

A network of food centers building community through *nourishment*.

# A Letter From the Executive Director

Change was a recurring theme for NourishMKE in 2024 but the “why” of what we do remains constant.

**We believe everyone is entitled to food. Food is a human right.**

Without this most basic nourishment, it is impossible to flourish in our communities. We *feed our neighbors and our neighbors feed us*. It’s so simple and yet it opens up a world of possibilities. There is something transformative that happens when we break bread together, we satiate a physical and spiritual hunger and begin to create trust. With a foundation of trust we are able to build relationships with one another and strengthen our community.

2024 was a challenging year on many levels. We experienced a change in our organization’s leadership, we faced ongoing flooding and facility repairs, and on top of that we changed our name to

better reflect the work we are doing to nourish our city. During all of this, we saw a substantial increase in the need for our services. Thanks to the generous contributions of our staff, guests, volunteers, and donors, we have continued to meet this need while reinforcing the hope and dignity of our community.

As we head into 2025, we have been tirelessly preparing for a continued increase in need for community nourishment. The most important thing we need right now is you— our partners in this work. In the same way we build relationships to strengthen our communities on the ground in our food centers, we are focusing on nurturing existing and new relationships as an organization. This means strong partnerships with other community based nonprofits and businesses.

This means growing relationships with residents looking to make a difference in their neighborhoods. This means sharing our work widely across this incredible city and inviting in each and every person who wants to be a part of this work. There is power in communities when we are nourished.

**I hope you will join us. Together we can build resilient communities with hope, love, and of course, food.**



## STAFF

Valerie MacMillan - *Executive Director*

Jenna Koch - *Community Engagement Coordinator*

Abby Brace - *Volunteer & Development Coordinator*

Chad Walter - *Mitchell & Orchard Site Manager*

Cheryl Ousley - *Vliet & Fond du Lac Site Manager*

Quis Thorn - *Home Delivery Coordinator*

Erika Schmitt - *2023 - 2024 AmeriCorps & Part-Time Staff Member*

Aubree Hansen - *2023 - 2024 AmeriCorps*

Reilly Lynch - *2024 - 2025 AmeriCorps*

Ashanti Hall - *2024 - 2025 AmeriCorps*

## BOARD

Adam Cook - *Board Chair*

Sarah O’Connor - *Vice Chair*

Nadene Foti - *Treasurer*

William Prescott Marshall

Amanda Frazer

Kimara Ellefson

Samantha Bear

Kelsey Prestby

Danielle Coterel

Meg Brondos

Brandon Ramey

# New look, same mission

*In 2022, a group of stakeholders from Friedens Food Pantries began the process of rebranding our organization to maximize both our impact and potential while honoring our values. In June of 2024, we reintroduced ourselves as NourishMKE Community Food Centers. While our name has changed, our mission remains. Here's how we nourished our community this year.*

