



# harvest

Spring 2023

## A Light in Chelsea

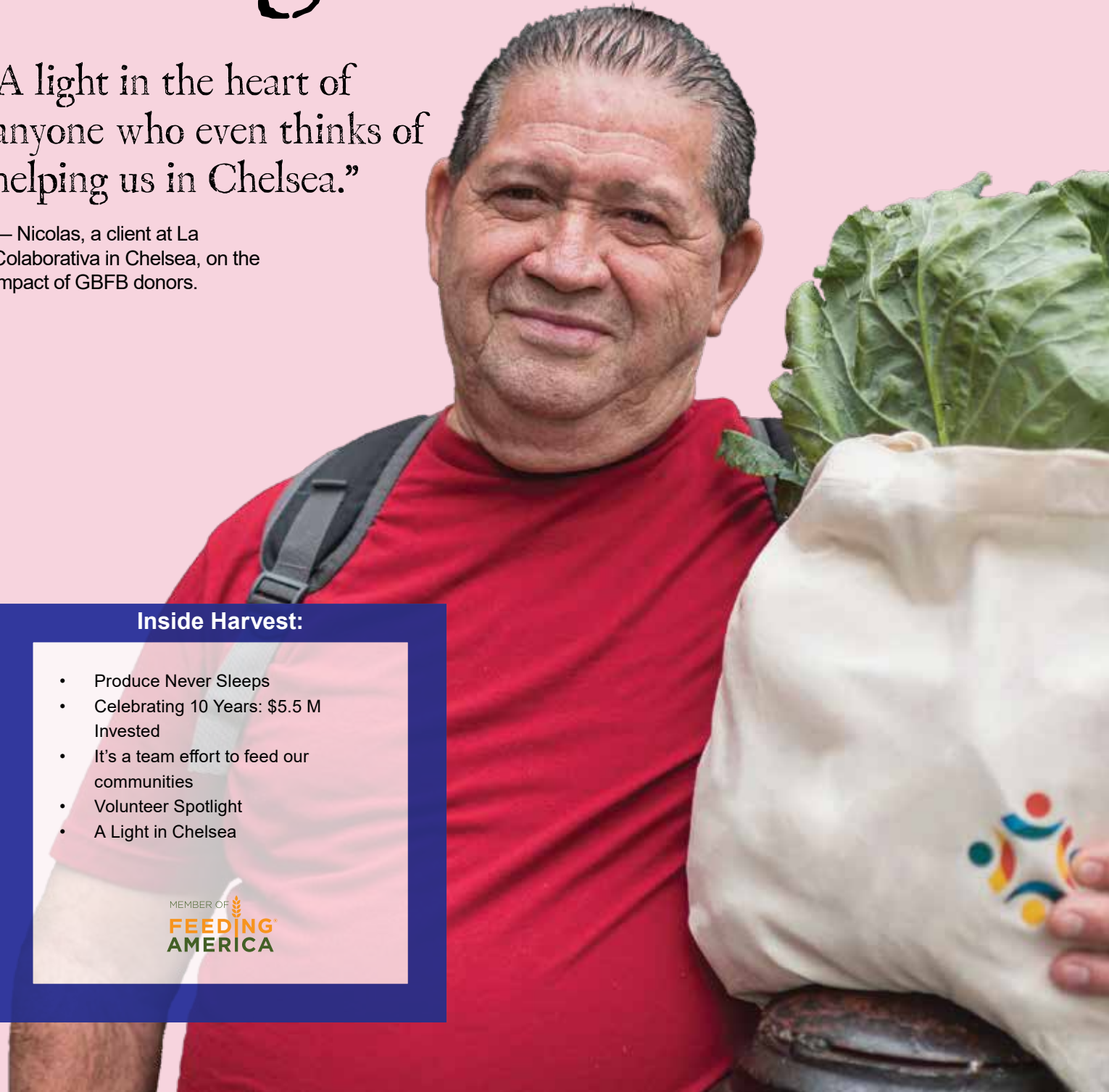
“A light in the heart of anyone who even thinks of helping us in Chelsea.”

