



harvest

Fall 2023

GBFB: A Beacon of Hope

“Those who can’t make ends meet need the pantry.”

—Maritza, a client and volunteer at La Colaborativa in Chelsea.

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MEMBER OF
**FEEDING
AMERICA**



Dear Friends,

Our neighbors need your help. The data from our recent Food Equity and Access report shows that **1 in 3** households continue to experience food insecurity. Inflation, the prohibitive cost of food and the end of federal benefits demonstrate the overlapping emergencies that continue to drive historic food insecurity.

We hear it from our partners, who are seeing an uptick in the numbers they are serving. And we're hearing it from their clients, people like Maritza, who find it hard to cover bills and have money left for food.

That's why we continue to listen to our partners to understand what they are seeing on the front lines and it's why we continue to invest in partners, like PACE, Inc., through our Community Investment Grants. Just recently, we awarded nearly \$1 million to 38 partners to further support infrastructure and capacity building initiatives. It's also why we are listening to and testing various foods requested by the network to ensure we are meeting the cultural needs of our clients.

We are grateful to our partners as well as donors like MFS Investment Management and volunteers like J.T. and Fred, for helping us to get food into the community. We all play a role in ending hunger. Please join us.

Gratefully,



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



We'll Give You What You Want

GBFB's Community Investment Grants Program has helped strengthen GBFB's network of partners in 136 cities and towns for the last decade. Among those recipients is GBFB partner PACE, Inc., whose food program serves 800 to 1,000 people a week in the Greater New Bedford area.

Founded in 1982, PACE—short for People Acting in Community Endeavors—runs more than 10 programs tackling challenges faced by people with low income. A recipient of GBFB grants since 2019, it has applied the funding to infrastructure upgrades—a refrigerated truck, pallet jacks, and most recently—building renovations to support a new food distribution model—helping them to distribute more food and serve more clients.



PACE has been helping the Greater New Bedford community since 1982 in many ways, including operating its new Community Food Center on New Bedford's Park Street, open Monday through Friday. Photo courtesy of PACE staff.

We chose, perhaps, the worst—or best—day to catch up with Executive Director Pam Kuechler and Kathleen Golden, Director of Development and Marketing. Just that morning, PACE had opened their brand-new pantry, years in the making. During the transition they moved to a grocery-style pantry, which we often refer to as client choice. “Previously, we just gave bags,” she explains. “Our patrons were so grateful to see this beautiful space that we spent two years getting ready for them.”

Better yet, she adds, “It really helps us to stretch the food, because people will be picking out things they want.” She reflects for a moment.

“It sends a message,” she says. “We'll give you what you want.”

At PACE, Keuchler reports, GBFB has played a “critical role” through its support. “We had to ramp up, finding better space for our food pantry where we could better serve more people in a more dignified way.”

“It's really had a huge impact.”

Learn more at:

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



Maritza Flores is both a client and a volunteer of Chelsea's La Colaborativa. Among other services to the Chelsea community, La Colaborativa distributes food to over 3,000 families each week from its distribution site at 63 Sixth Street.

Making Ends Meet

For refugees from El Salvador, such as Maritza Flores, 41, the refrain is all too common: violence and political instability prompting families like hers to look for safety and peace. Maritza, her husband, and daughter did just that, ultimately finding refuge in East Boston in 2017.

*It's for everyone who needs it.
The help is critical. People are
benefiting from it.*

—Maritza

It was a challenge. Navigating a new country, a new culture; living in a friend's basement until her husband found work; suffering an accident at a local park where she fractured her knees and required surgery on both... She admits she got a little depressed. Her husband's job

enabled them to move out of the basement to a small apartment, but the \$2500 monthly rent often left them with only \$200. What can \$200 buy, she asks? And where, she wondered, was that shining beacon of hope they'd imagined when they first considered this journey?

But as she recuperated from surgery, she was able to leave the house and explore. She grew more confident and learned the city's bus routes. Eventually she discovered the food pantry at La Colaborativa in Chelsea. "Before that, it was difficult," she recalls. "Imagine coming home to an empty fridge. It's stressful. But now I can put food on the table. My husband and daughter are happy."

But it's not just about the food, she adds. Her volunteer work for the pantry has engaged and energized her, drawing her out of her sadness. "Privileged" is one word she now uses to describe herself. "Happy," too. She is part of the community.

"It's not just for me," she says of the donations that power the pantry's work. "It's for everyone who needs it. The help is critical. People are benefiting from it. Those who can't make ends meet need the pantry."

MFS Investment Management: “Why Would We Not Do This?”

GBFB enjoys a longstanding relationship with one of its most supportive partners, MFS Investment Management. We are grateful for their shared commitment to ending hunger here in Eastern Massachusetts through financial support and volunteerism.

Corporate citizenship is rooted in the culture of MFS, and centered around the pillars of health, education, self-sufficiency, and civic engagement. Bill Adams, Chief Investment Officer for Global Fixed Income, and Maureen Bryan, Director of Corporate Citizenship, lead those initiatives—of which GBFB is a beneficiary. Most recently, MFS sponsored GBFB’s 2023 FreshFest, as well as its 2022 Women Fighting Hunger breakfast. Total financial giving to GBFB over the years has resulted in more than 1.2 million healthy meals, and that does not include total hours spent volunteering.

