



The Joy of Giving Back

“To be able to give back
... is rewarding”

—Barbara Surujbally, client and volunteer
at Roslindale Food Pantry, Boston



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Providing More Than Just Food to Meet the Need

Catherine's Message

Dear Friends,

For two and half years now, we've all faced a perfect storm: the impact of COVID, supply chain disruptions, inflation, high costs for food, fuel, and housing, and climate change, which is devastating the agriculture industry.

The consequences are shocking. In 2021, as many as 1 in 3 adults in Massachusetts experienced food insecurity. I thought the numbers would decline, but that hasn't happened. Instead, the number of individuals and families who rely on food pantries has grown from 32% to 46%.

At the same time, The Greater Boston Food Bank is also affected. Just as the number of people who need food is increasing, the cost for us to meet the demand is higher, too.

Yet, despite the challenges and the growing need, I have hope for one reason: people like you. Thanks to your generosity and compassion, your help has enabled us to help others by continuing to provide food to those who need it most in communities throughout Eastern Massachusetts.

Thank you for standing with us and all those we serve in these challenging times. For some people, it really is a matter of life and death.

Gratefully,



Catherine D'Amato
President and CEO



Volunteers like Wendy Meigs help GBFB partner agency The Salem Food Pantry meet the needs of an increasing number of people in Salem at the at the Espacio Mobile Market. Photo by Kim Indresano Photography.

Food insecurity in the greater Salem area is growing, says Robyn Burns, Executive Director of The Salem Pantry. "Before COVID, there was already a chronic unmet need," she says. "When COVID hit, we saw a huge spike. In January 2020 we served 262 households, including 589 individuals. Today, we're serving 1,250 families, about 3,000 individuals monthly."

Most people who come to the pantry are low income and nearly 60% are Spanish speaking. "Thanks to grants from The Greater Boston Food Bank (GBFB), we were able to increase capacity by building out a storage warehouse with freezers and coolers to meet the growing demand," Robyn says.

"We distribute food through our mobile market program and partnerships with other social service agencies," Robyn says. "We work with Salem Public Schools and Salem State University, which is our biggest distribution point." Salem State is part of the Hunger-Free Campus Coalition, led by GBFB, formed in 2019 to address food insecurity among high-need populations enrolled in Massachusetts public colleges and universities.

The Salem Pantry provides more than food. "In the early days of COVID, hospitals and health centers asked to set up with us to provide additional resources," Robyn says. "We're creating a community marketplace for our clients."

The food distributed from The Salem Pantry comes largely from GBFB, local and regional farms, and community food donations. But Robyn says cash donations are critical.

"Donors who support us and GBFB are making a difference for individuals and families throughout Salem, the Greater North Shore, Boston, and beyond. Their support can be transformative for someone struggling with food insecurity."

Learn more at:

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



Barbara Surujbally volunteers at the Roslindale Food Pantry every weekend with her family. The food pantry is open most Saturdays from 2 to 4 pm, and distributes boxes of food to those in need living in Roslindale and Hyde Park.

How One Food Pantry Client is Giving Back

Barbara Surujbally knows well how critical food pantries are to a family. Growing up, her mother fostered up to 10 children at any one time. To help feed their bustling home, she and her siblings depended on the Roslindale Food Pantry.

Today, Barbara is a young stay-at-home mother with a 1-year-old son, and she, too, depends on the Roslindale Food Pantry to make ends meet—and she also serves as a volunteer.

“To be able to give back as a volunteer, to the people in my community who have given so much to me, is rewarding,” Barbara says. Barbara volunteers up to 25

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client and volunteer at the Roslindale Food Pantry



Boxes of food are staged on the front porch of the Roslindale Congregational Church to distribute to residents each week.

hours a week for the Roslindale Food Pantry. “Basically, I do anything and everything that the food pantry needs done,” she says.

Barbara adds that seeing the value of the food pantry from both sides, as a client and a volunteer, is eye opening. “I know the impact it’s had on my life,” she says. “As a volunteer I see the impact it has on others. It feels good when you see the gratitude and appreciation people have when they pick their food up here.”

Seasonal Bounty from Local Farmers Provides Fresh Produce to People in Need

For nearly 25 years, The Greater Boston Food Bank (GBFB) has had a commitment to provide fresh fruits and vegetables, which often tend to be more expensive, to individuals and families in need. Thanks to the generosity of our donors, GBFB purchases millions of dollars worth of nutritious produce, and a statewide program called the Massachusetts Emergency Food Assistance Program (MEFAP) which supports MassGrown farmers, GBFB has grown its produce distribution to nearly 30% this year!



One of GBFB's largest MassGrown farm partners is the Pioneer Valley Growers Association (PVGA), a cooperative of over two dozen local farmers located in the Pioneer Valley of Western Massachusetts. Each year local farmers sell, at the lowest cost to GBFB, nearly 1 million pounds of fresh vegetables. The fall season brings hardy options like radishes, tomatoes, radishes, tomatoes, corn, zucchini, kale, swiss chard, and peppers, which are then distributed to our clients in need.

