

A DOWNTOWN STROLL TO CELEBRATE OUR 40 YEARS

Thank you to the Northampton merchants who stepped up with generosity and flair

In August and September, the Northampton business community honored the 40th anniversary of the Northampton Survival Center, embracing its iconic carrot logo with a variety of festive and philanthropic tributes during our **Business Stroll Series**.

- **Six restaurants** featured a stunning array of sweet and savory carrot-inspired delicacies for our "40 Ways to Cook a Carrot" week in August.
- **Twenty-one downtown business windows** sprouted carrots and bloomed orange over an early-September weekend, enticing hundreds of visitors to cast their votes for the best display. A lucky 15 winners among those who voted earned wonderful gift certificates to area shops.
- **Eleven toiletry drives** were held by participating businesses, with all donations benefitting clients of the Center's food pantry.



The winning window display, at Forget me not Florist, was a magnificent floral carrot, constructed out of 350 real roses on a frame built from old tomato cages. Fitzwilly's was the runner-up with a playful painting of two carrot characters out on the town.



Original dishes included *from left*: Spiced Carrot Reuben at Fitzwilly's, Carrot Cake Ice Cream at Herrell's, Carrot Radiatore at Homestead, and Carrot Cake at Paul & Elizabeth's. WINDOW AND FOOD PHOTOS BY JULIAN PARKER-BURNS

TWENTY-NINE BUSINESSES ENGAGED AND DELIGHTED DOWNTOWN VISITORS

WINDOW DISPLAYS

A2Z Science & Learning Store
 Achieve TMS East
 Ashtanga Yoga Northampton
 The Baker's Pin
 Beerology
 The Blue Marble
 Cathy Cross
 Cedar Chest
 Cornucopia
 Fitzwilly's
 Forget me not Florist

Gazebo
 Jackson & Connor
 ode boutique
 Optical Studio, LLC
 Pure Barre
 Silverscape Designs
 Starbucks
 ThelōHome & Modern
 Wellness
 Thornes Marketplace
 United Personnel

CARROT-INSPIRED RESTAURANT OFFERINGS

Belly of the Beast
 Fitzwilly's
 Herrell's Ice Cream
 Homestead
 Paul & Elizabeth's
 Woodstar Cafe

TOILETRY DRIVES

The Baker's Pin
 Beerology
 Care One
 Cornucopia
 Forbes Library
 Gazebo
 Homestead
 Pure Barre
 Thornes Marketplace
 United Personnel
 Yoga Sanctuary

THE ECONOMICS OF FRESH PRODUCE AT THE CENTER:

- \$74,000 was spent last year on 165,000 pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables.
- That translates into a cost of less than 45¢ per pound of fresh produce.
- In all, we spend only \$185,000 on food that is actually valued at over \$1.35 million!

SURVEYING HOW NEW CLIENTS ARE COPING

Asking new clients about their food security when they start at the Center yields stark results

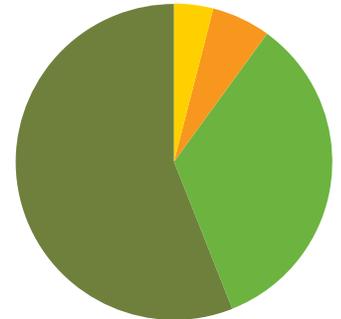
Since September we have surveyed 455 new clients to find out whether they experienced food insecurity in the month before coming to the Center for help. Here are some of the troubling results:

90% of clients coming to us for the first time experienced **low or very low food security** in the month before coming to us. For example, 88% indicated that the food they bought that month often didn't last, and they didn't have money to purchase more.

More than two-thirds of clients reported

having stretched their food by cutting the size of their meals, or even **skipping meals** altogether. On average, new clients had done this more than 10 times in the month before they starting using the Survival Center.

Nine out of ten clients averaged fewer than the five recommended servings of fresh fruits and vegetables per day in the month before coming to the Center for help. In fact, 55% of clients reported a daily average of **0-1 serving of fresh produce** before using the food pantry.



- Very low food security
- Low food security
- Marginal food security
- High food security

Note: While we don't yet have comprehensive follow-up data on how new clients have fared after regular access to the Center, some promising trends are emerging. Read Bill Mustard's story on the facing page.

KEEPING THE FRESH FRESH



Thanks in part to a grant from The Conservation Fund, the Phippen-Adams family, and Ford of Northampton, a new refrigerated van allows us to bring a multitude of donated groceries to the Center every day. With the van, we can pick up more fresh perishable foods—including produce, fresh corn tortillas, frozen meats, and prepared meals—which we can now fit into the reconfigured pantry. Clients are thrilled to be able to select treats like quiche, yogurt parfait, and ready-to-go sandwiches during each visit.

“SNAP benefits force you to get quantity over quality, but now, it feels good to provide better food for my family,” —says Randy, who reports that some of her family's digestive issues greatly improved since starting at the Center a few weeks ago.

“ I got lamb here last time, but I had no idea what to do with it. I looked it up and found a recipe, so now I’m back to get carrots and onions. My family is going to be so happy! ”—Randy, new client

WHAT “EATING THE RAINBOW” LOOKS LIKE WHEN WE INVEST IN CLIENTS’ HEALTH

You might not imagine finding fresh peaches, strawberries, mushrooms, or limes in a food pantry. In many areas, getting food assistance means picking up a pre-bagged supply of groceries just once a month.