**59,151** individuals served

**Mitchell**  
1615 S 22nd St, 53204

**29,642**  
individuals served

**Vliet**  
1220 W Vliet St, 53205

**5,156**  
individuals served

**Orchard**  
209 W Orchard St, 53204

**16,228**  
individuals served

**Fond du Lac**  
10230 W Fond du Lac Ave,  
53223

**8,125**  
individuals served

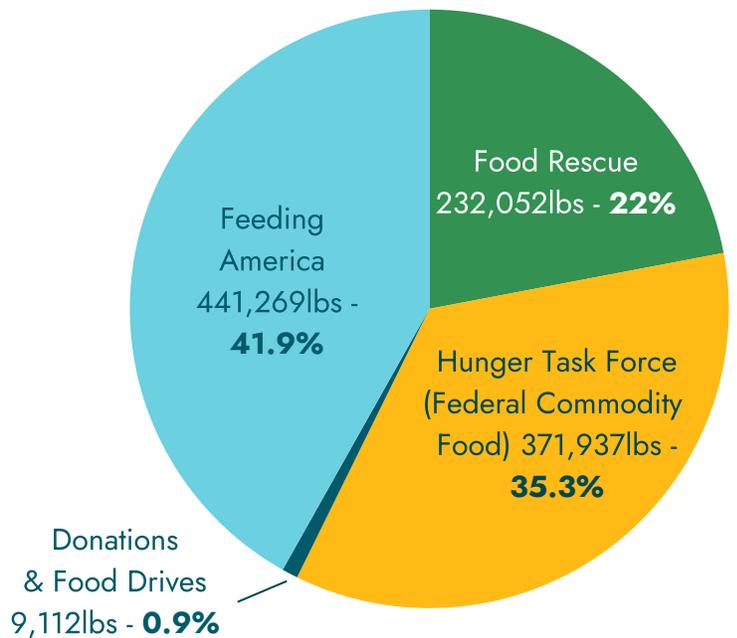
**16,345**  
households served

**2,606** first-time  
guests

**1,054,370** lbs of  
food distributed

**16,868** repeat  
guests

## WHERE OUR FOOD COMES FROM



## NON-FOOD DISTRIBUTIONS

**215,000**  
diapers

**60,000**  
Bombas socks

**115,000**  
period products

**568**  
cans of formula

# Community Support in a Year of Change

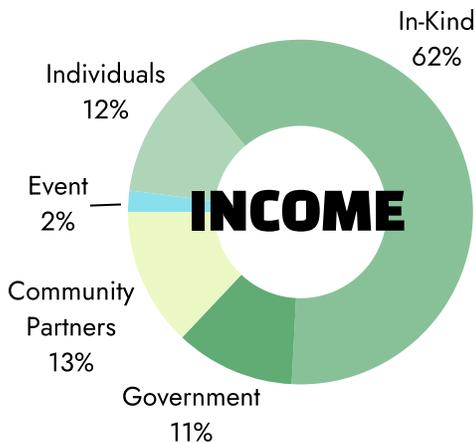
In February of 2024, our Mitchell location experienced two devastating floods. In the following weeks, we had to close the space as we worked to remediate the damage and replace 21,000 lbs of shelf stable food. During this time, we were generously supported by community partners, and directed our guests to our Orchard Street food center, resulting in a 44% increase in new visitors at Orchard.

Over the summer, we rebuilt our stock of food while the building underwent renovations. We also hired Chad Walter as the South Side Site Manager, the first full-time employee to oversee Mitchell.

With Chad's leadership and the support of numerous dedicated volunteers, we were able to re-open our Gathering Room space in September. We are grateful for the outpouring of support while we continue create a more accessible and welcoming space to serve our community.



## YOUR SUPPORT IN ACTION: 2024 DONORS



### \$50,000+

Anonymous Individual Donor  
Anonymous Family Foundation  
Greater Milwaukee Foundation  
Otto Bremer Trust Community Responsive Fund

### \$25,000-50,000

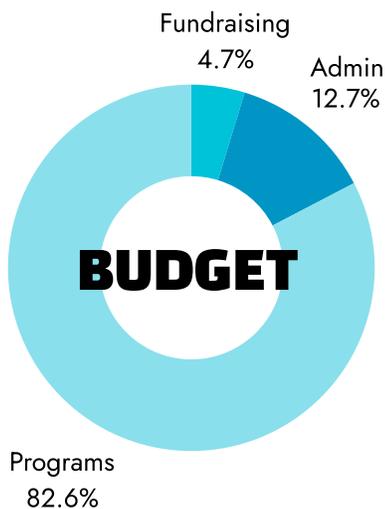
Various Anonymous Donors  
Zilber Family Foundation

### \$10,000-25,000

Otto Bremer Trust  
Department of City Development  
Froedtert Health  
Quad Graphics  
Anonymous Individual Donor

### IN-KIND

Bombas, Muskego Food Pantry, Trader Joe's, Ebenezer, Costco, Aldi, Festival Foods, Outpost Natural Foods, Sendik's, Pewaukee Food Pantry, Breadsmith, MKE 2024 RNC, Grace Creek Church, Life Center Milwaukee, Anonymous Individuals, United Way of Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County, Church of the Gesu, Save-a-Lot, Light Palace Pub & Grill, Brewers Community Foundation, Eastcastle Place, Outreach Community Health Centers, Milwaukee County Department of Human Resources, Friendship Force of Greater Milwaukee, CL&D, Apple Ridge Academy, MSOE, New Berlin Middle/High School, KPMG Milwaukee, Brookfield East High School, Zoological Society, Somerset Photography & Studio, MCM Timing & Results LLC, Union Copy, Puppy World, Grunau Company, Nel-Sunshine Farms, Girl & Cub Scouts at German Immersion, Rupena's, Von Briesen & Roper S.C., House of Prayer Lutheran Church, Dynasty Farms, STRATTEC Security Corp, Shady Lane Greenhouses, Shorepoint Church, Mt. Mary University, Ceramic Tool Company