— Nicolas, a client at La Colaborativa in Chelsea, on the impact of GBFB donors.

### Inside Harvest:

- Produce Never Sleeps
- Celebrating 10 Years: \$5.5 M Invested
- It's a team effort to feed our communities
- Volunteer Spotlight
- A Light in Chelsea

MEMBER OF  
**FEEDING  
AMERICA**



Dear Friends,

We believe that access to healthy food is a human right, and it is how we build healthier communities, where our neighbors can thrive.

Neighbors like, Nicolas, who rely on their local food pantry to provide fruits, vegetables, and cultural favorites like Maseca. Area food pantries, like the one that serves him, rely heavily on us for the food to feed their communities.

As we continue to see the impact of inflation and the prohibitive cost of food here, we estimate that 1 in 3 adults face food insecurity.

Our response is to support our community partners. As you will read in this issue, we have made a significant investment in more than 300 partners to increase their capacity to serve more clients and distribute more perishable, healthy food.

By working closely with this network, we distributed ninety million meals last year alone. On average, serving more than 600,000 people per month.

We are grateful to them and the local MA growers who provide the fresh produce that our clients need most—to stay healthy. And finally, we are so thankful for our army of volunteers, like Alex, who show up to help.

Together, we can end hunger here.



Catherine D'Amato  
(she/her)  
President and CEO



## Produce Never Sleeps

Good food is good health, and of the desired items on any given shopping list, fresh produce arguably sits at the top—the food our clients need most to stay healthy.

With the intersection of nutrition, hunger, and health shaping GBFB's strategy—the acquisition of fresh produce has taken on a leading role. Today, over 60 percent of the food distributed by GBFB is fresh produce, protein, or dairy products. Of the total pounds of food distributed in FY22, fresh produce accounted for 31.7 million of them.

That focus is supported in part by the Massachusetts Department of Agriculture's 'MassGrown Initiative', which connects the state's farmers to buyers such as GBFB. With the Massachusetts Emergency Food Assistance Program (MEFAP) underwriting some of the costs, we also relied on the support of our donors to purchase more than 30 percent of the produce last year. The result is more fresh fruits and vegetables distributed by our network of 600 partners across Eastern Massachusetts, from as many as 23 Massachusetts farms. And it's growing. Russ MacPhail, GBFB produce acquisition manager says they added 10 new farms last year, and plan to add another 10 this year.



*Honey Pot Farm in Hatfield, Massachusetts sells 35% of the farm's annual production—including plenty of peppers—directly to GBFB.*

Honey Pot Farm of Hatfield—150 acres nestled up against the western side of the Connecticut River—is one example. Managed by Greg Zgodnik, a fifth-generation farmer on his mother's side, Honey Pot has been supplying GBFB for five years with 30 different kinds of vegetables, starting with asparagus (spring) and finishing with parsnips (winter). And peppers—lots of peppers—to address the growing demand for preferred healthy food. These days, Greg estimates, he sells fully 35 percent of the farm's annual production—of everything—to GBFB.

He stops for a minute when he says that, reflecting on its weight. "They move a lot of fresh produce," he says of GBFB. "I'm shocked how much they move." And best of all, he adds, efficiently and in a timely manner, because "Produce never sleeps."

"They're a key piece of this farm," he says of GBFB. "I wouldn't want to imagine life without them. I can't say enough about them. They're that good."

