

# PLENTY

Summer 2020

MEMBER OF  
**FEEDING  
AMERICA**

**food gatherers**  
fighting hunger where we live

## Special COVID-19 Response Edition

Dear Gatherers,

Food banks across the country, including Food Gatherers, are weathering a perfect storm of food insecurity. The need for food assistance has increased dramatically, and at the same time, the pandemic has forced us to rethink every aspect of our service model, from how we gather food to how we distribute it to those who need it. This crisis also throws into sharp contrast the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on communities of color and the disparities and inequities that underpin our economic and health care systems.

Since March, Food Gatherers' network of hunger-relief partners has reported a tremendous rise in first-time visitors, including families with children and laid-off workers. Some programs that once served 100 people a week, now feed that many in a day. While there is no guidebook for this crisis, our community members did not hesitate to roll up their sleeves, put on their PPE, and get things done.

In this newsletter, we are highlighting stories of ingenuity, resilience, and generosity from our community that inspire us now more than ever:

- Local school districts built a food distribution model from scratch, partnering with Food Gatherers to fill the gaps for families who could no longer rely on free and reduced-price meals for their children.
- The Governor deployed National Guard members to all seven Michigan food banks to support their COVID-19 response plans, allowing us to continue without the thousands of volunteers we usually rely on to do our daily gathering.
- Our network of partner pantries transitioned to grab-and-go grocery pickups and expanded home-delivery to safely

reach as many people as possible.

- Restaurants of all shapes and sizes offered free meals to displaced workers and/or donated congregate meals to social service programs throughout our county.

While we celebrate the ways in which the pandemic has brought us together, we must also recognize that racism is an insidious virus as well. Miles and miles of cars lined up at food banks throughout the country seeking emergency food... miles and miles of people taking to the streets throughout the world affirming and demanding that Black Lives Matter.

As we work to fill the plates of our neighbors with food today, we must also work to set the table for justice. It is critical that we actively incorporate racial equity into our response to

food insecurity and health access. We are actively learning more about racial justice and how Food Gatherers can take anti-racist steps to ensure all of our neighbors have access to the food they want. We recommend exploring resources from the United Way of Washtenaw County's 5-Day Equity Challenge to learn more about the disproportionate impact of the virus on



*Like many pantries, Saline Area Social Service staff and volunteers have switched to drive-by food distributions in response to COVID-19 public health guidelines.*

Black and Brown communities, and structural racism ([www.uwashtenaw.org/equity](http://www.uwashtenaw.org/equity)).

Since the start of the pandemic, Food Gatherers, has expanded our services to meet the rising need for food assistance. This journey will be a long one and it is just beginning.

Gathering with you,

Eileen Spring  
President/CEO

Donate now to help families facing hunger in our community - [www.foodgatherers.org/summer20](http://www.foodgatherers.org/summer20)

# Working Together to Fight Hunger

**F**ood Gatherers has stayed open to respond to the rise in food insecurity caused by the pandemic. Through the hard work and support of our community we have been able to distribute record-breaking levels of food to our neighbors in need. Take a look at what we accomplished together.

**Up to 300% more visits** Since March, our partner pantries have reported a 30-300% increase in people seeking assistance.



**Record high distributions** From April-June, Food Gatherers had three consecutive record-breaking distributions, a 27% increase over an average month.

**10,454 plates** Food Gatherers' Community Kitchen served 10,454 takeaway meals to shelter residents and anyone in need in March, April and May of 2020.

**2.8 Million** Food Gatherers distributed more than 2.8 million pounds of food to our network from March-June.

**58%** Of food distributed was fresh produce or protein.

**40%** Of visitors had never used a food pantry before.



**4,000+ HOURS**  
Michigan National Guard members clocked more than 4,000 volunteer hours at Food Gatherers' warehouse from March through June.

**15,000+** Emergency food boxes packed  
**30,000+** Pounds of food sorted

**5,000+** Produce bags packed  
**8,000+** Pounds of cheese processed

**Thank You!** On June 30th, Food Gatherers bid farewell to members of the Michigan National Guard who worked shoulder-to-shoulder with us since late March. The guardsmen were a wonderful support to our food distribution efforts. We thank them for their service!