"Every off-season, we sit down with the team at GBFB to determine what they want us to plant and grow, what works best and what doesn't," says Bill Barrington, general manager for the PVGA.

"I like supporting the mission of GBFB and knowing that we're part of a community-based program that's helping people all around Eastern Massachusetts," Bill says. "Working with GBFB has also positively impacted our farmers in more ways than one. 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."

Elevating Voices for the White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health

The White House is holding a National Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health, with the goal of ending hunger, increasing healthy eating and physical activity by 2030.

"The last conference of this nature, held in 1969, was historic in its impact and established, harmonized, and expanded much of the U.S. food policy framework that is still in place today," said Catherine Lynn, VP of Communications and Public Affairs. "We have an incredible opportunity in the aftermath of the pandemic to leverage lessons learned and advance efficient and equitable food policy priorities for future generations."

This summer in an effort to engage and elevate the voices of our community, GBFB hosted two virtual discussions, collected video testimony submissions and online forms in English and Spanish to hear feedback, experiences, and anti-hunger policy recommendations from our partner agencies and clients. These valuable insights were captured in a formal comment sent on behalf of Eastern Massachusetts from GBFB in July.

"We need to remove the shame and stigma that surrounds people experiencing food insecurity. I want to see more people with lived experience of navigating complicated social service systems making the decisions in leadership in food access initiatives," said one participating pantry client and volunteer from Medford.



GBFB also participated in convenings hosted by a variety of stakeholders locally and nationally to share our collective recommendations, and Catherine D'Amato, President and CEO of GBFB, participated in a Task Force convening in Washington, DC.

Perfect Hunger Storm

This pandemic is unprecedented in our 40-year history. Food insecurity is still well above pre-pandemic levels—many of our neighbors are struggling. Historic inflation and consequences of the pandemic have made it harder for families to access enough to eat.

“We’re seeing a 50% increase in clients as compared to January 2021.”

—Susan Dietrich, Medway Village Church Food Pantry

Our partner agencies are reporting a dramatic increase in need. Susan Dietrich, Executive Director at the Medway Village Church Food Pantry, said, “We have new clients every week and we are seeing many former clients returning, all driven by the cost of living. January of 2022 was the busiest month in our 20 years of operation. We’re seeing a 50% increase in clients as compared to January 2021.”

GBFB’s second statewide food access study released in June called *Opportunities to Improve Food Equity and Access in Massachusetts** confirmed the demand is greater than we imagined—as many as 1 in 3 adults in Eastern Massachusetts experienced food insecurity at some point in 2021. The report revealed staggering data about our

most vulnerable communities. Populations with the highest rates of food insecurity include Latinx (61%), Black (53%), LGBTQ+ (51%), and Households with Children (40%).

GBFB is not immune to inflation. We purchase 70% of the food we distribute and are seeing an overall 15% increase in average food pricing compared to last year.

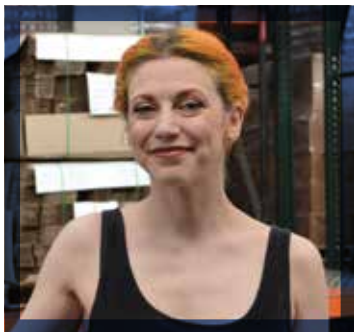
GBFB provides our network with nearly 80% of the food distributed to those in need. Through your donations, you



can make our impact go further. Help us help others as we continue to work to end hunger in Eastern Massachusetts.

*The full *Opportunities to Improve Food Equity and Access in Massachusetts, June 2022*, can be found [here, gbfb.org/data](https://gbfb.org/data)

The More You Do, The More it Feeds Your Soul



“Volunteering is something that the more you do, the more it feeds your soul,” Haley says. “The more you do, the more you want to do, because you feel part of something bigger than just yourself.”

Over the past year, Haley has volunteered up to four days a week at GBFB, sorting and packing food, or serving clients at one of our mobile markets.

Haley discovered the value of volunteering as a child, when her mother took her to help at various nonprofits. In 2021, when she was a student in grad school, she decided to get involved again.

“I was still in grad school, so I didn’t have extra funds to donate to causes,” she says. “But I had my time.” She

decided to volunteer for GBFB because “I think food is one of the most important things.”

“I love it,” she adds. “Not only do I get to see the impact I’m making, I get to meet so many people I wouldn’t normally get to.”

She encourages others to get involved. “Just sign up for a shift,” she says. “You’ll be surprised how fun it is!”

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—Haley Forest on volunteering at GBFB

HELP END HUNGER HERE

Every dollar doubles

**through the end
of September.**

September is Hunger Action Month—a 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 donating, volunteering, through social media, and advocating for food assistance.

September 30th is the end of our Growing Healthy Futures campaign. Every dollar you donate will be matched by our campaign sponsor MathWorks! Your donations help to distribute healthy meals to students and families facing hunger so they can continue to grow, learn and thrive.

Together, we can end hunger one meal at a time.

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

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