Learn more at:

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

# Celebrating 10 Years: \$5.5 Million Invested into the Eastern Massachusetts Community

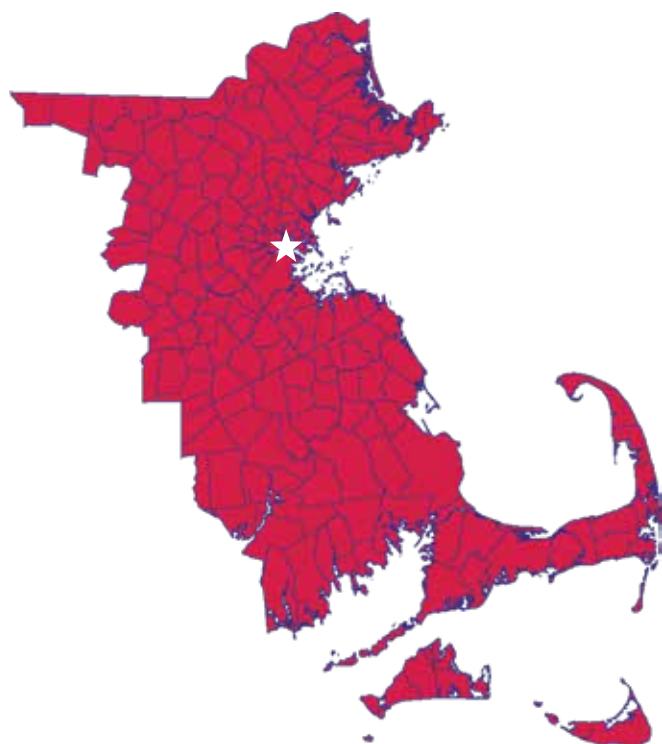
In the 10 short years since we introduced our Community Investment Grant Program, GBFB has invested \$5.5 million in our partners. These resources were an intentional strategy to help increase the capacity across Eastern Massachusetts to serve more clients, distribute more food—including more perishable and healthy food—and to assist underserved communities where hunger relief resources are either unavailable or unable to meet the need.

Since we launched the program in 2013, grant funding has grown annually from \$20,000 to more than \$850,000, with grants made to agencies in 136 communities, and every county in Eastern Massachusetts.

Over the years, grant categories and priorities have evolved with our network's needs. In FY21, we added service to communities of color as a grant priority. In FY22, we introduced organizational funding, which allowed agencies to apply for one-time funding for new operational costs. More recently, we added additional priorities to the grant-consideration process—service to communities disproportionately impacted by food insecurity, inclusion of client voice, and demonstration of community engagement.

And this past holiday season we also offered, for the first time, \$2,000 in direct funding to all 600 agencies to use however they saw fit.

See how one of our partners, Project Just Because, put GBFB Community Investment funding to use.



## 10 Years and...



Nearly **300**  
Partners funded

Grants awarded to  
agencies in **136**  
communities



**200** grants used  
for refrigeration and  
perishable storage

**85** grants used for  
nonperishable equipment  
and renovations



**51** vehicles  
purchased

**17** grants used to  
enhance technology



**11** grants used for  
kitchen equipment

## Project Just Because

An unassuming name, a location in Hopkinton—and the caring demeanor of founder and CEO Cherylann Lambert Walsh started Project Just Because (PJB) from humble beginnings.

“It’s a team effort to feed our communities.”

—Cherylann

Launched from Walsh’s basement three decades ago, PJB today serves 810 families per week. “When families come to our pantry, it’s not just a visit,” Walsh explains, “We are meeting a very real, basic necessity.”

The basement quickly proved too small to meet the growing need, as did their next site. Now in their new ‘forever home’—PJB applied a \$35,000 Community Investment Grant from GBFB to install a new rack system and forklift. It increased their vertical storage capacity, enabling them to accept more food—between 20–30 pallets per week thanks to the wonderful racking system that the GBFB grant helped to fund. In turn, expanding food choices and providing more nutritious and culturally relevant food.



“We provide a dignified, shopping experience,” she says. “They come in, grab a grocery cart and shop for what they need. When a family comes here, they may also pick up snacks. That’s important, too. When that child goes to school and the teacher says, ‘It’s snack time,’ they can participate, and belong.”

