



IMPACT REPORT 2024



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OUR ORGANIZATION AND ITS MISSION

Our Organization

The Food Brigade is a hunger-relief nonprofit organization that operates free *Community Markets* (food pantries) for New Jersey residents dealing with food insecurity.

The Food Brigade Inc. is a registered tax-exempt charity under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, EIN 85-3278219. We are a registered charity with the New Jersey Office of the Attorney General, Division of Consumer Affairs, Charities Registration Section, Charity Registration #CH4394200. We are a Partner Agency of the Community FoodBank of New Jersey, part of the Feeding America network, and a Local Distribution Agency ("LDA") for United States Department of Agriculture food under TEFAP (The Emergency Food Assistance Program) and for New Jersey Department of Agriculture food under SFPP (the State Food Purchase Program).

The Food Brigade Inc. provides service without regard to race, color, religion, age, handicap, sex, or national origin. The Food Brigade Inc. does not require any money, property, or service from anyone in exchange for food or any other goods and/or services. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Our Mission

The mission of The Food Brigade is to ensure that no child or adult in New Jersey goes hungry, and to establish food security for our neighbors facing poverty and systemic inequalities. We accomplish our mission by (1) providing direct food assistance through our network of client-choice Community Markets, and (2) implementing a holistic approach which includes the offering of wraparound services to address the root causes of food insecurity. We strive to treat all who come to us for assistance with the highest level of dignity and respect, in a trauma-informed manner. Our guiding principle is compassion for our fellow man.



MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

In 2024, The Food Brigade expanded our emphasis on bringing increased dignity and respect to the food assistance system in New Jersey. As we work to incorporate trauma-informed approaches into our policies, practices, and procedures, the way that we treat everyone who comes to us for help is equally important as the physical act of providing their families with food. We don't consider ourselves to be in the food assistance business; we see ourselves as being in the *customer service* business. And we continue to feed not just our clients' bellies, but their hearts as well - through kindness, warmth, and caring.



When our organization began, like most food pantry operators we saw our role as simply that of an emergency food provider. However, we quickly realized that **there needs to be much more to operating food pantries than just giving out food to people**. That discernment caused us to evolve, to seek to become transformative in the lives of our neighbors who come to us for assistance, rather than merely transactional.

So, we have pivoted to being a food pantry organization that provides holistic support in a safe and welcoming environment. At The Food Brigade, we have no long lines with recipients forced to stand for hours competing for a limited supply of food. Our locations do not look like traditional food pantries: they are free "Community Markets" which look like grocery stores, complete with supermarket-style shelving and shopping carts, where our guests shop - by appointment - for nutritious food (fresh produce, meat/seafood, dairy products) in a comfortable, stress-free setting. Significantly, we now stress the importance of wraparound services which address the root causes of food insecurity - poverty and systemic inequalities - including SNAP enrollment, job training, and financial literacy workshops.

We are transitioning to measure our impact not by how many people we feed, or how many pounds of food we distribute - but by how many people leave us and no longer need to receive food assistance from us.

Karen DeMarco, President

OUR FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

OUTCOMES

The Food Brigade provides food to New Jersey residents in need.

From our free Community Markets in Bergen, Hudson, and Passaic Counties, we provide direct food assistance to our neighbors dealing with hunger and food insecurity. These are “client choice” food pantries, where our guests enjoy the autonomy of selecting their preferred food items in a relaxed, grocery-store setting - rather than being handed a “one size fits all” prepackaged bag or box - thereby bringing greater dignity and self-determination to the food assistance process.

We offer the convenience of online registration for new applicants. All shopping in our Community Markets is done on an appointment-only basis.

