to do it as efficiently as possible." ■

“
I just think it's really important to have food support for yourself and for your family. To figure out how to cook and figure out how to do it as efficiently as possible.”

← Leanne Ashley, afterschool program assistant, swimmer, and food shelf visitor.

HUNGER is a POLICY CHOICE ✓

THIS FALL, BE AN ANTI-HUNGER VOTER

The Second Harvest Heartland team is spreading the word: Policy decisions play an important role in our efforts to end hunger. Did you know that public dollars support school lunches for kids, SNAP for families facing hard times, and help fill the shelves at food banks? Furthermore, there are policy decisions that impact neighbors, including SNAP eligibility requirements, as well as hunger-adjacent issues, such as housing, medical and childcare costs. For years, we've asked people to volunteer their time or give a financial gift. Now we're asking folks to reach out to their elected officials to make sure hunger is on their list of priorities. Our state is famous for food—our veggies and dairy products feed the world. We can choose to share the bounty by letting our elected officials know it matters to us.

This November, Minnesotans should consider hunger when they vote. Register, research the candidates in your area, talk to them about hunger in your community and vote on or before November 5. Let's make sure we continue to build a region where everyone has the food they need to thrive. ■



← Nathan Kern, Molly Prytz, and Emily Odegaard at the Second Harvest Heartland MN State Fair booth.



Consulting FOR GOOD

SLALOM MINNEAPOLIS IS A DEDICATED PARTNER FOR HUNGER RELIEF

Slalom, a consulting firm in Minneapolis, has partnered with Second Harvest Heartland for the last 10 years on an annual fund-and-volunteer drive. This year, employees raised \$19,695 and volunteered 42 hours! Their team also worked with Second Harvest Heartland for the first time to coordinate give-back days with local restaurants that donated a portion of their sales to Second Harvest Heartland.

Slalom's work with Second Harvest Heartland doesn't end there. The firm also offers pro-bono consulting services to the food bank. Their latest project involves process mapping the Second Harvest Heartland volunteer center experience,

looking for ways to make our work more efficient while maintaining a great experience for volunteers and staff.

"Over the last 10 years, this partnership has given our employees a meaningful way to give back—whether it's packing food, raising money or supporting business initiatives via our Partners for Good pro-bono consulting team," says Alicia Eimers, managing director at Slalom. "Second Harvest Heartland exemplifies the spirit of compassion in our community, and we greatly appreciate the chance to work alongside you and do our part to reduce hunger and increase access to food!" ■

↑ Slalom volunteers joined us for a packaging shift during their annual food drive.



↑ Jennifer is a regular visitor to Today's Harvest in Oakdale, where she stocks up on fresh produce and easy-to-prepare meals.

FOR YOU & ME

Jennifer Shares How Today's Harvest Brings Her Joy

On a sunny summer day in Oakdale, Minnesota, shoppers are lining up outside Today's Harvest as a Second Harvest Heartland truck carrying farm-fresh eggs pulls up to the market's loading station.

Inside, volunteers are hard at work sorting through fresh fruits and vegetables, stocking the produce tables, freezers and bakery sections before the food shelf opens their doors to the public.

Jennifer has been a regular at Today's Harvest ever since she realized that the food shelf's hours worked with her schedule.

"I drive the ten minutes to Today's Harvest. I live on the East Side of Saint Paul, but this place was open on a Saturday. And me and the food shelf, we've been friends ever since," Jennifer jokes.

Jennifer recently retired due to mental health and physical mobility issues after a life of helping others in the community. "I was raised in Saint Paul. I did some college, but I basically worked from the age of 12. I did some advocacy and human services work. I worked at the battered women's shelter, as well as at a technology magnet school."

Jennifer, like many retirees, has found herself utilizing food shelves because of the rising cost of basic needs and her reduced monthly income.

"Even though I'm single, one check a month doesn't go very far when half your check is groceries, and then you have rent. And you know, I have two fur babies to keep me company, so I have to keep them happy."

One of the things that Jennifer loves about Today's Harvest is how caring and respectful the shopping process is. She's also a self-confessed picky eater and is thrilled with the selection and choices that are available to her. "They have so

many choices. Gluten-free, things of that nature. I love the variety and just the access. You're respected here. I'm treated here very well, and not like a child—it's been very big in my life."

Because of Jennifer's mobility issues, it is often difficult for her to stand and cook for longer periods of time, but when she does cook, she tries to minimize the time spent on her feet. "I try to enhance some of my mother's old recipes—the greens. On Sunday, I made country style ribs. It's something that I can throw in and leave alone. I like to use fruit to help add flavor—like season meats with the fruit and fruit juices."

She also is a fan of the fresh produce provided by Second Harvest Heartland to use in her stir fry dinners. "I cook a lot of fried cabbage. I like to keep things simple—something quick on the stove so I don't have to stand for too long."

