



**A FRESH APPROACH
TO ENDING LOCAL HUNGER**



Fresh News

EAGAN PANTRY | MOBILE PANTRY | MOBILE LUNCHBOX | GARDEN TO TABLE | POP-UP PRODUCE STANDS | **FALL 2021**

Our team has never enjoyed stronger support from our community than we have over the last 18 months. Together, you have helped our team provide fresh and healthy food to more people than ever, tripling our capacity and making room for 40,000 people who had never come to The Open Door for help before.

The number of families we are currently supporting has steadily declined from a peak of around 20,000 individuals a month, to closer to 10,000. We believe we have weathered the peak of the pandemic-related surge and are preparing to maintain our new normal, while building capacity to tackle the food-assistance waiting list we had before the pandemic began. From Senior Living Facilities to low-income neighborhoods, we have more than 20 communities who have asked our team to help make healthy food more accessible for their neighbors. With your help, we will tackle that list site by site!

Whether you helped make snack packs for Mobile Lunchbox, volunteered at one of our Drive-Thru Food distributions, made a financial gift, or shared our work with a friend – you have been part of a remarkable effort to make this pandemic more bearable for thousands of our neighbors. We hope the stories in the following pages will give you a clear sense of the impact your decision to help has made.



With Gratitude,

Jason Viana, Executive Director



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THE OPEN DOOR & IHCC CREATE PERMANENT SITE FOR STUDENTS

Dedicated Space on Campus Gives Students Food Access on their Schedule



"Some students come to me and say it's been their only food for the week."

-Nicole Bietz on the Mobile Pantry

The Open Door's Mobile Pantry has been coming to Inver Hills since 2013, and since day one both sides knew the impact was both significant, and also not consistent enough. The once-a-month model wasn't working for college students inconsistent schedules on campus. When leaders from both organizations cut the ribbon on the new permanent food shelf space on campus this August, it felt like a true moment of achievement.

IHCC Counselor Nicole Bietz was a driving force behind the project and knows the impact this space will have for her students. "Inver Hills participated in some research studies about basic needs and security, and we found that there was a significant amount of our students who struggled with (accessing food)" Bietz said. "Our goal was to help bridge that gap."

According to Nicole, she frequently receives calls and handwritten thank-you notes from students whose only source of food for the week (for themselves and their children) has been The Open Door's Mobile Pantry. She believes that this new permanent space on campus will make getting help even easier for students moving forward.

Nicole hopes to continue spreading the word about the school's new pantry to all Inver Hills students to ensure everybody has access to what they need. She also hopes to expand the pantry to include other resources such as mental health counseling and housing help.



TOD Executive Director Jason Viana, Mobile Staff Members, Adam Hoffman and Sara Garcica with IHCC Staff Members at the opening of IHCC's on-campus food pantry.

TAKE A LOOK BACK AT SUMMER AT THE OPEN DOOR

From our first annual 5K, to Garden Camp, Mobile Olympics and Volunteer Appreciation Picnic, Summer 2021 was our busiest yet!



Garden to Table Campers learning about soil



Volunteers at the annual Volunteer Appreciation Picnic



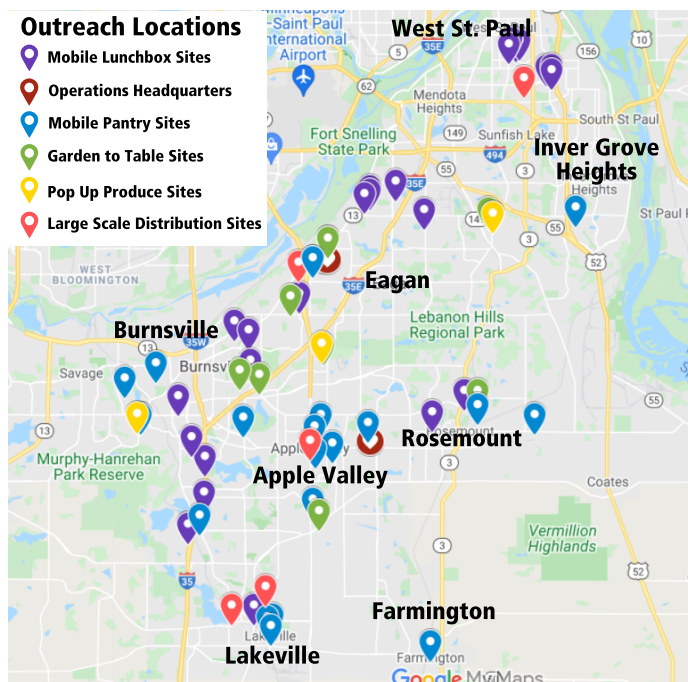
The Open Door's 1st Annual 5K Race at Casperson Park



Mobile team at the Warehouse Olympics

WHERE IN DAKOTA COUNTY ARE WE?

