

We work to

fill unmet

needs to build

a thriving,

connected

food

system...

2022

Community

FarmShare

Impact

Report



...supporting families, farmers and our earth.



Background

To address these inter-related food systems issues, Community FarmShare serves as a community centered grass-roots organization, focused on families and local farmers. Our community focused goal is to meet the nutrition security needs of residents in vulnerable communities. We do this with each bag of fresh produce delivered, by investing in the local farmers and paying a fair price for their hard work, their unique skills, their dedication to grow our food — to grow our health.

In this way, we work through a systems lens — linking existing resources together at all levels to co-create a more connected food system that works better for residents, for food producers, for ecology.

While the current challenges facing families, farmers and our planet are certainly daunting, we invite you to take steps with us to make a difference and address needs that communities face today.

Families

Key Challenges Faced by Communities



Access: Healthy Food Barriers

- A high number of Montgomery County residents continue to face nutrition insecurity.
- Due to inflation and supply chain disruptions, higher food prices (particularly for fresh produce) squeeze families' budgets and limit access to healthy food choices.
- The decrease in SNAP benefits has reduced available food support resources.

Equity: Food Disparities

- “Food deserts”, or more accurately, the “food apartheid” results in healthy food options not being available in many communities of color. The “grocery store gap”, which refers to the number and quality of grocery stores present in communities of color, reduces low-income residents' ability to use SNAP and WIC benefits, and causes increased reliance on unhealthy food choices at corner convenience stores.

Health: The Epidemic of Diet Related Chronic Disease

- 7% of Montgomery County adult residents suffer from diabetes and many more face the health challenges of hypertension, obesity and heart disease.
- Communities of color face higher rates of diet related chronic disease.
- Unmanaged diet related chronic disease leads to higher healthcare costs for families, creating difficult choices between food, rent, and other critical needs.

Our Programs... Addressing Unmet Needs

Community FarmShare's programs address community needs by leveraging existing structures and programs through partnerships with community-based organizations, clinics and schools.

We listened to community voices... and what we overwhelmingly heard was how HEALTHY people felt after eating so well all season — how good everything tasted, and how much nutrient dense produce access actually matters to people's health. Our response to this feedback was to deepen our healthy food access priorities by focusing on a Food Is Medicine approach with our communities and schools programs.

Food is Medicine Program



What is Food is Medicine?

Poor diet, exacerbated by food insecurity, is now the leading cause of death and disease in the United States and is linked to \$50 Billion in US healthcare costs. Individuals with low incomes and those dealing with food insecurity can be especially at risk for poor nutrition, due to additional

factors associated with inadequate household resources as well as under-resourced communities. Food is Medicine approaches such as medically tailored meals and produce prescription programs have become increasingly powerful and cost-effective interventions to prevent and treat diet-related chronic conditions, improve household food security, and address health disparities. Produce Prescription programs typically include two components: fresh produce access and nutrition and diet related chronic disease management classes which lead to improved outcomes when linked together.

How our Food is Medicine Program Strengthens Communities:

- Weekly fresh produce: Through our community clinic and hospital partners, primary care providers provide produce prescriptions for patients experiencing nutrition insecurity and who are diagnosed with or at risk of diet related chronic disease. Community FarmShare then packs and delivers the weekly culturally valued farm produce for 24 weeks of the growing season to our program participants and partner organizations.
- Nutrition education: Patients enrolled in the Food Is Medicine program receive nutrition, healthy lifestyle and diet related disease management education to support patients' long-term ability to manage their health. These health and nutrition courses are carried out in coordination with community health partners serving low income uninsured community residents.
- Program outcome and evaluation: Primary care providers measure diet related chronic disease indicators (A1c, BMI and blood pressure) at the start and end of the program to measure outcomes (and program evaluation) and offer follow up health plans for participants.

Farm to School Program

What is Farm to School?

Our Farm to School program links fresh produce from Montgomery County farms directly to children and families in MCPS schools who lack access to nutrient dense healthy food options as part of the County's efforts to end childhood hunger. Through the support of the Montgomery County Council and all of our generous donors and funders, 400 Montgomery County Public School families will benefit from healthy, nutrient dense, fresh produce in 2023 through our partnership with Community Schools and Linkages to Learning.