# Stronger Together: Our Volunteers

*Volunteers support in nearly every aspect of keeping our sites running smoothly. From cleaning and shopping, to project management and program support, there are volunteer roles at NourishMKE to meet the needs of anyone who wants to help.*



**1,400+**  
volunteers



**14,000+**  
total hours served



**\$469,111**  
monetary value of  
volunteer time



“Our pantry is a place that brings people together. It’s not just food, it’s the whole atmosphere. **It’s like a family.**”

**Meri, NourishMKE**  
Volunteer since 2005



## THE POWER OF VOLUNTEERS: EMPTY BOWLS

Our annual autumn fundraising event, Empty Bowls, would not be possible without the support of volunteers. Each year, attendees can shop for donated handmade bowls from local artisans while trying soup samples from local restaurants— all proceeds go to NourishMKE.

From the planning process to the day-of event, it takes the generosity and commitment of our volunteers to put on Empty Bowls each year. We are so grateful for the support and dedication of sponsors, restaurant partners, potters, auction donors, and volunteers.

Get involved today— we need support through every step of the planning process. Reach out to [volunteer@nourishmke.org](mailto:volunteer@nourishmke.org) to learn about group opportunities and other ways to support the event!

**15**  
restaurants

**850**  
bowls sold

**137**  
volunteers

**\$60,739**  
raised

# Volunteer Groups: Building Skills & Relationships

Our volunteer groups share so much of their time, effort, and community. In return, we hope to build meaningful experiences for all who donate their time and talents to our organization. The Connects Learning Center, an alternative high school in Cudahy, built service learning at NourishMKE into their curriculum in Fall 2024.

“What impressed me about NourishMKE was the quality student experience,” CLC teacher Bernie Carreon says. “What they get there from Cheryl is amazing... she does a really nice job of training them in a way so they take it seriously, but building an empathy piece as well.”

This is CLC’s first year offering service learning. Along with the actual

volunteer shifts, students complete written assignments and presentations about food access in Milwaukee.

CLC is based around the Circle of Courage teaching model, which has roots in Lakota, Nakota, and Dakota Indigenous cultures. These cultures identify four universal growth needs for youth: mastery, generosity, belonging, and independence.

Each student took something different from the experience; one shared how they were “surprised by how much food there was and how nice it was,” while another shared that the experience helped them get out of their comfort zone.

CLC student, Colton, stated in an interview that he volunteered because

his friend asked him to come.

“Me and him were just doing the food [sorting], but he was scared to help someone,” Colton says. “But it’s easy, it’s not hard, you just have a conversation basically.”

Bernie says skills such as talking to guests or working as a team can help students when they enter their first jobs. Service learning is rewarding for him as an educator, too.

“It’s liberating to be able to look at what the students need, all those aspects of the Circle of Courage,” Bernie says. “We want to honor that by creating quality experiences... that’s why NourishMKE is awesome for them.”



## THANKS TO OUR 2024 VOLUNTEER GROUPS

Ozaukee Congregational Church, Dominican High School, New Berlin West High School, Brookfield East High School, Spanish Honor Societies, Marquette Medical Brigade, Children’s Wisconsin, Saputo, Sunbeam Kids, Goodwill, Quad Graphics, Somos Uno Employee Group, Connects Learning Center, UWM Service Learning, Mount Mary Dietetics, Marquette Service Learning, MIAD Service Learning

## GET INVOLVED

Are you looking for a group volunteer opportunity? We have opportunities at our four sites across the city Tuesdays through Saturdays. **Email [volunteer@nourishmke.org](mailto:volunteer@nourishmke.org) to get started.**



# Serving Communities Across the Table

*We know we can't do this work alone. Our partnerships provide us with not only funding and resources, but connections across sectors that help us all work toward a more equitable food system.*

To address health disparities that affect our guests, we invite in healthcare organizations into our centers. Whether it's taking a guest's blood pressure or sharing low-cost insurance information, our partnerships provide guests with the information they need to support their health.