Adams not only serves as a champion of GBFB within MFS, but also sits on GBFB’s Board of Advisors. He and his wife, Margaret, personally give to GBFB, and with others from MFS often volunteer in the warehouse. “This may sound trite,” Adams admits, “but it’s easy to write a check. What’s hard is creating a commitment around one’s most valuable resource, and that’s time.”

“We have two top priorities,” explains Bryan. “Support our communities and encourage our employees to engage with amazing organizations, like GBFB.” MFS promotes volunteerism and offers opportunities at GBFB on a quarterly basis. Employees earn rewards for their community service hours that can be used for charitable donations.

“We work in a business where you’re not dealing with the tangible,” Bryan continues. “You’re helping people to fulfill their goals. But at the end of the day, when you come to GBFB you can tangibly say, ‘I packed 360 boxes, I helped serve 9,000 healthy meals.’”

And there is a business benefit, too. “We recognize that our colleagues are our most important asset,” Adams explains. “Doing things like going to the food bank together actually brings us closer and makes us better colleagues,” Bryan adds, “and helps us get our work done more efficiently because we now have a deeper connection with one another.”

The challenge, as always, lies in finding the right partner. “There are a lot of organizations that do incredible work but do they do it well?” asks Bryan. “Do they do it in a way that makes you feel like they are stewards of our philanthropic dollars? Are we making a worthwhile investment in our community? I feel that, with GBFB, the answer is absolutely ‘yes’ on every count.”

Click ‘N Cook® Recipe



Soy-Glazed Cod and Bok Choy

Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon honey
- 2 tablespoons low sodium soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
- 4 6-ounce skinless cod fillets
- 1 tablespoon canola oil
- 3 cloves garlic finely chopped
- 4 scallions thinly sliced
- 1 small red chile thinly sliced
- 1 inch piece ginger peeled and grated
- 3 large bok choy (or 1 head cabbage, sliced)

Directions

1. Position oven rack 6 inches from broiler and heat broiler.
2. In small microwave-safe bowl, whisk together honey, soy sauce and balsamic vinegar. Microwave until slightly thickened, 60 to 90 seconds.
3. Pat cod filets dry and season with ¼ teaspoon salt and ½ teaspoon pepper. Spoon half of the glaze over cod and brush to coat. Broil until cod is opaque throughout, 6 to 7 minutes. Spoon remaining glaze over the top.
4. Meanwhile, heat oil in a large skillet over medium-high. Add garlic, scallions, chile and ginger and cook, tossing for 30 seconds. Add bok choy or cabbage and ¼ teaspoon salt. Cover and cook for 2 minutes.
5. Uncover and cook, tossing, until the bok choy or cabbage is tender, 3 to 4 minutes more (adding 1 to 2 tablespoons water if necessary). Serve with glazed cod.

For more healthy recipes,
visit clickncook.org.

Culturally Responsive? So Far, the Data Says Yes

At GBFB, we're committed to addressing equity in food access through policy, partnerships, and providing nutritious and culturally preferred food across Eastern Massachusetts. That's why we continue to listen to our network of agency partners to understand and respond to their clients' needs and preferences.

Building upon data we collected in our statewide study, GBFB recently conducted a food preferences survey with our network of community partners. The survey, distributed in late March to early April 2023, sought to understand dietary factors, physical limitations, and cultural and seasonal preferences.



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The study illuminated a variety of requested food preferences, including bok choy, plantains, yuca root, and masa corn flour. Based on that feedback, GBFB began acquiring increasing quantities of yuca root and masa flour. We then carefully mapped the location of our partners' orders against Census 2020 demographic data to analyze whether these foods were reaching the intended communities—with promising results.

This survey provided GBFB with valuable insights into clients' needs and preferences and will help to guide our food acquisition and distribution. By understanding dietary factors, physical limitations, and cultural preferences, GBFB and our partner agencies can further tailor food distribution to meet the unique needs of individuals facing food insecurity.

“Why Don't We Make It a Regular Thing?”



Fred (left) and J.T. (right) have been volunteering together at GBFB twice a week for almost five years.

Volunteers Fred Langa of Malden and James (J.T.) Thomas of Newton came to GBFB via different routes, but it did not take long to find, through their work together on the shipping dock, both similarities and synergy. “We talked and said, ‘Why don't we make it a regular thing, on Tuesdays and Thursdays?’,” J.T. remembers. And so, they have, for nearly five years.

“We're the intermediary between the professional shippers on the fork trucks and pallet riders, and the agencies who are coming in smaller vehicles that can't be loaded mechanically,” Fred explains. The pair focuses on hand loads, breaking down pallets and passing the food to others on the dock. It's one of the most physical of volunteer roles at GBFB, and J.T. admits with a laugh that “...our sanity has been questioned a couple of times.” But he quickly adds, “It's a genuine community, with good people. We enjoy our relationship with the GBFB team and the agency partners we have come to know over time. They're family.”

It's a genuine community, with good people... They're family.

—James (J.T.) Thomas

“It's good exercise, while doing good,” Fred says. “It's a win-win. Give it a try. Take a volunteer shift.”

HELP END HUNGER HERE

Every action counts.

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.

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

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



Hunger Action Month | **FEEDING AMERICA**