Community Food Distribution Project

Started in April, 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic

Northampton Survival Center
Grow Food Northampton
Community Action Pioneer Valley

Hear about the project in an interview on NEPR with Volunteer Coordinator Diane Drohan here https://www.nepr.net/post/food-pantry-staffer-embraces-rewarding-exhaustion-essential-duties
Community Food Distribution at Jackson Street School
Northampton Survival Center / Grow Food Northampton / Community Action
Day one — April 6, 2020

Cones preventing cars from entering until food distribution begins

Diane managing the site and multi-tasking

Food arriving from Food Bank being unloaded

Diane greets each volunteer and asks wellness screening questions before they’re approved, gives out masks, asks them to wash hands, and assigns them to a task

Artemis ready to greet clients and do intake (with Sarah on phone connecting with data from client database)
Staff and volunteers each making up A bags and B bags at their own tables

Others making up produce bags for each household

Specialty bags for vegetarians with no tuna or other meats

Produce bags ready to go outside

Some boxes for each size family already made up and ready to go out quickly

A bags and B bags ready to go out to each family
Excellent space for practicing physical distancing while preparing lots of food

Chart showing number of A bags, B bags, and produce bags per family size

Grow Food Northampton preparing bags for Tuesday delivery

Day one — 74 households served

Carrots offered as an extra to everyone
Community Food Distribution
Delivered by Grow Food Northampton, with the Northampton Survival Center
Day two — April 7, 2020

Deliveries made to:
- Florence Heights
- Hampshire Heights
- Meadowbrook Apartments
- Pioneer Valley Workers Center
- The Lumber Yard

Day two — 155 households served at 5 locations

Produce from local farmers

Volunteers readying the deliveries

Grocery preparation at Jackson Street School
Community Food Distribution at Jackson Street School
Northampton Survival Center / Grow Food Northampton / Community Action
Day three — April 8, 2020

Day three — 53 households served

Day four — 49 households served... for a weekly total of 335 families served

Fresh fruit
Carrots
Assorted canned goods
Walnuts
Replenished pasta!
Great volunteers following a clear system
Toilet paper
Community Food Distribution at Jackson Street School
Northampton Survival Center / Grow Food Northampton / Community Action
Day five — April 13, 2020

Despite damaging wind and heavy rain, the crew made well over 1,000 bags of groceries and fresh produce, plus toilet paper, for today and tomorrow.

Day five — 36 households served
Community Food Distribution
Delivered by Grow Food Northampton, with the Northampton Survival Center
Day six — April 14, 2020

The day starts by unpacking the van... at Hampshire heights...

Simultaneous distributions at housing sites all around town...
... at Florence heights

... at Meadowbrook Apartments

Mother/daughter volunteer team Chera and Kaylee

... and at The Lumber Yard, all timed with the Northampton Public Schools’ free meal program for families with kids
From a happy recipient of greens from Hart Farm in Conway:

“Omg, those greens you brought are SO GOOD!! I just ate an entire bag of baby kale and I am in absolute Heaven right now....”
Community Food Distribution at Jackson Street School
Northampton Survival Center / Grow Food Northampton / Community Action
Day seven — April 15, 2020

Volunteers and staff enjoying their role in making sure every family gets a balanced assortment of items

Our trusty van now makes multiple trips each day!
Dedicated helpers, including family members working side-by-side, help prepare for the day’s distribution, while staff make a last-minute potato run when the supply gets low.
Community Food Distribution
Delivered by Grow Food Northampton, with the Northampton Survival Center
Day eight — April 16, 2020

Deliveries made to senior housing and disabled housing sites:

- Walter Salvo House
- Tobin Manor
- Forsander Apartments
- McDonald House
- Cahill Apartments

Day eight — 79 households served
By the end of the second week of our collaboration, the new food distribution system had served 1,432 individuals across the region. Through this partnership we successfully created an efficient staging and distribution site that ensures the safety of clients and volunteers, and made deliveries to hundreds of appreciative residents of low-income and senior-housing sites around the city.

Today we began partnering with case workers from Soldier On to meet the food needs of 100 veterans living at the shelter on the VA property in Leeds.
In addition to serving 44 households at Jackson Street School, Monday’s efforts include preparing over 1,000 bags of food to be whisked away and delivered around town on Tuesdays.
Grow Food Northampton deliveries, with lots of fresh, local produce, went out to 159 households at 4 low-income housing sites, and to another 30 households through the Pioneer Valley Workers Center.
Today’s distribution included a bounty of bananas, donated by our friends at State Street Deli & Fruit Store.
Community Food Distribution at Jackson Street School
Northampton Survival Center / Grow Food Northampton / Community Action
Day fourteen — April 24, 2020

The overhang outside offers much-needed shelter from the rain...

