



**A FRESH APPROACH  
TO ENDING LOCAL HUNGER**



# Fresh News

THE EAGAN PANTRY | THE MOBILE PANTRY | THE MOBILE LUNCH BOX | GARDEN TO TABLE | POP-UP PRODUCE STANDS | **FALL 2020**

What have we learned over the last six months? Just like your household, we have learned that being flexible, creative, and forgiving is essential to making it through this. Together we do better, and together you have helped our team respond in remarkable ways.

The outpouring of support from our community has empowered our staff and volunteers to take bold steps to address the impacts of COVID-19 head on. You helped us find a new normal in short order, find new ways to do old things, and find ways to stay together while standing further apart. Extra staff, vehicles, space, food, you name it, with your help we have been able to say 'yes'.

As we head into the colder months, know that we are making preparations to adjust our programs to make fresh and healthy

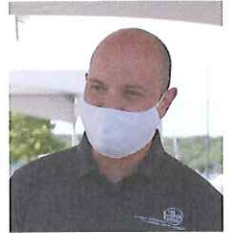
food accessible as safely and consistently as possible. Our team remains committed to finding our way through this crisis, and with your help we are confident we can sustain our momentum until some sort of normal finds its way back to those we serve.

I hope you enjoy the stories that follow, and I hope you feel a great sense of ownership in our work.

Thank you for your faith in our team, mission and work.

With Gratitude,

Jason Viana, Executive Director



[www.theopendoorpantry.org](http://www.theopendoorpantry.org)

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# Six Month Crisis Response Update

Since March of this year The Open Door has been in a state of remarkable growth as our team has rallied to respond to the impact of the Coronavirus. It is a testament to the resiliency of our community that this pandemic has been met with an extraordinary outpouring of support which has enabled our volunteers and staff to be creative, flexible, and responsive as they found new ways to make healthy food more available at a time when much more has been needed.

From new volunteers, to creative food drives, to generous financial donors, your support has made it possible for our team to respond to an increased need for food support in our community. Your gifts have allowed us to secure temporary warehouse space, additional staff members, renting additional vehicles to expand our Mobile Lunch Box program, and the ability to purchase extra food and cleaning supplies.

In August we officially surpassed our entire food distribution totals from all of 2019! Through our expanded Mobile Lunchbox program to our Large-scale drive through food distributions, our team has found ways to expand almost every aspect of our organization. We are on pace to provide over 2 million pounds of fresh and healthy food in 2020, and are well into planning for 2021.

Our partners at Second Harvest Heartland are projecting a 70% increase in need for food support in Dakota County through the end of this year, and we have every indication that our operations need to prepare for sustaining this level of support for the next 18-24 months.

Because of your trust in our team The Open Door is positioned to continue meeting the need in Dakota County. Our plans for the next six months are focused on developing safe spaces for food distributions before the weather shifts. We are in conversation with our school district partners and stand ready to mobilize our Mobile Lunch Box program on short notice to support meal deliveries to low-income families as needed.

We will continue to be creative and persistent in establishing a new normal for the fall and winter seasons. With your continuing support we will continue working every day to find ways to make fresh and healthy food available anywhere it is needed in our community.

**Scaled-Up** from 7,000 to  
**20,000**  
Individuals each month

**58,000** meals to  
students

**Exceeded 2019 Food Totals**  
**In August 2020!**

**Expanded**  
**Mobile Fleet**

**500+** New  
Volunteers

**over 19,000** new  
clients since March

**56** new  
garden plots



L to R: District 191 staff pre-packing food for a Drive Up Distribution at Souix Trail Elementary in Burnsville; TOD volunteers loading clients cars at a Large Scale Distribution held at the Dakota County Northern Service Center in West Saint Paul; TOD staff member Dave Johnson in his fighting hunger t-shirt helps volunteers prepare for a Large Scale Distribution at Lakeview Elementary School in Lakeville.



## Lunchbox Brings 58,000 Meals to Kids

*New District, expanded routes fuel exponential growth*

Access to healthy meals during summer break was already a pressing issue for children in Dakota County, and the pandemic only made this issue worse. Knowing this year would present unprecedented need for support, our team proactively worked with School Districts 191, 194 & 196 to develop a plan to make meals available to students in more neighborhoods, and more often than ever before.

This summer our volunteers and staff delivered meals to 18 neighborhoods five days a week. Together we brought more than 50,000 meals to kids this summer, and more than 58,000 since Spring Break! Together we increased the impact of this program by more than 14-fold!

The meals helped families with more than just lunch. 97% of families shared with The Open Door that not only did the Mobile Lunch Box increase their access to fresh and healthy food, but also helped them spend less on food purchases and have the ability to put more money towards other essentials.

We are currently in discussions with each of our school district partners to determine what support will be needed this school year. As you can imagine the variables are numerous, but know that our team is committed to being a creative and flexible partner that will do what is necessary to get healthy food to families that need support.