Jennifer's enthusiasm for the food shelf knows no bounds. Her life has been so positively impacted by visiting Today's Harvest that she wants to share the love with everyone else. "Don't be afraid! Call me—I'll help you through the

process!" she says while laughing. "You'll come in and you'll walk out smiling. There are people here that will treat you with respect. This isn't a hierarchy of class—it's like, 'Hello, I need some assistance. I don't have groceries and I can't get to the grocery store because I don't have the money.' It's here for everybody regardless of status, class, etcetera. It's especially designed for you and me."

"Food impacts my life," Jennifer says. "I can take care of my cats. I can get my medicine. I'm learning. I'm adjusting. I'm recognizing that all you have control over is what you like—and coming here is something I like." ■

Even though I'm single, one check a month doesn't go very far when half your check is groceries, and then you have rent.



A New Community Market and Resource Hub in White Bear Lake

SECOND HARVEST HEARTLAND GRANT FUNDING IS HELPING MEET THE NEEDS OF NEIGHBORS

In 2022, Second Harvest Heartland set the wheels in motion for White Bear Lake's new Community Market by offering a Collaboration and Innovation Grant, financially backing the initiative with a grant of \$150,000. This May, the Community Market opened its doors. Run by the White Bear Area Food Shelf, this new hunger-relief facility provides neighbors with fresh and healthy food free of charge and supports meeting their other basic needs. Second Harvest Heartland is proud to source food and manage the food rescue partnerships with the grocery stores that will stock the shelves at the community market.

"It is because of [Second Harvest Heartland] that we are able to purchase six dollars' worth of food for every dollar given to the food shelf," explains Dan Perry, Chair of the White Bear Area Food Shelf Board.

This new facility will also provide a resource hub space where neighbors will learn about food assistance, legal services, mental health services and housing.

"We know we cannot charity our way out of hunger. We must also find innovative ways to serve all our neighbors' basic needs," says Second Harvest Heartland CEO Allison O'Toole. "By having a space for community partners to meet with neighbors who need housing, financial or legal support, this market will start to holistically address everyone's needs."

When food banks and food shelves work together, we not only increase the efficiency of every dollar in our emergency food system, we also better connect with our neighbors. ■



← Second Harvest Heartland CEO Allison O'Toole (right) and State Senator Heather Gustafson (center) hold the ribbon while Perry Petersen (left), executive director of White Bear Area Food Shelf, cuts it to officially open the new market.



How WCCO Helps Tell the Story of Hunger

WCCO has been telling Minnesota's story to listeners and viewers since 1949. A trusted source of local and national news, WCCO has also been an integral voice in telling the story of hunger through their partnership with Second Harvest Heartland. WCCO's annual radiothon brings varied stories of hunger to their passionate listeners, bringing in financial donations that go a long way toward helping Minnesota families access the nutritious food they need to thrive. "One of the most impactful initiatives for this legendary platform has been our work with Second Harvest Heartland; raising funds and awareness for hunger relief in the community continues to be a high priority for our team at WCCO Radio," says Brad Lane, Brand Manager and Program Director of WCCO. "We look forward to more efforts in our next 100 years to 'Make Hunger History' with these great partners!"

WCCO has been partnering with us on the radiothon for 16 years. We appreciate them dedicating a full day of high energy in the fight to end hunger.

"WCCO has been partnering with Second Harvest Heartland on the radiothon for 16 years," says Second Harvest Heartland's Cause Marketing and Events Manager Anne Laskey. "We appreciate them dedicating a full day of high energy in the fight to end hunger and are looking forward to the radiothon in 2025." ■





7101 Winnetka Avenue N
Brooklyn Park, MN 55428
2harvest.org

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Twin Cities, MN
Permit No. 27370

“The main thing is that we’re now eating a regular meal.”

Eddie and Roxann moved to the Twin Cities from New Mexico in 1998. They love the variety and freshness of the produce at The Open Door Pantry in nearby Eagan.

Eddie says, “We’re both disabled and on social security, so the cost effectiveness of this is a huge help. The main thing is that we’re now eating a regular meal. Food increases everything for us, exponentially.”

He continues, “We went for a long time being like, “Well, why should we get up in the morning?” We didn’t have a lot. But now it’s like ‘wait a minute—we’ve got a bunch of food. What are we going to eat?’”



Join us on November 21, 2024 for Give to the Max Day—Minnesota’s biggest giving day of the year—as we give for good in our community! Every donation makes a difference towards the goal of providing over two million meals to our neighbors.

Starting November 1, **your gift can have TWICE the impact** thanks to matching funds from our generous sponsors.



Your Give to the Max Day donation will help Second Harvest Heartland and our over 1,000 food shelf and hunger-relief partners provide the food Minnesotans need to thrive now and in the winter months to come.