How our Farm to School Program Strengthens Communities:

- Ensure that families with school children have the opportunity to eat healthy foods on a consistent, weekly basis, reducing food and nutrition insecurity
- Eating healthy promotes better learning, better school performance and lower stress within families
- Consistent fresh produce access helps develop lifelong healthy eating habits, starting

at a young age. Home deliveries enable families to prepare these foods in the way their children will enjoy.

- Through our partnerships with Community Schools and Linkages to Learning, we support these established programs to deepen community outreach through health food access opportunities.

Meet Ms. Rivas



Ms Rivas arrived in the U.S. with her two children three years ago. She works two part time jobs and takes English conversation classes at the library.

When Debbie, our Community FarmShare volunteer, first saw Ms. Rivas when delivering the produce bags, she was reserved, with a shy, maybe unsure smile when she opened the door. Soon, Debbie's welcoming broad smile contagiously spread to Ms. Rivas and shortly after, the kids came, with smiles too, to the

door to meet Debbie.

Through this trust and connection Debbie learned their story — of leaving Honduras under a difficult situation. They made their way to Montgomery County, where they have relatives in Silver Spring; she found work and got her kids into school.

But over the next two years, her rent increased and she found herself having to make very difficult choices — either buy healthy, but more expensive food, or save every dollar possible to stay in their apartment. Back in Honduras, their family bought fresh food at the village market every day; now, the shift to the Standard American Diet (a.k.a , “the SAD” diet) of low-cost, processed convenience foods has led to her pre-diabetes condition.



Farmers

Key Challenges Faced by Small Scale Local Farmers

Access: Reliable Market Access

- Lower production volumes and varied consistency make accessing larger markets more challenging.
- Lack of agricultural infrastructure (such as local aggregation hubs) leads to greater challenges to access institutional markets.

Equity: Land and Resources Access

- Equitable access to land, farming resources and markets have historically marginalized farmers of color.

Sustainability: Small Farms are Hardest Hit by a Broken Food System

- Significant price increases for farm inputs (due to inflation and geopolitical challenges) make it more difficult for farmers to earn a livable wage.

Climate Change Challenges Relating to a Non-Local Industrial Food System

- The true cost of food (reflecting energy inputs and other impacts) is not reflected in pricing, making small scale farming financially challenging.
- Farmers (and grocery stores) face supply chain risks from disruptions in a global food system (local farms can still stock shelves and markets when long-distance trucking can't).
- Greenhouse gasses are increasing from industrial agricultural practices (regenerative agricultural practices reduce GHGs).
- Crop yields are declining due to extreme and changing weather patterns (small farms with diversified production can more easily adapt than monocrop farms).
- Land cleared for industrial agriculture leads to global warming (regenerative farming practices help cool the earth).
- Ecosystems are disrupted due to herbicide and pesticide use (regenerative farms restore soil health, grow healthy food and don't pollute our waterways).

Our Programs... Addressing Unmet Needs

Farmer Contract Purchasing

Community FarmShare purchases local farm produce through contract purchasing agreements with Montgomery County local fruit and vegetable growers to support production expansion.

How Contract Purchasing Supports Farms:

- Farmers can plan their crops according to agreed volumes and pricing that works for both parties.
- Farmers know they have a guaranteed sales channel and can plan their cashflow needs accordingly.
- Local, regenerative agricultural practices help mitigate causes of climate change.

Aggregation Hub

In 2023, Community FarmShare shifted from purchasing pre-bagged produce from farmers that ran their own CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) sales model to an aggregation model. Aggregation enables us to purchase select bulk produce from local farmers, receive that at our central aggregation hub located at Common Root Farm in Derwood, and pack bags for distribution.

How a Local Aggregation Hub Supports Farmers and our Food System:

- Aggregating produce in a central location enables small farmers to sell to medium and large institutional buyers that they otherwise would have difficulty accessing. Aggregation facilitates purchasing from small farms, including beginning farmers, BIPOC farmers and farmers who have been disadvantaged through structurally discriminatory land access policies.
- Through our aggregation model, Community FarmShare can better serve our Food Is Medicine program participants with their produce needs, by purchasing items specific to diet related chronic disease management, as well as meeting the needs of our Farm to School families.
- Community FarmShare has designed processes that can tie into an improved system and that can support additional needed agricultural infrastructure projects on a county and regional level, further strengthening our local food system.