"Our partnership with The Open Door is critical to supporting families in our community. Together, we are ensuring students are fueled for the journey to accomplishing their infinite possibilities."

- District 196 Superintendent Mary M. Kreger

Top to bottom: Mobile Lunch Box volunteers distribute lunches to kids; Mobile Lunch Box Coordinator Heleyna Sjoberg and long-time volunteer Denise prepare the Mobile Lunch Box van for lunch distribution.

## The Mobile Lunch Box program is made possible in partnerships with



## Best Season Ever - Gardens Thrive During Pandemic

Garden to Table had a banner year in 2020 as more plots allowed more clients the opportunity to grow their own fresh and healthy food while getting outside and safely interacting with neighbors! Our newest garden at Valley Natural Foods added 58 new plots for gardeners in a location closer to several low-income communities, increasing the program's available plots by 25%!

The 709 plots adopted by clients marked an all-time high for the program, and while the harvest numbers are still coming in, there is no doubt this will be the most successful year in the program's history! Thanks to your support, our team was able to hire a summer intern as well as support a seasonal AmeriCorps member to ensure our Garden to Table clients received hands on encouragement and support throughout the growing season.



Garden to Table's newest garden site at Valley Natural Foods, Burnsville



## Volunteer Spotlight: Stacey Notch



When Stacey's life started to change due to COVID-19, she started looking for ways to help others and stumbled upon The Open Door. "I had to take one month leave of absence from my job. At the same time my dad was in Chicago going through some health issues and I couldn't always be there to help take care of him, between that and not working I just needed to get out and do something." Stacey quickly became a fixture at the Eagan Pantry routinely going above and beyond and trying on multiple roles to find a fit.

From Client Attendant, to shopping for clients, to trying out large-scale distributions, Stacy jumped in with both feet. While she truly loves every volunteer opportunity she's had, her favorite moments have been working with clients. "I enjoy connecting with people, having that opportunity to be able to talk to them and do something for others." While her path to The Open Door was unexpected, Stacey says it's brought tremendous perspective. "For me and for a lot of people there's been so much change, and being able to continuously volunteer here and see everything that's going on, everything that people are doing to help other people has made me change the direction of my life. Being able to see what people are going through as opposed to just watching it on the news or reading about it or, you know... I've been able to grow."

When COVID hit, many of TOD's regular volunteers found themselves in high-risk categories and had to step back. Stacey is one of more than 500 new volunteers who have joined The Open Door since COVID-19 hit our community. The presence of our new friends has been critical to helping The Open Door sustain its remarkable growth over the last six months. To learn more about how you can join Stacey visit [theopendoorpantry.org/volunteer](https://theopendoorpantry.org/volunteer).

*Dine out for Good!*





# OctoberZest!

RESTAURANT WEEK

A week of great dining at local favorites benefiting 

OctoberZest restaurants are giving 20% of all sales to The Open Door on a select day the week of Oct 4-10.

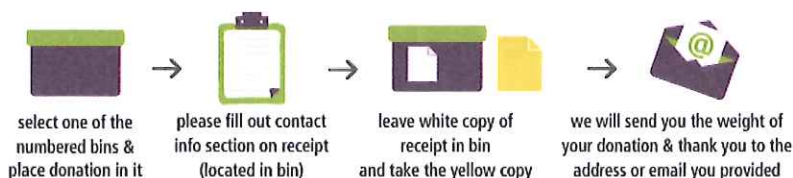
## October 4th-10th

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
 <b>BURGERS AND BOTTLES</b>	 <b>ANDIAMO</b>	 <b>Jensen's Eagan</b>	 <b>LAKEVILLE BREWING</b>	 <b>UNION 32</b>	 <b>DICKY'S BARBECUE PIT</b>	 <b>DUNN BROTHERS COFFEE</b> Lakeville & Eagan

## Virtual Food Drives - A Fun, Safe and Easy Way Give!

Have you switched your grocery shopping routine by ordering online with delivery or contactless pickup? Why not do the same and donate to The Open Door! Online ordering, Instacart or Shipt shopping, and curbside pickup has made it easier and safer to donate to The Open Door than ever before! Consider holding a virtual food drive with your family, friends or colleagues! Anyone can participate from anywhere. Select an item from our top five most needed items, add it to your cart wherever you shop, whether its Amazon, Target, Walmart or Costco. Have it delivered to our pantry or drop it off yourself at our Contactless Donation Bins. Snap a photo of yourself with your donations and share it through social media - energize others to do the same! For more information, visit <https://theopendoorpantry.org/virtual-food-fund-drives/>

### NEW CONTACTLESS DONATION PROCESS



#### TOP 5 ITEMS

- > tomato sauce: 15 oz
- > diced tomatoes: 15 oz
- > bottles of vegetable oil: 16 - 48 oz
- > bottles of 100% fruit juice: 64 oz
- > apple sauce & mandarin oranges

## Thank you to our annual partners:

