

# HUNGER SOLUTIONS

Winning Minnesota's Food Fight



THE STATE OF HUNGER IN MINNESOTA

— 2013 —



# Our work

## **ENSURING FOOD SECURITY FOR ALL MINNESOTANS**

Hunger Solutions Minnesota works to end hunger by advancing fair nutrition policy and guiding grassroots advocacy on behalf of hungry Minnesotans and the diverse groups that serve them. We connect Minnesota's food shelves and hunger-relief organizations with the necessary funding, technical assistance and logistical support to reach thousands of Minnesota individuals, families and children in need. Our work is made possible through the generous support of donors across the country; each sharing our commitment to ensuring no Minnesotan will struggle with food insecurity alone.

# How it all works

SMALL ORGANIZATION, BIG IMPACT





8,500

In 2012, more than 8,500 people per day used Minnesota food shelves.

# Hungry for Meaningful Change

2013 has been a year of positive change for hunger in Minnesota, but there is still a dire need for hunger relief services as economic uncertainty continues to impact communities across the state. Hunger Solutions Minnesota will continue to rely on support from donors to achieve our goal.

To paint a clearer picture of the challenges that lie ahead in 2013 and beyond, Hunger Solutions Minnesota has assembled a current snapshot of the state's hunger landscape.

## **FOOD SHELVES: POSITIVE TRENDS, PRESSING NEEDS**

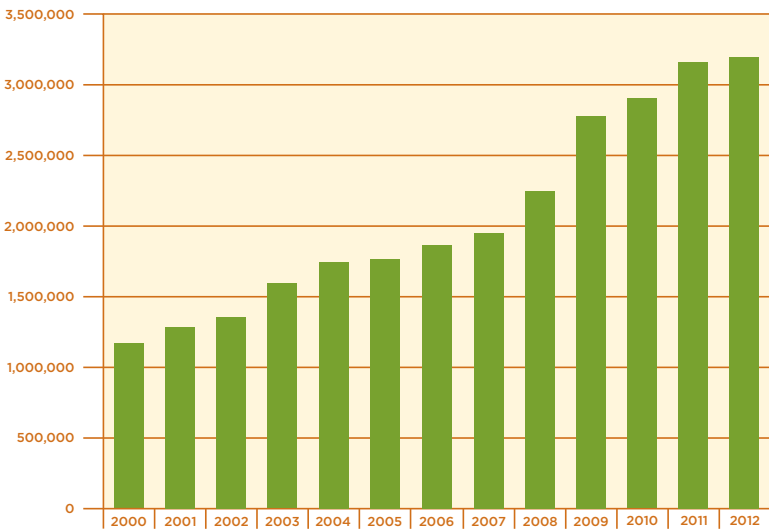
While Minnesota's economic climate continues to improve, thousands of families still struggle with hunger because of poverty, food access difficulties and a lack of education about nutrition assistance benefits. Simultaneously, community food shelves are stretched to the limit.

Hunger Solutions Minnesota helps food shelves in this time of increased need. Through the TEFAP commodity food program, Hunger Solutions Minnesota distributes **more than 12 million pounds of high-quality proteins, fruits and vegetables** to Minnesota food banks. Through its Food Shelf Capacity Building Program, Hunger Solutions provides emergency grants to food shelves in crisis, and helps them obtain equipment like refrigerators and freezers, to help them provide more nutritious food.

## BY THE NUMBERS

- In 2012, more than 8,500 people per day used Minnesota food shelves, an increase of 59% since the recession began in 2007.
- Families with children account for more than 1.2 million Minnesota food shelf visits, and nearly 20,000 more children used food shelves in 2012 than in 2011.
- In the Twin Cities metro area, suburban and exurban counties (Dakota, Isanti and Carver) have seen the highest rise in food shelf use over the past five years.
- Visits to Minnesota food shelves have increased 166% between 2000-2012 — over 3 million visits a year.

### 2000 - 2012 FOOD SHELF VISITS



*“I am a proud person, but when pride got in the way of getting help, I had to learn to finally let go. I only go to the food shelf when I need a little extra, and I now I volunteer there twice a week to let other people know it’s OK to ask for help.”*

— Anonymous food shelf user



*“A lot of times I have to choose between buying groceries or paying the bills. Usually the bills get paid first.”*

— Betty, a senior from Hibbing

# A Summer of Food Insecurity for Minnesota's Youth

As of 2012, one in five families with children in Minnesota face hunger or food insecurity. This means that thousands of Minnesota children do not always receive three meals a day or sometimes skip meals.

While hunger is a daily reality for hundreds of thousands of Minnesota children, the need becomes even more critical during the summertime, when there is no access to free or reduced-cost school meals. More than one-third of the state's school children qualify for free or reduced-cost school lunch.

## BY THE NUMBERS

- More than **600,000** students eat school lunch in Minnesota, and more than 40% of those students qualify for free and/or reduced lunch prices at school.
- **165,000** Minnesota students eat breakfast at school, a **110%** increase since 2003.
- During summer vacation, approximately 36,000 children a week in Minnesota eat lunch via the federally funded Summer Food Service Program, **but this represents only 14 out of every 100 eligible children.** For thousands of kids, no school equals no lunch.



Hunger Solutions Minnesota has partnered with Minnesota Department of Human Services to help bridge the food access gap with a new Summer Backpack Program grant. Hunger Solutions distributed grants to four Greater Minnesota food banks to provide additional food to at-risk children for 12 weeks this summer.



