The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts

word of mouth

Summer 2021



Providing healthy food with local farms

In this issue:

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THANK YOU

The following businesses, organizations and foundations made a gift of $1,000 or more between January 1 and March 31, 2021

Alternative for Youth Foundation, Inc.

America's Gardening Resource, Inc.

Amherst Knights of Columbus Council 1619 Inc.

Anthem, Inc.

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Feeding America

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Stop & Shop Family Foundation

Subaru of America, Inc.

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UMACC

Whole Foods Market

Women's Benevolent Society

Women's Fund of Western Massachusetts

The top food donors between January 1 and March 31, 2021

1. Big Y*
2. Stop and Shop
3. BJ's*
4. Target
5. Walmart*
6. Cumberland Farms*
7. A. Martinez Produce Company*
8. Aldi*
9. Coca-Cola/Minute-Maid Co.*
10. Bimbo*

multiple stores combined

The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts

For regular updates on Food Bank activities, sign up for our enewsletter at foodbankwma.org

MEMBER OF FEEDING AMERICA

The Food Bank's vision is a Western Massachusetts where no one goes hungry and everyone has access to nutritious food.

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From the Executive Director

Providing healthy food with local farms

It's tough for families at risk of hunger to feed their kids healthy meals when school is not in session and free school meals are unavailable. **Since the pandemic began, 1 in 6 children (26,830) are now facing food insecurity in Western Massachusetts. This represents a 27 % increase over pre-pandemic levels.** Can you imagine what it must feel like as a parent knowing your child is not eating enough nutritious food? Fortunately, with your support, we are well positioned to continue providing healthy food to families with children this summer as we have been since the beginning of the pandemic and long before. We have strong reciprocal relationships with more than 50 local farms. Last year, they **donated** collectively almost 700,000 lbs. of fresh produce. Using principally funds from the Massachusetts Emergency Food Assistance Program (MEFAP) administered by the Mass. Dept. of Agricultural Resources, The Food Bank also **purchased** just over one million pounds of fresh produce from local farms at a cost just shy of $272,000.

By supporting our local farmers, we are investing in the local farm economy to strengthen ***community*** as well as ***household*** food security. As a region, producing more of the food we eat and making this food accessible to everyone is essential for long-term self-reliance and resiliency in the face of future economic downturns and climate change.

For these reasons, we purchased a second Food Bank Farm in Hadley in 2019 and are beginning our second growing season on it. We now have long-term agreements with farmers Joe Czajkowski (Lakeside Organics) and Gideon Porth (Atlas Farm) to farm it in exchange for a share of the harvest in lieu of cash rent. This arrangement is like our longstanding partnership with Ben Perrault (Mountainview Farm CSA) on our first Food Bank Farm, which we have owned since 1992.

We are very grateful for the support that we receive from our local farmers and from you! ◆

1 MILLION LBS. OF PRODUCE PURCHASED FROM:

- Sugar Mountain Produce
- Wendolowski Farm
- Plainville Farm
- Szawlowski Potato Farms
- Honey Pot Farm
- Lakeside Organics Farm
- Atlas Farm
- J. M. Pasiecnik Farm

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Making a difference: screening for food insecurity during healthcare visits

For the past three years, The Food Bank has supported patients from Western Massachusetts Health Centers through the Food Insecurity Screening and Referral Initiative (FISRI). Alan Dallmann, Hunger Solutions Innovator at The Food Bank, oversees FISRI and explains how he and his team are working with other organizations in the region to provide desparately needed services.



The FISRI team (clockwise from top left): Osvaldina, Alan, Johanna, and Damaris.

FISRI is one more way The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts connects residents to services that help them become more food secure. Although the initial referral from health centers is for direct food assistance, we also direct patients to other services that can bring them more financial stability.

To provide a clear example of how important FISRI screenings have been, I'd like to share a story from Johanna (Jo) Farrell, one of our food assistance resource coordinators. Holyoke Health Center referred to Jo a patient who screened positive for food insecurity. He and his family were from Puerto Rico and had moved to the area in January after his wife experienced a reoccurrence of cancer. "They were living in a friend's basement," Jo said, "until they got on their feet."

In January, the man began working at Yankee Candle and his wife started medical treatment. Their teenage boys are adjusting to their new life. The family needed support.