By the end of week three — 1,756 unique individuals served during 3,277 visits

...while volunteers indoors are dry but stay very busy!
Community Food Distribution at Jackson Street School
Northampton Survival Center / Grow Food Northampton / Community Action

Day fifteen — April 27, 2020

Beginning today we were able to give out fresh eggs to every household.
Carts loaded with groceries for delivery throughout Hampshire Heights apartments
Our wonderful friends at Ford of Northampton send over a loaner van to meet our transportation needs for the duration of the pandemic — free of charge!
Deliveries from Grow Food Northampton include healthy recipes and family-friendly activities like how to sprout apple seeds.
Community Food Distribution at Jackson Street School
Northampton Survival Center / Grow Food Northampton / Community Action
Day nineteen — May 1, 2020

A new storage container from SPACES in Northampton adds capacity for boxes and easy-access during delivery days

By the end of week four — 1,953 unique individuals served during 4,446 visits

In addition to an assortment of canned items, clients visiting today received eggs, fresh pineapple, red peppers, apples, oranges, potatoes, onions, and a bag of walnuts.
Clients today received fresh-made burritos from Bueno Y Sano, frozen chicken, sweet potatoes, garlic, carrots, bananas, apples, oranges, cereal, peanut butter, juice, rice, beans, diced tomatoes, canned pineapple, and dried plums!
Community Food Distribution
Delivered by Grow Food Northampton, with the Northampton Survival Center
Day twenty-one — May 5, 2020

Our friends at Florence Bank, including new President and CEO Kevin Day, amplified the bank’s financial support of our collaboration by helping out today with Alisa Klein, hands-on, during food distribution.
Thanks to our friends at Bueno Y Sano, today every person in each client household received a freshly-made burrito!

We also offered two bunches of bananas to every family today, as well as frozen chicken, milk, lots of produce, juice, cereal, and more.
Our steadfast supporters at River Valley Co-op donated 2,500 paper bags to help us deliver food with a gentler impact on the environment.
Intrepid food distribution organizer Michael Skillicorn, Associate Director of Grow Food Northampton, ensures that all groceries arrive on time to the senior housing sites, while wearing an appropriately-themed face mask.
Community Food Distribution at Jackson Street School
Northampton Survival Center / Grow Food Northampton / Community Action
Day twenty-four — May 8, 2020

A carefully-curated rotation of groceries awaits assembly into individual food bags. Careful planning ensures that families receiving food each week have a healthy and appealing variety of ingredients, to help support both physical and emotional well-being.
Day twenty-four — May 8, 2020

Toothpaste and toilet paper available during every visit today, as a new, low-tech, number-calling system helps communicate among volunteers and staff maintaining safe distances.
By the end of week five — 2,076 unique individuals served during 5,576 visits
Veteran volunteer team Karen and Ken help unload the “Built to Lend a Hand” loaner van from Ford of Northampton, getting us ready for a busy day preparing over 2,000 grocery bags.
Volunteers load prepared bags into twelve separate vehicles to make deliveries among a variety of housing complexes, as well as the Pioneer Valley Workers Center, set up to take place in conjunction with the Northampton Public Schools meal program.
Community Food Distribution
Delivered by Grow Food Northampton, with the Northampton Survival Center
Day twenty-six — May 12, 2020

Bags of shelf-stable groceries and fresh produce are readied for quick pick-up by clients at The Lumber Yard Apartments
The loan of a pallet jack, thanks to our friends at Perfect Supplements, will help improve our storage capabilities and save our backs in the process.

We also delighted in the delivery of one of our industrial refrigerators, moved from the Northampton Survival Center to JSS to increase our capacity.
We couldn’t be more grateful to the team at D. A. Sullivan & Sons (the very same people who renovated the Survival Center 10 years ago). When they heard about the challenge of moving thousands of pounds of food every day up and down the stairs at the school, they sent over a crew to build us two beautiful and incredibly helpful ramps — all done in the span of a few hours.

These fine folks have brought joy and ease to the whole operation!
Community Food Distribution at Jackson Street School
Northampton Survival Center / Grow Food Northampton / Community Action
Day twenty-nine — May 15, 2020

As we look ahead to what the next phase of the pandemic will require of us longer–term, we purchased a large supply of sturdy, stacking crates. Now, with the help of the pallet jack and new ramps, organizing and moving large quantities of food in and out of the building is getting simpler and easier.