Froedtert Community Outreach Nurse Morgan Miller provides resource navigation and health screenings twice a month at our Vliet location. Miller might first take a guest's blood pressure or talk to them about a recent diagnosis. After getting to know them and their needs, she can assess what resource to connect them to. "Sometimes it's just a conversation to open their eyes to the resources around them," Miller says.

Jackie Day often tables alongside Miller as Versiti's Community Health Navigator. Day connects guests to healthcare resources as well as

housing, transportation, childcare, and other basic needs.

"All those dots have got to be connected," Day says.

We envision our food centers as places where guests can leave with not only groceries, but a path forward.

Whether that's an appointment with a new doctor, the address of a local childcare center, or an application for GED classes— we work toward each guest leaving our centers emboldened with the tools they need to thrive.

## OUR OUTREACH PARTNERS

- Anthem
- Ascension
- Children's Hospital
- Collins Insurance
- Feeding America FoodShare
- Froedtert
- Hunger Task Force
- League of Women Voters
- MATC Dietetics Students
- Milwaukee Public Library
- Mount Mary Dietetic Students
- Planned Parenthood
- UWM Story Cart
- Verisiti
- Humana/iCare
- Molina Healthcare
- Milwaukee Zoological Society

## PARTNERS AT OUR SUMMER BLOCK PARTIES



# Creating Resilience in Food Systems

At NourishMKE, we've been a leader in the community with our food recovery program that helps keep food out of landfills and puts quality, nutritious foods into the hands of those who need it most.

We build partnerships with retailers to take the food they cannot sell (due to damaged packaging or being close to expiration). This program works to supplement the food we receive through our two local, wonderful food banks: Feeding America and Hunger Task Force.

We see challenges on the horizon, as a very large percentage of the food provided by our food banks is supported by federal government programs and grants which are currently under threat of reduction or elimination. These crucial federal safety net programs not only help feed our neighbors, but also support farmers across the nation.

Looking to the future, we want to expand our food recovery program and explore other innovative sources for food procurement to keep our shelves stocked in 2025 and beyond.

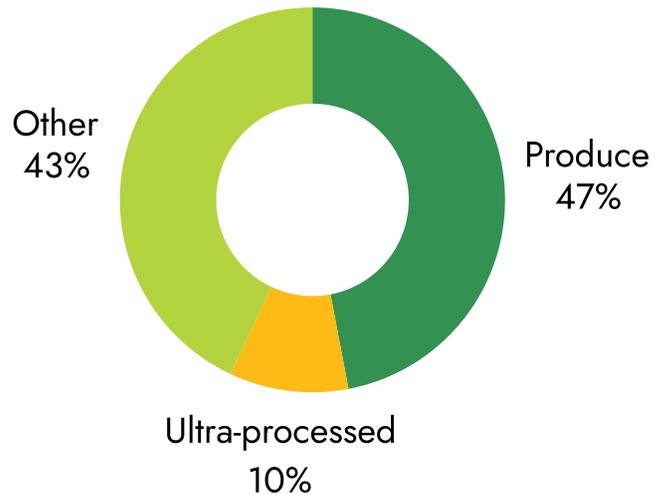


**25**  
volunteer delivery drivers  
*picking up from...*

**16**  
food rescue partners  
*donating food worth...*

**\$463,600!**

## TYPES OF FOOD DONATED



## HOW YOU CAN HELP

You can join our team of dedicated food rescue drivers who volunteer to pick up food from our partner stores and deliver to our food centers. If you have a relationship with a local farm, consider connecting them to NourishMKE so we can explore a mutually beneficial partnership supporting farms and our neighbors in the City of Milwaukee. Contact [volunteer@nourishmke.org](mailto:volunteer@nourishmke.org) to learn more.

# Making Space For All: Our Programs

*Food is medicine— for the body, spirit, and collective. Our programs combine these elements to create connections while providing valuable education. We aim to foster an environment where community flourishes.*

In September of 2024, we restarted our food education program with the reopening of our Gathering Room.

