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harvest

Fall 2021



Feeding the Next Generation of Leaders

“I’m so grateful that I can
count on receiving food.”

- Mariela, a graduate student who gets food
delivered through Healthy Waltham

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MEMBER OF
**FEEDING
AMERICA**



Dear Friends,

September is Hunger Action Month, Feeding America's inaugural call-to-action to mobilize support for hunger-relief organizations. This is a time when people all over America take action and stand against hunger.

Your donation has enabled the Greater Boston Food Bank to be not only an active participant but a **leader** in this national effort.

We continue to serve more households than any other time in the history of our organization, leveraging your generosity to turn efforts into outcomes. Because of you, we have been able to distribute the equivalent of around 2 million meals every single week.

At a time when hunger relief is critically important, I encourage you to continue making your voice heard. Anyone can make a difference by donating, volunteering, or raising awareness about hunger on social media. Every action counts, especially at a time when so many are at risk.

When you support the Greater Boston Food Bank, you are ensuring communities around us continue to not only survive—but thrive. A great example of your support is graduate student Mariela, who relied on deliveries of fresh fruits, vegetables, and protein to get through the pandemic. You can read her story in this issue.

You'll also read about creative ways our Community Impact and Acquisition and Distribution teams continue to meet the need, and learn just how far your dollar goes to providing healthy food to families in Eastern Massachusetts.

Thank you for your commitment to our mission. Together, we can end hunger here.

Gratefully,



Catherine D'Amato
President and CEO



Forty Years of Food



In 2021, the Greater Boston Food Bank commemorates our 40th anniversary. Learn more about our roots:

Kip Tiernan founded the Boston Food Pantry in 1974, modeling operations after the Chicago Food Depository. A couple of years later, we were legally incorporated as the Boston Food Bank in 1981.

In the 80's...

- We distributed 5 million pounds of food every year.
- We grew from serving 60 agencies to 300 agencies out of a 23,000 square foot warehouse at 70 Armory St.
- Our first transportation system was established with the purchase of a van and a semi-tractor trailer, and the donation of two refrigerated tractor-trailers.
- The Food Bank staff included 11 people: an executive director, an agency relations manager, a food solicitor, a volunteer coordinator, an administrative assistant, a coordinator, two truck drivers, two warehouse workers, and an associate for finance.

Now, in 2021, we are the Greater Boston Food Bank...

- We distribute 100 million pounds of healthy food, including high-nutrient produce and protein, to more than 600 partner agencies and direct distribution sites every year.
- We operate out of our 117,000-square-foot Yawkey Distribution Center at 70 South Bay Avenue, in the same South Boston neighborhood.
- GBFB's transportation system consists of over 10 tractor-trailers, 4 refrigerated trucks, and a fleet of miscellaneous donated vehicles thanks to partners across the state.
- Team GBFB has over 120 hard-working individuals who secure, store, transport, receive, distribute, sort, pack, talk about, and care about food.



This past year, GBFB distributed enough food across Eastern Massachusetts to make over 81 million meals.

It's because of you that we have been able to grow and continue to meet the need across our Eastern Massachusetts community. Thank you!

Learn more at:

[GBFB.org/about](https://www.gbfb.org/about)



Local university graduate student Mariela Martinez accepts a delivery from fellow Brandeis student Bola Lamidi outside her Waltham home.

Providing Healthy Meals to Students in Need

When Mariela moved to Massachusetts from Arizona to begin her master's degree in Public Policy at Brandeis University, the cold weather wasn't the only thing that shocked her—the high costs of living did, too.

Fortunately, thanks to your commitment, the Greater Boston Food Bank was there to help.

Mariela shares, “Being isolated during the pandemic with new expenses, like books, rent, and high-speed internet—winter was very rough for me. I'm so grateful that I could count on receiving food.”

Mariela is one of the graduate students of Brandeis University who participates in FRESH, Food & Resources for Equitable and Sustainable Health. This program works closely with Healthy Waltham, a GBFB partner agency, to provide hungry students with food. FRESH serves around 10% of the student population at Brandeis, and Mariela's one of 80 students who receives a package of fresh vegetables and non-perishable items delivered to her student housing.

“They're very intentional about providing healthy meals, I get cans of tuna and chicken, beans, fresh carrots, and cucumbers...” Mariela pauses, and then exclaims, “They even gave students turkey for the holidays! It's very thoughtful.”

Mariela spent Thanksgiving on-campus but was able to save up part-time earnings to travel home for Christmas break. “Christmas Eve is actually my birthday, so being able to afford the trip home and have tamales with my family was the best gift of all,” Mariela says with a smile.

“They're very intentional about providing healthy meals, it's appreciated.”

-Mariela

While studying full-time, Mariela works part-time on campus training student leaders on equitable, community-centered practices. “People think students are young and dependent on their parents. That's just not the case.” Mariela is right—nationally, the average age of a typical college student is 26 years old.

She continues, “The pandemic has changed a lot for students, but having access to food because there is a community of support surrounding us, knowing that places like Healthy Waltham and the Greater Boston Food Bank exist, it gives me strength.”