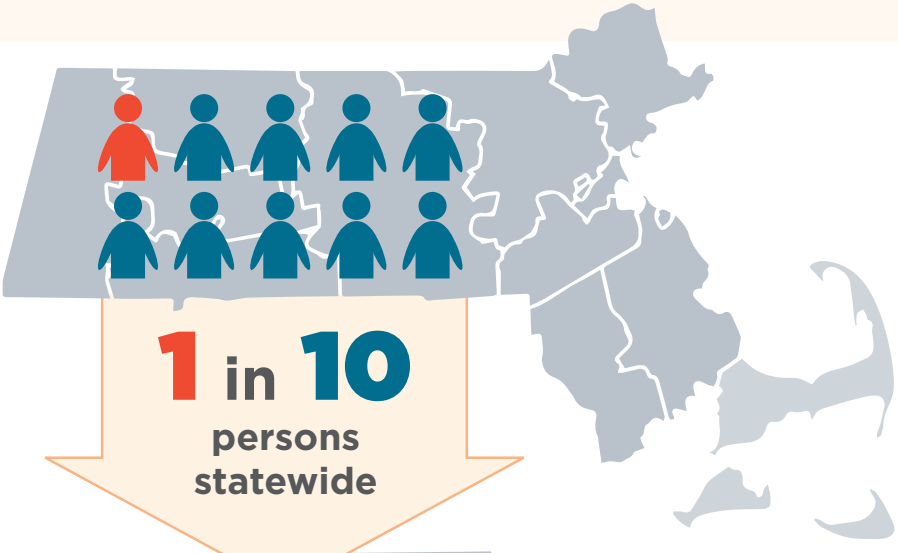
"I was able to refer them to Wayfinders for housing and MassHire for employment training. I also informed them about the nearest food pantry in their area and shared the 413cares.org social services website," Jo added.

"He and his wife were very appreciative for all the information."

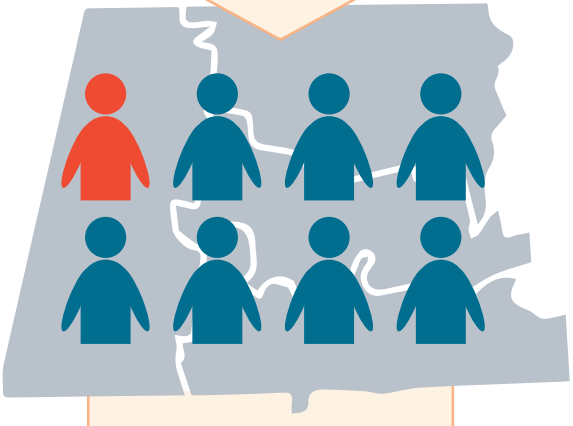
By addressing the causes and effects of food insecurity in partnership with other social service organizations and health care centers, we can help provide lasting solutions to those who need them. We look forward to deepening our community partnerships. ◆

2021

MASSACHUSETTS FOOD INSECURITY PROJECTIONS



1 in 10
persons statewide



1 in 8
persons in Western MA



1 in 6
children in Western MA

Since 2019, the number of food insecure individuals in Massachusetts increased **20%** (682,420 persons)

- **12%** of all Western Mass. residents (99,890)
- **17%** of all children in Western Mass. (26,830)

[Source: Feeding America. Revised March 2021]

Learn more: **foodbankwma.org/2021-mass-food-insecurity-projections**



The Food Bank Honors Long-time Contributors, Betty and Charles Barker

Friends and family of the late Betty and Charles Barker say the couple was committed to serving their community, but most never knew the depth of their philanthropy. The Barkers made a point of donating anonymously to The Food Bank and many other local non-profit organizations for decades. They began giving to The Food Bank in 1998, and after Charles passed away three years ago, Betty continued that tradition until her passing in early 2021. The Barkers were concerned —not with recognition – but with making a difference in the lives of people in need.

Today, their giving spirit lives on in their daughter Ann, co-owner of Quonquont Farm in Whately, who has served on The Food Bank's board of directors since January 2020. "My parents were humble philanthropists, who quietly shared their good fortune with others. They were passionate believers in the importance of community and the need to show compassion and kindness to others," Barker said. "I am grateful to have seen their compassion in action and find comfort in knowing their impact in the community is deep and lasting."

Over the years with their generous contributions, the Barkers made possible countless meals for individuals facing food insecurity and hunger. And, as food insecurity spiked last year during the COVID-19 pandemic, increased donor generosity enabled The Food Bank to distribute more healthy food than ever before in its almost 40-year history. Without this support, providing nutritious emergency food would have been impossible in communities across all four counties of western Massachusetts.

The generosity and compassion the Barkers displayed make the mission of The Food Bank possible. "We are grateful for their philanthropic support to lift up so many people who were going through hard times," said Andrew Morehouse, executive director of The Food Bank. ◆

Read the full article at: **foodbankwma.org/newsroom**

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ONE MILE AT A TIME.



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presented by

STOP&SHOP

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September 26, 2021

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willbike4food.org

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U.S. Postage Paid
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The Food Bank
of Western Massachusetts

P.O. Box 160
Hatfield, MA 01038

foodbankwma.org

"I'm struggling to put food on the table. My kiddo eats from our veggie garden and lots of bread and cheese, plus eggs from our two chickens."

*– Local parent**

foodbankwma.org/donate

**This quote is taken from a local parent who wishes to remain anonymous.*