So what makes the Northampton Survival Center so different? Several years ago we upended the traditional pantry model by investing in a wide variety of beautiful, colorful, specialty produce items which are usually too expensive for clients to buy for themselves.

Our commitment to providing access to these nourishing staples on a weekly basis means clients are changing their eating habits—and their health outcomes—for the better.



Fresh produce all year

More than 800 new clients come to the Center each year, most of whom aren’t eating enough fresh produce (see survey results on facing page). With that in mind, we place a high priority on our Fresh First Program, which we enhanced through a pantry reconfiguration in February, adding refrigeration and shelving and making the process less stressful and more efficient.



As a result, even as the growing season ends we continue offering clients fresh fruit and vegetables by purchasing them from Black

River Produce in Vermont, a distributor of quality produce. It isn’t unusual to find multiple varieties of apples, potatoes, squash, lettuce and citrus at the pantry on any given day. Families appreciate knowing that they will have access to a huge selection of produce throughout the year, regardless of the season.



How a steady supply of fresh veggies translated into a pair of hiking boots

In his short time at the Survival Center, Bill Mustard has already made a name for himself as an easy-going and friendly client, and one whose food security has moved from marginal to high with just a few short months of regular access to our enhanced perishable offerings.

Bill does a good deal of healthy cooking in his small, shared apartment, and finds the weekly access to fresh vegetables from the Center “really zests things up” in flavoring his staples of rice and lentils. In the past, his limited supply of onions, garlic, or peppers necessitated that he only use a fraction of a vegetable in order to spread it out over several meals. Now he looks forward to being able to select specialty items like a prepared quiche during his weekly visits.

As a retired offset printer, Bill augments his Social Security benefits by doing occasional jobs helping friends with yard work. He keeps close track of his finances and is careful not to splurge, stretching his clothing funds by buying used items at thrift shops. Tabulating the costs of food he saved coming to the Center, he recently made a happy discovery: An avid walker, he was pleased to find he had enough money to invest in a sturdy pair of hiking boots that will last him for several years.



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REFLECTIONS ON 15 YEARS AT THE HELM

Executive Director Heidi Nortonsmith reminisces on the Center's 40th anniversary year



When I started in my role as Executive Director in 2004, the Survival Center was just celebrating its 25th anniversary. With such a happy swirl of activity

around me in the years since, I've scarcely noticed the passage of time, until I catch a glimpse of an old photo from before our renovation, and suddenly the milestones of these years flash before my eyes.

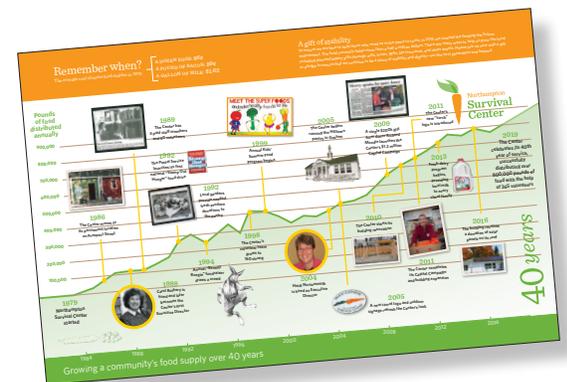
The timeline we published in our last newsletter (shown below) sparked happy memories for many readers, just as it did for me. Undeniably, our most important and salient achievement has been the volume of food distributed these 40 years—over 15 million pounds so far. To my mind, a close runner-up is the sense of belonging and community we have carefully cultivated in this non-judgmental atmosphere. Watching volunteers and clients greet one another as dear friends—with all the psychological wellness that imparts—continues to move me on a daily basis.

A few particular markers stand out for me as the memories of the years come into focus. I'll never forget the single father I served in my early days here. With downcast eyes and a gruff manner, he berated himself, saying again and again, "I've never asked for help in my life!" He had been subsisting on a diet of rice and tuna for weeks, and had just learned he'd be caring for his 4-year-old daughter for the weekend. He knew he had to take control of the situation and come to us—to provide for her in a way he hadn't managed to do for himself. As we worked to build a box of food that would sustain the two of them over the weekend, his demeanor softened and he began to get excited about the prospect of serving his

daughter some of her favorite meals. When it was time for him to leave, he turned and said to me, "I never knew it would be like this to come here! You've given me so much. Now, instead of worrying about food all weekend, I'm going to be playing Candyland with my little girl." As a parent and as a daughter, I marvel at the ineffable importance of what I've come to think of as the "Candyland effect" of our mission.

I remember getting a call one winter from the Chaplain at Cooley Dickinson hospital, when it was discovered that a patient who was ready for release had no shoes for his size 15 feet. With a couple of well-placed phone calls, we had 4 beautiful pairs of shoes in his size donated and ready within a few hours. His relief in having new shoes was matched by the joy of a handful of community members being asked and able to provide so concretely for a neighbor in need.

And of course, there are funny moments too, when I realize how my own identity has sometimes been subsumed into that of the Center. When my dentist asked me during a check-up, "do you need personal care items?" I did a double-take in misunderstanding for a moment that my own hygiene was in question. We had a good laugh about that, and I came away, as I always do in those moments, feeling honored to be so embedded in this beloved institution.



The green line graphed on our timeline indicates the increase in pounds of food distributed over our 40 years.