“The investment [grant] by GBFB and the resources they regularly share...is a gift,” Walsh explains. “It’s a team effort to feed our communities.”

## Volunteer Spotlight: Alexander Tavares



*Alex Tavares has been volunteering at the GBFB warehouse since 2019, often taking multiple shifts a week between flying for JetBlue.*

Even among the 7,500 volunteers who generously gave their time at GBFB last year, some individuals just stand out.

Alex Tavares, 31, of East Boston, is one. Tavares, first introduced to GBFB in 2019, has become one of our go-to volunteers, says Patrick Monfort, GBFB’s Senior Manager of Community Engagement.

“Seeing the amount of work GBFB does and knowing it has a huge impact—it’s nice to be part of that.”

—Alex

If a volunteer shift or group cancels at the last minute, Monfort explains, “Alex just jumps in and signs up for the shift, which has saved us on many, many occasions. He knows how the shift works and he can help train the other volunteers.”

He can, implies Monfort, do just about anything.

As a pilot for JetBlue who is on call with 12 hours’ notice, Alex’s schedule requires flexibility. Typically, you can find him at the food bank two or three days a week. There are weeks he cannot make it at all due to his schedule; at other times, he will be working shifts in the warehouse for five straight days.

After every volunteer shift, GBFB staff will share with the volunteers the number of families that we will feed because of their work that day. “I love that,” Alex says. “Seeing the amount of work GBFB does and knowing it has a huge impact—it’s nice to be part of that.”



*La Colaborativa distributes food to over 3,000 families in Chelsea every Wednesday and Friday. They anticipate opening their Survival Center at 63 Sixth Street later in 2023, which will host their food pantry and other programs. Photo courtesy of Hortencia Sanchez*

## A light in Chelsea

It has been no less than 35 years since Nicolas Tejada left behind his house and life in Chalatenango, El Salvador, for the United States, yet he shivers even now from flashbacks of violence and war—grainy images of cruelty and loss that have come to define his home country.

“God put a light in the heart of whoever started this pantry. A light in the heart of anyone who even thinks of helping us in Chelsea.”

—Nicolas

When he arrived in Boston in 1988, it was much easier than it is today to find work and get established, he says. He began by packing chocolates, and subsequently took various janitorial positions. Eventually, he was working 70 hours a week for a cleaning service and property-management company. With steady and reliable work, he was building a new life.

But now, at 69 and living alone, Nicolas struggles in retirement. His sole income is the \$800 he receives each month in social security, which must cover all his expenses—electricity, gas, cable TV, and more. In the face of daunting inflation, food has become a luxury.

Fortunately, he says, his local food pantry, GBFB partner La Colaborativa, in Chelsea, has proved a blessing. He depends on them for everything from fruit and vegetables to meat and rice. Even better, he adds, the pantry offers cultural staples, such as Maseca—maize flour to make the tortillas and other foods popular with Salvadoreans.

He is so appreciative of the pantry’s work that he has become, one of its most steadfast volunteers. Waiting in line one day last year, he looked around and realized they needed help. Without asking questions, he jumped out of line and began distributing food. After everyone finished cleaning up, he asked if he could come back again. “Everybody said yes,” he said. “And that was it.”

“God put a light in the heart of whoever started this pantry,” Nicolas says, adding—“a light in the heart of anyone who even thinks of helping us in Chelsea.”

# FreshFest

Wednesday, May 17, 2023  
6:00 – 9:00 P.M.  
High Street Place  
100 High Street, Boston MA

After a four-year hiatus, we're thrilled to bring back our signature event! Please join us for a memorable evening of delicious food, cocktails, networking, and fun as we reconnect in person. Let's celebrate our partnership and commitment to providing fresh, nutritious food to those in need, and raise funds to help us feed our neighbors across Eastern Massachusetts.

Join us:



[GBFB.org/FreshFest](https://GBFB.org/FreshFest)