The “surviving-on-ramen” joke is getting old—and so is your average college student.

Support Local, Eat Local!

At the Greater Boston Food Bank, our community is vital. This includes you, the families we serve, partner agencies, and the local farmers growing fresh produce all across Massachusetts. Together, we can end hunger here.

Through the Massachusetts Emergency Food Assistance Program (MEFAP), GBFB gets funding through what is known as the Massachusetts Grown Initiative, also known as Mass Grown. This program gives low-income individuals access to fresh produce while simultaneously providing a market for local farmers.

For over 22 years, Mass Grown has re-invested MEFAP funds into the state's agricultural industry. It has also helped food banks maximize the nutritional value of their food.

With this funding, GBFB works closely with farms across the state, including the Pioneer Valley Growers Association (PVGA), a cooperative of farmers located in the Pioneer Valley of Western Massachusetts. Thanks to this group of small farmers, 1 million pounds of fresh, seasonal vegetables, like radishes, tomatoes, corn, zucchini, kale, swiss chard, and peppers, are purchased at the lowest cost to us, then distributed to our clients.

"Working with GBFB has positively impacted our farmers in more ways than one," Bill Barrington, Manager of PVG, shared. "It enables state funding to support small farming businesses, and we get the satisfaction that we're providing nutrient-rich food for people in need."

As GBFB continues to focus on the power of nutrition and increasing the volume of fresh produce, Mass Grown provides an incredible opportunity to source quality local products.

Group Gives Personal Meaning to Supporting GBFB Mission



Ellen (center, right) and her Adult B'Not Mitzvah class dedicated their event to helping their community. Starting a fundraiser for GBFB is easy, go to www.gbfb.org/get-involved to learn more!

After learning how much helping the community meant to each one of them, the six women quickly decided they would do something a little different for their class project and Ellen identified The Greater Boston Food Bank as a recipient of their donation.

"The power of healthy food has been a passion of mine for a long time."

-Ellen

"The power of healthy food has been a passion of mine for a long time," Ellen begins. "I was a special education teacher for 30 years. It was there that I saw firsthand the positive impact of a nutritious meal."

Now retired, Ellen has begun to explore several new endeavors, including joining five other women for an adult B'nai Mitzvah class under the guidance of Rabbi Leora Kling-Perkins. When COVID-19 hit, the group went virtual and relied on each other for support.

"The gift was part of a symbolic moment in our personal lives. B'not Mitzvahs were ceremonies that many of us didn't get the opportunity to do when we were younger for different reasons," Ellen shared.

Interest in the project grew, and soon the entire Temple Emunah community got involved! "We were thrilled to be able to use our event to highlight the need for good food, bring our community closer together in support, and raise critical funds for the Food Bank."

Connecting the Waltham Community to Food

Healthy Waltham began as a community coalition to help kids with healthy eating. When the pandemic started, the mission stayed the same—but the need changed.

“The food needs just exploded overnight, and we had to get more focused in that area.” Myriam Michel, Executive Director of Healthy Waltham, explained. “We didn’t know how, but we just did it. We did what needed to be done. If kids aren’t eating and if their parents aren’t eating, how are they supposed to succeed?”

Food is caring. Food is a leveler, a connector, and food has and will continue to strengthen our community.

Myriam and Maria DiMaggio, Operations Director, tapped into their community to find resources. Soon, they began operating a thriving pantry twice a month out of a church basement, serving 1,000 local families in need.

“That’s when we officially became a Greater Boston Food Bank partner agency.” Myriam explains, “It was amazing to have consistent access to high-quality food, and partners to help distribute it.”

In addition to the pantry, Healthy Waltham has been able to implement alternate models where they bring food out into neighborhoods in need with the help of the community. These partners include Brandeis University’s FRESH program for students facing food insecurity and Africano Waltham, which serves the growing Ugandan community in Waltham.



Steven with FRESH/Brandeis collects food from Healthy Waltham staff member Joe Previtera on the Brandeis loading dock on Thursday morning.



Healthy Waltham staff members Maria DiMaggio, center, and Myriam, right, stand with all the volunteers at St. Mary's Church Thursday morning.

When asked about continuing these food services after the pandemic, Myriam explains “We’re still exploring what the future holds. The country is beginning to open back up, but that doesn’t mean people aren’t backed up with bills. COVID-19 exasperated a lot of issues, and we have to care for our communities.” She continues, “But I’m confident.”



“It was amazing to have consistent access to high-quality food, and partners to help distribute it.”

-Myriam

“We’ve learned so much over the past year, and we’ve done miraculous things thanks to the support of the Greater Boston Food Bank. Food is caring. Food is a leveler, a connector, and food has and will continue to strengthen our community.”

HELP END HUNGER

Every dollar doubles

**to provide 4 meals
in September.**

September is Hunger Action Month—a month-long, nationwide movement to raise awareness about hunger and inspire our neighbors to take action to end hunger in their communities. You can make a difference every day by taking actions like donating, volunteering, sharing on social media, and advocating for food assistance. Together, we can end hunger one meal at a time.

**Learn more at
GBFB.org/HAM.**



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