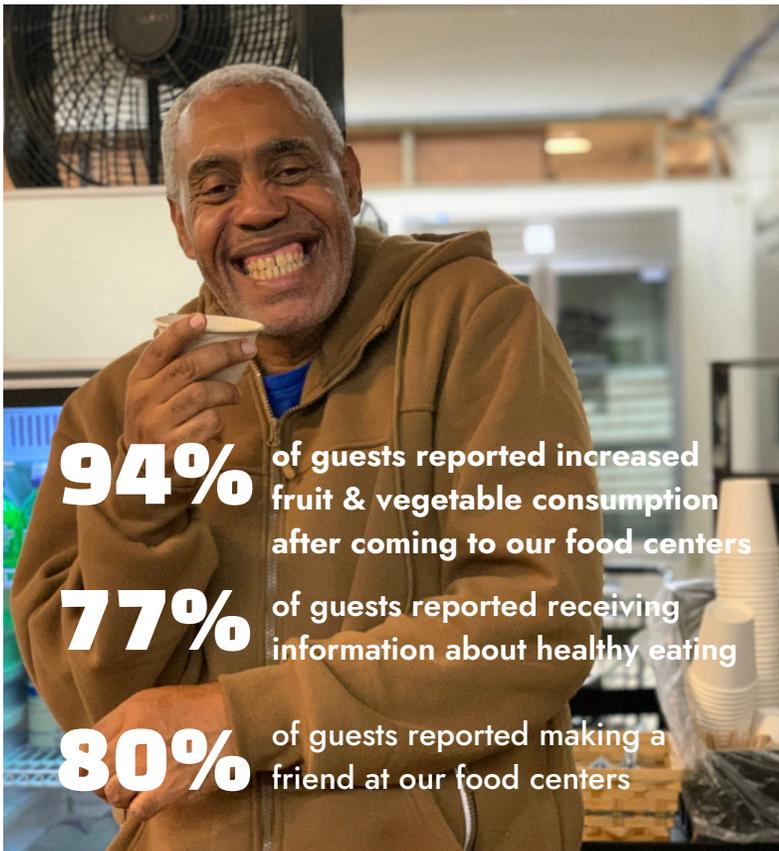
At the same time, we brought on 5 interns studying to work in majors such as public health, medicine, and education. The fit was natural, then, for these programs to grow together. Each student involved brought a unique perspective to the program; with some bringing in cultural recipes, and others taking a nutrition-based approach.

As we continue to grow both programs, the integration of students into our food education program breathes new life into our programming and creates invaluable learning experiences for our students and guests.

“I am passionate about food education as a way to **empower individuals and communities to make healthier choices** and overcome barriers to accessing nutritious food.”



**Yaritza, Community Outreach Intern & Public Health Major**



**94%** of guests reported increased fruit & vegetable consumption after coming to our food centers

**77%** of guests reported receiving information about healthy eating

**80%** of guests reported making a friend at our food centers

## **PROGRAMMING HIGHLIGHTS:**

- Planted **4 raised garden beds**, growing zucchini, radishes, tomatoes, peppers, and more for our pantries
- Worked with **5 interns** from various universities
- Hosted **3 summer block parties**
- Restarted food education table after flooding
- Piloted food education program at Vliet, Orchard, and Fond Du Lac
- Worked with MATC's first Health and Nutrition Navigator program intern



# Where you come in

Our annual report is a reflection of what we've done, not just an organization, but as a network of individuals and communities working toward food justice. This network includes our over 1,400 volunteers, numerous donors, and community partners that contribute invaluable resources and time to our mission. At the core of this report, however, are our guests. Our community's resilience in the face of challenges inspires us every day to work toward a world in which food is a human right.

The increased need for food amidst numerous federal, state, and local changes to food systems is daunting. We aren't sure of what the future holds— but we are sure that we want to live in a future where everyone has the nourishment they need.

We invite you to use your time, resources, and voice to build this future with us. Whether you can volunteer your time through stocking shelves or updating our website, use your voice to share our mission with your network, or contribute resources through donations and food drives, together, we can build a more equitable world. Each number we share in this report— 59,000 served, or 1 million pounds distributed— represents a life changed by your actions. Through joining hands and working together, we can create a more equitable, dignified food system for all of our neighbors.

## TAKE ACTION TODAY.

Visit [www.nourishmke.org](http://www.nourishmke.org) or email [connect@nourishmke.org](mailto:connect@nourishmke.org) to connect directly.

