PLENTY
Fall 2026
PARTNER FOOD BANK OF FEEDING AMERICA
food gatherers

SNAP Strengthens Washtenaw County One Meal at a Time

Vergie and her husband are the primary caretakers of their grandchildren. They both work long hours, six or seven days a week, to provide for their family. Still, with the high costs of living, they find it difficult to keep food on the table. Thankfully SNAP, also known as food stamps, helps them get the nutrition their family needs:

"It's good to see [the kids] smiling," Vergie says. "When they finish eating, they tell me, 'Mom, I'm full.' You know, that brings me joy. And I know that SNAP benefits helped me with this."



What is SNAP and Why Is It Important?

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, commonly referred to as SNAP or "food stamps" is a vital country-wide support system that provides benefit cards for people to purchase groceries at many retailers, like Kroger, Busch's or Meijer, or to use at farmer's markets. SNAP was first introduced in 1939 as a pilot program to help families during the Great Depression and exists today to ensure children stay fed, individuals and families are supported during difficult times, and communities are strengthened.

SNAP is the primary mode of hunger relief for our neighbors, while food banks like Food Gatherers and the partner pantries and programs we work with are meant to provide a food safety net. We are here to help feed our community when someone's SNAP benefits fall short, or for those who don't qualify, but are having a difficult time affording enough food. We often hear stories of neighbors who shop from our network of food pantries when they're waiting on their next SNAP installment, or when they're having trouble with their benefits:

"A participant in our program who regularly relies on SNAP benefits suddenly stopped getting them. They weren't sure why it was happening or how long it would take to be fixed. The participant was able to come to our program multiple times to fill their pantry. They shared that without this resource they didn't know how they would survive. This work is life changing." *- A local food pantry in Food Gatherers' network*

SNAP FACTS:

Most people on SNAP are unable to work - Nearly 80% of SNAP recipients are children, seniors, and people with disabilities who are not able to work. Many able-bodied adults on SNAP are working hard to feed their families, but aren't paid enough to cover all their basic needs. SNAP helps ensure they're fed through times of financial difficulty.

SNAP gives households the ability to choose food that best meets their family's needs - The majority of SNAP dollars are spent on meat, fruits, vegetables, milk, eggs, bread, cereal, dairy products, rice, and beans. According to the USDA, the top expenditure for both SNAP and non-SNAP households is proteins like meat, poultry, and seafood.

SNAP is efficient and effective - SNAP is able to provide nine times the meals that a food bank like Food Gatherers can provide, while having one of the lowest fraud rates among federal programs. **SNAP Payment Error Rates are not the same as fraud.** Errors in SNAP payments are largely unintentional, administrative mistakes.



SFSP volunteers get ready to hand out food at a Grab and Go distribution

FIGHTING CHILD HUNGER
DOESN'T TAKE A SCHOOL BREAK

The health impacts of food insecurity pose a higher risk to kids and teens who are at a key stage of development. Receiving adequate nutrition is essential to their ability to learn, grow, and have a healthy and active life.

That's why when school is out for the summer, Food Gatherers provides nourishing meals to any kids in our community who need them. The 2026 Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) had another record-setting year, **providing more than 153,000 meals to 1,400 children and teens.**

Local parents appreciated the ease of the SFSP Grab & Go model, where they would pull up to 1 of 5 sites and have their vehicles loaded with kid-friendly meals for the week.

"I had a baby in early July & this helped me so much with easy meals for the kids while I recovered post-partum." -a local mom

Now that school is back in session, so are free school meals and Food Gatherers' Healthy School Pantry Program (HSPP). The program operates at 24 schools and offerings can include:

- A choice-model pantry stocked with eggs, dairy, meat, and pantry staples for kids to bring groceries home to their families
- Produce boxes filled with a variety of fresh fruits and veggies and healthy recipes
- Lunches with Love - bagged non-perishable lunches for kids to take home over the weekend or over school breaks when they don't have access to school meals

Through the Summer Food Service Program and the Healthy School Pantry Program we're supporting **more than 12,000 local families**, so kids have the fuel they need for healthy minds and growing bodies, and parents have the relief of knowing their children have enough food on their plates.

Summer Food Service Program 2026:

5 SITES

153K MEALS

1,400 KIDS



OUT AND ABOUT:
SHARING OUR ECO-FRIENDLY INITIATIVES AT A2ZERO'S GREEN FAIR

Food Gatherers was honored to be a part of A2Zero's Green Fair, an annual street fair in downtown Ann Arbor that celebrates sustainability, community, and climate action.

Food Gatherers created the first food rescue operation in Michigan and one of the first six in the country. The program rescues nearly 8,000 lbs of food daily from Washtenaw County grocery retailers so that good, healthy food can go on our neighbors tables instead of in a landfill. Food Gatherers has several green initiatives to reduce our carbon footprint and ensure we are being good stewards of the environment. Our vision of a hunger-free future is also one where everyone has access to clean drinking water, healthy air to breathe, and plenty of greenspaces to enjoy.

Food Gatherers' Green Facts

- Since we installed solar panels in 2019 we have saved 1.76 million pounds of CO2 which is the equivalent of planting more than 13,000 trees.
- Our warehouse is lit entirely by energy-efficient LEDs
- We partner with Recycle Ann Arbor to responsibly dispose of waste from cardboard to soft plastics
- We contract with MyGreenMichigan to compost food that is no longer safe for consumption, which puts it back into the food system as nutrient rich soil

LOCAL GARDENERS PROVIDE FARM-TO-TABLE MEALS THROUGH *"PLANT A ROW"*

We believe that everyone should have reliable access to nutritious food, which means everyone should be able to enjoy the foods that often come at a higher cost, such as organic produce straight from the farm. **Because we're not just serving food–we're serving *people* with the dignity they deserve.**

Through our Plant A Row initiative, we encourage local gardeners and farmers to plant an extra row of produce to donate throughout the growing season. A valuable partner in this effort is Project Grow, which operates more than 350 community garden plots across Ann Arbor. Site coordinators help us spread the word, organize the collection of excess produce, and drop it off at our warehouse.

There's even a Project Grow plot on Food Gatherers' property, just steps away from our building. Gardeners from this plot drop off donations daily. From there it gets packed up by our volunteers and distributed to our partners within 24 hours, ensuring our neighbors can enjoy fresh, nutrient-rich produce almost as soon as it's pulled from the ground.



Annie Broderick, Site Coordinator at Project Grow's Food Gatherers Site, standing in front of her garden plot

So far this year, Project Grow gardeners alone have donated nearly 3,000 pounds to help feed our neighbors, which is the equivalent of 2,500 meals.

"We've got this great influx of energy and connection," says Site Coordinator Annie Broderick. "I think we all have a responsibility to take care of each other, especially in these times."

Any gardener can fight hunger! As you harvest your fall crops, drop off your extra produce at 1 Carrot Way during business hours (Monday-Friday 9am-4:45pm).

Current & Upcoming Events

We're Rockin' for the Hungry!

December 1 - 5

During last year's Rockin' for the Hungry, our community helped us raise a new record of 1.5 million meals for neighbors facing hunger. With the heightened need for food, high costs of living, and more frequent visits to pantries in our network, our goal this year is to do it again.

The five-day radiothon is broadcast by ann arbor's 107one outside the Kroger on Maple Rd. Throughout the week we'll hear live interviews from our partners about what's happening in our community. Volunteers will be on site to spread awareness and inspire support and there's always lots of fun giveaways, such as collectible vinyl, concert tickets, totes and beanies.

Families and businesses who would like to help can sponsor a Power Hour. During that hour, community members are challenged to match your gift of $5,000 or $10,000. It's a great opportunity to get on the radio and tell Washtenaw County why fighting hunger is important to you.

For more information email Charlotte@foodgatherers.org or give us a call at (734)761-2796.



Rockin' for the Hungry!
December 1st - December 5th

Busch's Season of Sharing

November 16 - November 29

Fight Hunger with Busch's annual holiday food drive! You can donate at the register of any Busch's Fresh Market locations in Washtenaw County to support Food Gatherers.

Estate Planning Awareness Week

October 19 - October 25

A great time to make or update your will and legacy plan! When you make a legacy gift to Food Gatherers, you join our Forever Gathering Society and help us fight hunger for generations to come. Learn more at foodgatherers.org/plannedgiving or contact Charlotte@foodgatherers.com or by phone at (734)-761-2796

food gatherers BREAD WINNER
Brentwood Electric Commercial & Residential
BUSCH'S Fresh Food Market
Domino's
DTE Foundation
Kroger
THE MOSAIC FOUNDATION of Rita & Peter Heydon
NSF
TOYOTA
Zingerman's community of businesses

food BANK COUNCIL OF MICHIGAN
FEEDING AMERICA

Stay in touch!

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