Through Gardens, Mobile Lunchbox, Mobile Pantry and our stand alone pantry, we provide fresh and healthy food at more than 70 sites across Dakota County!



Become a Grow Hope monthly supporter of The Open Door! Your support provides a steady and predictable source of revenue year-round. Sign up online at www.theopendoorpantry.org or by contacting Melissa Miller at 651-888-0630 or melissa.miller@theopendoorpantry.org.

MOBILE LUNCHBOX SERVES STUDENTS IN 26 NEIGHBORHOODS

Addition of 4th School District helped reach more neighborhoods than ever before

For 10 weeks this summer, teams of volunteers picked up meals from schools or restaurants, and drove them directly to neighborhoods across more of Dakota County than ever before.

Overall, our volunteers visited 26 neighborhoods across 4 school districts 5 days a week, taking the impact of our Mobile Lunchbox program further than ever before!

For the first time, the Mobile Lunchbox partnered with Independent School District 197, adding 7 new neighborhoods in West St. Paul. The addition of ISD 197 was welcomed not only by The Open Door but the district as well. "Food insecurity has been a major issue for many of our students and adversely impacted their lives. To have The Open Door invest so much in our community is a huge win." said an ISD 197 Staff Member. The Mobile Lunchbox program was able to serve over 10,000 meals in West St. Paul alone. In total, The Open Door delivered more than 45,000 meals to kids across School Districts 191, 194, 196 and 197 this summer!

Mobile Lunchbox Coordinator Katelyn Maddox was extremely proud of the recent season and grateful for the amount of support the program received from invested citizens all over Dakota County. Mobile Lunchbox's continued growth would not be possible without the community, especially our volunteers, who go out and form relationships with parents and students in a wide variety of neighborhoods each day as they deliver complete, healthy meals to students. "It's nice knowing that I was sending such awesome people out on the routes every day and trusting them to create those relationships with clients." Katelyn said.

Missed meals in the summer is the biggest issue facing kids in Dakota County, as our community leads the state in childhood hunger. Mobile Lunchbox helps alleviate childhood hunger at its source. By taking meals directly into low-income neighborhoods 5 days a week, The Open Door's Mobile Lunch Box program helps children in our communities grow stronger and healthier, preparing them to learn and succeed.

What does it take to deliver 45,000 meals?

VISITS TO 26 NEIGHBORHOODS



4 LOCAL RESTAURANT PARTNERS

6 SCHOOL KITCHENS PER DAY



139 VOLUNTEERS

2,653 VOLUNTEER HOURS



800 MEALS PER DAY

45,000 TOTAL MEALS DELIVERED



Volunteers for Mobile Lunchbox load up vans and deliver meals to low-income students in 26 neighborhoods, across 4 school districts, 5 days a week during the summer months.

The Mobile Lunch Box program is made possible with partnerships and support from:



GARDEN TO TABLE FLOURISHES IN 12TH GROWING SEASON

This summer, Garden to Table has had a banner season as more plots allowed more clients the opportunity to grow their own fresh and healthy food while getting outside and having the chance to meet and build relationships with those in their community! The program saw 274 plots filled by 858 gardeners, a record breaking number for the program! So far our gardeners have harvested over 17,262 pounds of fresh produce through September of this year!

Alpa, our Garden to Table Manager said, "What I love about our Garden to Table program is building relationships with clients and watching their growth over time while they learn how to garden and harvest food for their families."

Beyond helping people around the community grow their own healthy food, Alpa has enjoyed working with hundreds of people this summer and is proud of how much her clients have developed in their skills and their confidence as gardeners.



River Valley Church Volunteers helping tend to our garden plots



VOLUNTEERS GIVE MORE TO HELP THE OPEN DOOR HAVE IT'S BEST SUMMER YET



Volunteers at weekly Metcalf Distribution

Our Volunteers have always been the center of our mission at The Open Door and are the ones who make our work possible. From sorting food to tending gardens, collecting client data or delivering meals to kids, nothing we do happens without them. This summer, they outdid themselves, not just breaking their "hours donated record" in July (4,015) but then breaking it again in August (4,235)! In total, 750 of our volunteers donated 11,612 hours of their time to The Open Door this summer. Their donated time allowed us to grow our summer programs to be bigger than ever before!



Eagan Pantry Volunteers re-stocking shelves

ARE YOU OUR NEXT VOLUNTEER?

Volunteers are the heart of The Open Door! It takes 60 volunteers each day to keep our operations going. TOD has volunteer opportunities for everyone. Our volunteers stock shelves, shop with clients, help at large food distributions, and keep the Pantry in tip-top shape. Garden to Table volunteers weed plots, shovel mulch and share their garden know-how.

Volunteer with The Open Door: www.theopendoorpantry.org/volunteer

Thank you to our annual partners!