# The Importance of SNAP Benefits

Despite improvements in the economy, many Minnesota households still struggle to put food on the table. Fortunately we can help enroll low-income families in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) — what used to be known as “food stamps.” SNAP is our most robust response to hunger.

In March 2012, Hunger Solutions Minnesota (along with its partners at General Mills, the Minnesota Department of Human Services, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Hunger-Free Minnesota) launched a creative public/private partnership to help raise awareness of the SNAP program and ensure food access to the recently unemployed and the elderly. The marketing initiative has had a significant impact on the number of eligible SNAP recipients receiving assistance. Through the first four months of the campaign, SNAP enrolled 59,000 new participants.

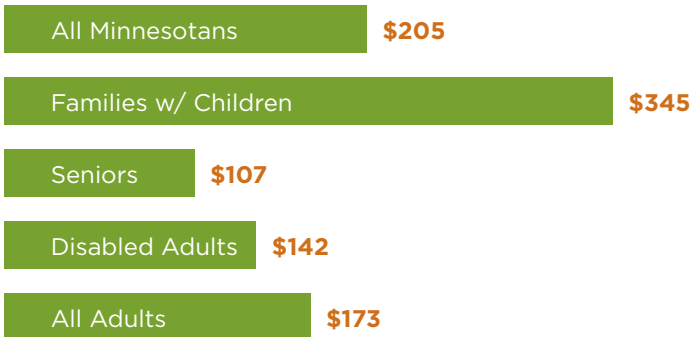


## BY THE NUMBERS

- Last year, nearly 550,000 Minnesotans were enrolled in SNAP.
- Nearly 67% of Minnesotans eligible for SNAP benefits live at or below the poverty line.
- Almost two-thirds of SNAP recipients are children, seniors, or disabled.
- Almost 44% are in working families. Because of SNAP, **more than half a million Minnesotans** have been able to stay above the poverty line.

The average SNAP benefits (as of December 2012) vary for each recipient, but provide lasting impact for families struggling with hunger.

## AVERAGE MONTHLY AMOUNT OF SNAP BENEFITS PER SEGMENT



# Hunger help on call

The Minnesota Food HelpLine helps low-income Minnesotans find help to get the food that they need. Since launching the HelpLine in 2009, it has helped more than 27,000 people get assistance. The HelpLine helps people find food shelves or meal programs, and it helps stabilize families by helping them enroll in SNAP.

Families with children in Minnesota receive an average of \$345 per month to help them buy food, so families can pay other bills and jumpstart their own economic recovery. Consider the lasting impact that these funds (in addition to nutritious food from a food shelf) can have on a family struggling with hunger. Investing in resources like the Minnesota Food HelpLine is an investment in stronger families and healthier children.

## BY THE NUMBERS

- Many working adults in Minnesota (**some working two or three jobs**) don't earn enough money to eat healthy meals on a regular basis.
- **98% of HelpLine users** qualify for some sort of food assistance.
- **Families with children and the elderly** account for a majority of HelpLine inquiries.



MINNESOTA **FOOD HELPLINE**

1.888.711.1151

Trisha's husband just got out of the military and is having a tough time finding employment. They heard about the Minnesota Food HelpLine through a veteran's program, and called us to find help. We provided them with information about their local food shelf and helped them enroll in SNAP to help until they could get back on their feet. Trisha said our help brought them some stability during a difficult time, and made her more hopeful for the future.



# Fighting for fair food policy

Hunger Solutions Minnesota enlists thousands of grassroots advocates to contact elected officials and urge them to help put an end to hunger in Minnesota.

Long-term hunger relief requires public policy intervention and systemic change. The Voice of Hunger Network, the grassroots advocacy arm of Hunger Solutions Minnesota, is a citizens' network working to end hunger in Minnesota by motivating decision-makers to take supportive action on state and national hunger policy issues.

**You can bolster the self-sufficiency of hungry Minnesotans and create the political will to end hunger by joining the Voice of Hunger Network at [hungersolutions.org](http://hungersolutions.org).**



## RECENT SUCCESSES

Hunger Solutions Minnesota and state food shelves successfully advocated at the Minnesota Legislature in March 2013 to support a bill that added \$750,000 in additional support to the Minnesota Food Shelf Program, as a way to relieve pressure on the state's resource-strapped food shelves, raising the total state funding to \$1.7 million for the year. This is the first-ever increase in a legislative allocation to Minnesota food shelves and a testament to the hard work of many anti-hunger advocates.

## ON THE HORIZON

Unfortunately, SNAP is facing drastic cuts at the federal level that, if enacted, would impact tens of thousands of Minnesotans. Hunger Solutions Minnesota is working to protect SNAP benefits by urging the Minnesota Congressional Delegation to strengthen the federal nutrition programs so benefits are sufficient to address hunger and so the programs reach more households in need. Voice of Hunger advocates ask their elected officials to strengthen, not cut the nutrition programs in the Farm Bill.

*“For us, the most valuable thing is that they lend a voice to the voiceless in our hunger community. We do not have enough resources as a food shelf to be at the State Capitol on a regular basis, to be in Washington D.C. telling the story of hungry Minnesotans, and Hunger Solutions provides those services for us, lends a voice to the work that we do so we can focus on helping people who are hungry.”*

— Armando Camacho, President, Neighborhood House,  
a St. Paul-based food shelf operator



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[www.HungerSolutions.org](http://www.HungerSolutions.org) | 651.486.9860



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