Meet Nia



Nia Nyamweya started Beauty Blooms Farm through her longing for food systems change and a reconnection to her roots. After 10 years in the non-profit sector, her culture called her home to begin stewarding the land in a more intentional way and capturing her multicultural heritage in practice.

Seeking healing and another form of contributing to her community, Nia participated in Future Harvest's Beginning Farmer Training Program. As a returning generation farmer with both sides of her family, Black and white, having rich agricultural backgrounds, she honors the complexity of her multi-racial roots and mixed heritage, from both the Abagusii tribe in Kenya and of European ancestry. The beauty, determination, and faith of her ancestors is deeply rooted in the starting of the farm.

In 2021, Nia farmed on a 1/8 acre plot and produced over 1,000 lbs of produce. The next year, Nia expanded on the vision of Beauty Blooms Farm and now leases 10 acres in Montgomery County. Her goal is to regenerate the land which was in corn & soybean production for over 30 years through organic practices and cover cropping to produce food that feeds the community. She is proud to be one of the first, hopefully of many, regenerative, natural farmers stewarding public park land for sustainable agriculture use.

Nia believes all people have a right to delicious, nutritious and culturally important food that's affordable and grown locally.

We brought healthy farm fresh produce to local families, (580 residents) every week of the season (an increase from 50 families in 2021, our first year).

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25 dedicated volunteers delivered over **38,000** pounds of fresh produce from our farm partners to our program participants.



\$100,000

We invested over into our local farms by purchasing their nutrient dense farm produce, helping our local farm businesses to be sustainable and grow.



40 patients in our Food Is Medicine program with Mercy Health Clinic gained better control of their diabetes; 72% of patients lowered their A1c, as measured at the start and end of the program.



38 families experiencing food insecurity in hard to reach areas of the county with the lowest health indicators (western upper Montgomery County) received weekly produce bags.



54 families from our Farm to School program were able to access healthy fresh produce, boosting children's health, helping them to establish healthy eating habits and learn better in school. In 2022 for our Farm to School program, we partnered with 12 Montgomery County public schools through their Linkages to Learning and Community Schools programs.

Finances

Income Overview

	2021	2022
Private Individuals	\$65,287	\$49,380
Foundations & Grants	\$17,196	\$109,839
Total Revenue	\$82,483	\$159,219

Expense Overview

	2021	2022
Farms for Food	\$45,442	\$103,194
Payroll	\$0	\$30,566
Operation Expenses	\$4,015	\$4,901
Total Expenses	\$49,457	\$138,661

Our Outreach & Impact

Message from the Executive Director

At our core, our work serves families, farmers, our planet. The space around that core is our mission to build an equitable, resilient, local food system. Community FarmShare is active in food systems work within the county and region, well positioning us to share our community level experience with advocates and policy makers, as well as to learn and connect with partners to strengthen our community outreach.

In 2023, we will serve 285 families (about 1,200 residents) each week through partnerships with 10 Montgomery County farms, 4 health care providers, three community-based organizations and 10 MCPS schools. With your help and partnership, we can reach more families next year and help fix the food system, together.

Let's see the day where Community FarmShare's work is no longer needed — where all farmers and families thrive.

Thank You,
Jennifer Freeman

How You Can Help



Our work is made possible through your support.

We welcome financial gifts of any amount, each of which truly matters to change lives.

Additional ways you can support our mission:

- Volunteer
- Advocate for food systems change and food justice
- Buy from your local farmer
- Educate your circle of people about the importance of nutrition security and healthy food options for all residents and local farms and local food systems
- Share information about local farms and sustainable local food systems

Our 2023 Board

Lucia Zegarra, Chair of the Board

Community Impact Director, Greater Washington Region,
American Heart Association

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National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, senior executive service, retired

Derek Longbrake

Formerly Donor Relationship Manager and Director of Development and Community Partnerships at Montgomery County Coalition for the Homeless

Key Foundation and Local Government Funders

Montgomery County

Holy Cross Health

The Carl M Freeman Foundation/FACES grant
Healthcare Initiative Foundation

The Town of Poolesville

The Longbrake Foundation

Healthier, Greener, Kinder Foundation

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The Blair Family Foundation

MAFRAC





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