## Michigan Medicine Food Drive

So far, Michigan Medicine has collected more than 22,600 pounds of nonperishable food and toiletries for Food Gatherers.



Since April, Michigan Medicine has hosted an ongoing food drive for Food Gatherers. We are so grateful for their partnership in this challenging time! Go Blue!

## Hunger Heroes

Whether it was one-time or once a week, we are grateful to these restaurants and businesses that donated ready-to-eat meals to the Food Gatherers' Community Kitchen!

- Ayse's Turkish Cafe
- Blue Llama
- Cardamom
- Cottage Inn
- Friends of Novi
- Glacier Hills
- The Grange Kitchen and Bar
- Harvest Kitchen
- HutKay Fusion
- Little Caesar's
- Mongolian BBQ
- TeaHaus
- Tio's Mexican Cafe and Tequila Bar
- U-M Women's Basketball coaches
- Washtenaw County Health Department
- Zingerman's

## Essentially Amazing

While most of us sheltered at home, the Food Gatherers operations and volunteer teams came to work each day to ensure that Food Gatherers could continue to distribute food to anyone who needed it. We are grateful for their resilience, compassion, and dedication to fighting hunger.



## Supporting Our Partners

Food Gatherers and United Way of Washtenaw County joined together to distribute cash grants to 15 partner agencies located in Ypsilanti who have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19. We recently checked-in with Theresa Puryear at Beautiful Gate Church (1225 S. Congress, Ypsilanti), to learn more about how their grant was helpful:

**How long has your program been operating?**  
We have been up and running for 3 years

**How has the pandemic affected your program/beneficiaries?**  
Since the pandemic, our client numbers have gone from 100 people a week to almost 300 people a week.

**How has the grant from Food Gatherers/UWWC helped your program respond?**

The grant helped our program tremendously! It allowed us to purchase much-needed items to help our program be successful!

**What makes your program unique? What are you particularly proud of?**  
I believe what makes our program unique is that we strive to be a part of the community, we get to know our clients who come here on a more personal basis. We also have other resources such as EBT sign-up with a social worker, delivery services to our elderly clients, and we assist in every way possible to help our clients get back on their feet.

# Serving Up Summer Meals



For many families summer is a time of fun and relaxation, but for others, there is an added stress. When school is out, students lose access to an important source of food – free and reduced-price meals – and many families are unsure of how they will feed their children. This year, with many more families experiencing reduced or lost income as a result of the pandemic, the need will be even greater. Food Gatherers' Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) helps fill the gap, providing free nutritious meals for children and teens during school vacation.

This summer, Food Gatherers is sponsoring 22 SFSP meal sites throughout Washtenaw County from June 29th to August 28th. The 2020 SFSP is offered in partnership with the Michigan Department of Education and is funded by Toyota. Toyota's generous funding allows Food Gatherers to supplement the meals with groceries and produce for participating families.

This year, in response to public health guidelines, the meal sites are offering non-congregate, to-go meals. Each week, sites strategically located in Washtenaw County will distribute bundles of free meals (breakfast and lunch) to provide 14 meals/week for each child. To learn more about the SFSP and the specific site locations please visit: [www.foodgatherers.org/summerfood](http://www.foodgatherers.org/summerfood).

## Upcoming Events

### First Responders Virtual Food Drive August 3rd - 30th

Kroger and Entercom Radio Detroit (104.3 WOMC, 99.5 WYCD, 98.7 The Breeze, 97.1 The Ticket and Newsradio 950 WWJ) are teaming up for this virtual food drive! Donations will be accepted online and through social media. Tune in to your favorite station for details.

### Mow Down Hunger

September 2020

During the Mow Down Hunger Campaign, Weingartz will match donations to Food Gatherers! Look for details later this summer.

### Hunger Action Month

September 2020

Build awareness about hunger during Hunger Action Month, the national campaign sponsored by Feeding America. Follow along on our social media pages to find ways to participate!



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