In settling in to our new operation, we’re now giving out about 30% more food than we were before the pandemic. At this point we’re averaging 17,000 pounds of food going in and out of Jackson Street School every week.

By the end of week six — 2,189 unique individuals served during 6,672 visits
Taking in our largest produce delivery to date was made beautifully simply by our extraordinary new ramp!
Community Food Distribution
Delivered by Grow Food Northampton, with the Northampton Survival Center
Day thirty-one — May 19, 2020

Food distribution on a lovely day outside Hampshire Heights Apartments
Today we introduced a new refrigerated element — yogurt for everyone!
Community Food Distribution
Delivered by Grow Food Northampton, with the Northampton Survival Center
Day thirty-three — May 21, 2020

Groceries are delivered every Thursday to the Walter Salvo House and five other senior living facilities around Northampton. Staff at each facility help get the groceries directly to grateful residents.
Today we happily received an amazing donation from our friends at Rachel’s Table, a program of the Jewish Federation of Western Massachusetts — enough ground beef, potatoes, and onions to help us feed 250 people.

By the end of week seven — 2,289 unique individuals served during 7,863 visits.
The day started off with cheese and eggs prepared for each of the five distribution sites, accompanied by fresh greens from Wingate Farm and flash-frozen Massachusetts-caught fish from BerkShore.
Community Food Distribution
Delivered by Grow Food Northampton, with the Northampton Survival Center
Day thirty-seven — May 28, 2020

Beautiful radishes from Wingate Farm
Grow Food Northampton volunteer Sue Crimmins and Rep. Lindsay Sabadosa transporting grape tomatoes at Walter Salvo House
By the end of week eight — 2,375 unique individuals served during 9,018 visits

Pantry Manager Carlos delights over our new pallet jack, made possible with a grant from the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts.
State Senator Jo Comerford visits the operation at Jackson Street School, posting later on her Facebook page:

“What does it take to: Move 17,000 lbs of food to people who need it every week in the midst of a pandemic? Serve well over 750 households every week? Deliver food to 11 sites? Wrangle dozens of volunteers?

It takes an absolutely beautiful partnership between the The Northampton Survival Center and Grow Food Northampton. It takes innovative systems thinking. It takes the heft of the The Food Bank of Western Mass. And the willingness of partners like the incredible Community Action for joining in and Jackson Street School for opening their doors to allow a much-expanded operation to have the room it needs to accommodate public health concerns. Thank you for giving me the honor of seeing this work in action.”
Community Food Distribution
Delivered by Grow Food Northampton, with the Northampton Survival Center
Day forty — June 2, 2020

Grow Food Northampton well prepared for another busy distribution day at The Lumber Yard
Community Food Distribution at Jackson Street School
Northampton Survival Center / Grow Food Northampton / Community Action
Day forty-three — June 5, 2020

By the end of week nine — 2,442 unique individuals served during 10,164 visits

Sometimes, good home-cooked comfort is all about the spices and the condiments! We make sure our clients have what they need to enjoy using all the groceries we provide.
Lately, Grow Food Northampton has been purchasing local maple syrup for clients, and this week, they introduced a sweet surprise by substituting in delicious Red Barn Honey from right here in Northampton.
Community Food Distribution
Delivered by Grow Food Northampton, with the Northampton Survival Center
Day forty-five — June 9, 2020

Recipes in Spanish and English, suitable for kid-friendly cooking, going out with all produce deliveries today!

By the end of week ten — 2,488 unique individuals served during 11,299 visits
Pick-Your-Own produce opens up at neighboring Abundance Farm — strawberries, cilantro, garlic scapes, and radishes available to all. Over 40 people joyfully participate.
Over fifty pounds of ground beef donated from Aldi today!
By the end of week eleven — 2,545 unique individuals served during 12,427 visits

Sweet and spicy chicken wings from Aldi supplement a colorful bounty of produce today

Community Food Distribution at Jackson Street School
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Day fifty-three — June 19, 2020
Delicious red grapes are a refreshing treat that everyone’s excited about in this heat.

Volunteers enjoy doing essential work while spending quality time with family members and new colleagues, as we wind down our third month of the Community Food Distribution Project.
Community Food Distribution at Jackson Street School
Northampton Survival Center / Grow Food Northampton / Community Action
Day fifty-eight — June 26, 2020

By the end of week twelve — 2,586 unique individuals served during 13,584 visits

Another wonderful donation from Rachel’s Table — onions, ground beef, and potatoes — provide satisfying meal-makers