In addition to the food assistance provided in our free Community Markets, we also offer the following periodic programs and services:

- Diapers - Infant
- Diapers - Adult
- Diaper Wipes
- Period Products & Supplies
- Supermarket Gift Cards
- Restaurant-Prepared Meals
- Annual Thanksgiving Food Distribution

PEOPLE FED IN 2024	FOOD DISTRIBUTED	VOLUNTEER OUTPUT
49,924 individuals total	295,490 POUNDS from “food rescue” operations	5,347 SHIFTS staffed by volunteers
15,093 children fed	869,960 POUNDS from other sources	16,846 HOURS performed by volunteers
13,839 households fed	1,165,450 POUNDS (582.7 TONS) total distributed in 2024	\$569,729.63 dollar value of volunteer time

OUR FOOD RESCUE PROGRAM

1.5 million tons of food is *wasted* each year in New Jersey. This spotlights an unnecessary injustice: there is more than enough food, and no one in our state should ever have to go hungry. So The Food Brigade is doing something about it. In 2024, we launched our Food Rescue Program, picking up unused, excess, and “short dated” food from supermarkets, wholesalers, and “big box” retailers. The food is perfectly fit for human consumption. Rescuing this food before it ends up in landfills, and redirecting it to New Jersey residents in need, is also good for the environment!

Last year, **we rescued over 295,000 pounds of food (roughly 148 tons)** from 20 suppliers in over 380 pickups - that’s more than one pickup per day, including weekends. We continue to aggressively pursue new and expanded opportunities, to increase our inventory and further diversity our food sourcing.



PASSAIC COUNTY COMMUNITY FOOD SECURITY CENTER

2024 saw our establishment of the new Passaic County Community Food Security Center in Clifton. Made possible through major support from the Community FoodBank of New Jersey and Lowe's Hometowns Program, the Center offers an innovative, holistic approach to the problem of food insecurity in New Jersey, and houses:

- Our appointment-based Passaic County Free Community Market;
- A 3,000+ square foot warehouse which serves as a distribution hub for our other market locations; and
- A Resource Room for wraparound services to address the root causes of food insecurity, including classes, workshops, and presentations on SNAP enrollment, job training, nutrition education, budgeting and financial literacy, ESL - **to move people out of poverty and into self-sufficiency and food stability.**



IN OUR CLIENTS' WORDS: TESTIMONIALS

"When I visited the place for the first time, I was very surprised. It's just like being in a supermarket, a great atmosphere, all the staff with a smile and willing to respond and help when you need it. Thank you! Keep welcoming us with that great smile."

"God bless all of you who strive to provide me with such a special service. I truly love the respect and kindness that you offered me at the market. I hope that all pantries operate in the same way and treat people as you do."

"It is very hard to come and ask for food, but going to The Food Brigade and doing your own shopping and being helped the way they do, it felt so good."



"I had inquired about your services recently after my spinal cord injury started to take a toll on my food situation. I am wheelchair bound with a lot of stairs in my building, so I don't go out much more than to my physical therapy. I was warmly welcomed by your staff when I was informed that I could come in after therapy, and everyone was extremely helpful and accommodating. I've visited The Food Brigade twice thus far, and I'm delighted to say that you have allowed my family and I to eat comfortably."

"Great experience...[you] don't feel bad. Makes you feel as if this is just you shopping, not that you need help."

"I wanted to thank everyone there for all the wonderful food we receive, especially all the fresh produce. Not a day goes by that we are not using the food given to us, and for that I am so grateful."

"I just got home from The Food Brigade. Everyone was so kind, welcoming, and caring. They explained everything. The store is set up in such a well thought out manner. Thank you for everything."

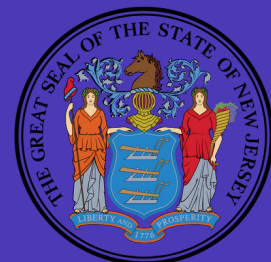
"It was a very, very nice shopping experience, and the people who were there also very friendly and helpful."

"It's such a great feeling to be able to take what you need as opposed to what you can afford. The baked goods are a real treat."

MAJOR DONORS, FUNDERS, AND SPONSORS



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REALTORS'
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THE FOOD BRIGADE INC.

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www.FoodBrigade.org

LOCATIONS:

Bergen County Free Community Market

185 W. Madison Avenue, Dumont, NJ 07628

Hudson County Free Community Market

1417 New York Avenue, Union City, NJ 07087

Passaic County Community Food Security Center

236 Colfax Avenue, Clifton, NJ 07013

DONATE:

