



Health
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The Food Brigade

ANNUAL REPORT **2025**

Moments from 2025





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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

Dear Friends,

In 2025, The Food Brigade remained guided by a simple belief: every neighbor deserves access to nutritious food, and everyone seeking help deserves to be treated with dignity.

Across New Jersey, the need for food assistance continued to grow. As the year ended, families faced greater uncertainty due to changes in the availability and extent of SNAP benefits, making dependable community-based food assistance more important than ever.

Our response is about more than providing enough food. It is about providing nourishing food. While canned and packaged staples have an important place in hunger relief, we emphasize fresh produce, milk and other dairy products, eggs, meat, and seafood. We want our guests to have the ingredients for balanced meals—not simply something to fill an empty plate. Our Community Markets pair that commitment with the dignity of choosing food for one's own household.

We strive to lead by demonstrating what thoughtful, people-centered food assistance can achieve. Our work received renewed recognition when 201 Magazine's readers named The Food Brigade "Best Nonprofit Organization" for the fourth consecutive year. This honor belongs to the volunteers, donors, and partners whose dedication makes our mission possible.

To everyone who stood with us in 2025: thank you. Your time, generosity and compassion helped put food on our neighbors' tables and reminded them they were not alone. The challenges ahead are real, but so is the strength of a community that cares. Together, we will continue working toward a New Jersey where no child or adult goes hungry.

With gratitude,

Karen DeMarco

President, The Food Brigade Inc.



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Our Food Assistance Programs

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.



Total Individuals Served:

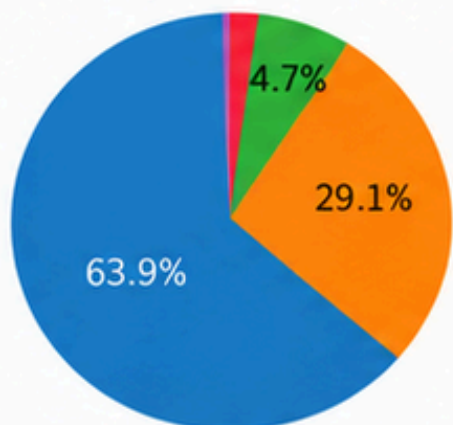
39,646



Total Households Served:

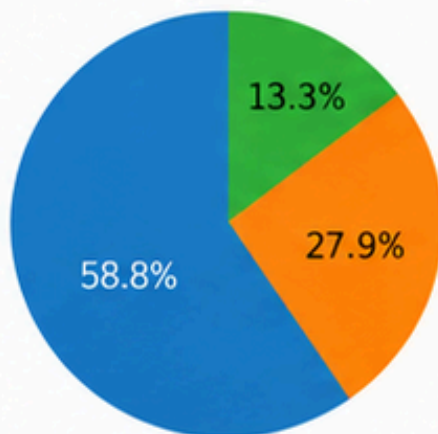
11,443

By Residence



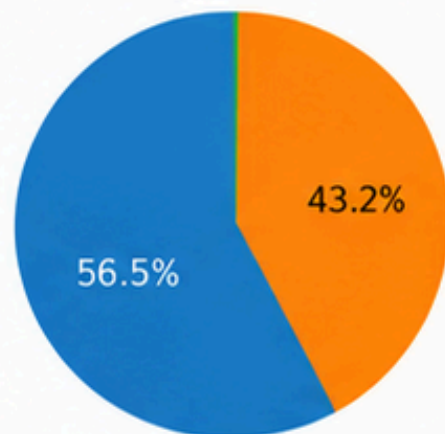
- Bergen County - 25,322
- Passaic County - 11,534
- Hudson County - 1,848
- Essex County - 731
- Union County - 130
- Sussex County - 62
- Morris County - 19

By Age



- Adult - 23,327
- Child - 11,044
- Senior - 5,275

By Gender



- Female - 22,387
- Male - 17,108
- Non-Binary - 151

Volunteer Impact



18,649
hours
volunteered



5,303
shift slots



Dollar value
of volunteer time:
\$630,691.28

Additional Support and Services



Diapers



Period products



Supermarket gift cards



Restaurant-prepared meals



Annual Thanksgiving
food distribution

Our Food Rescue Program

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1.5 million tons of food is wasted each year in New Jersey. This is 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!

In 2025, The Food Brigade became **one of the largest food rescue operations** in the region—and the region's largest food rescuer that also operates food pantries. During the year, we **rescued 456,334 pounds of food—228.167 tons—** with an estimated dollar value of **\$876,161.28**. Through the dedication of our volunteers and the generosity of our food donors, this food helped nourish our neighbors rather than going to waste. We continue to pursue new and expanded partnerships to increase our inventory, further diversify our food sourcing, and bring more nutritious food to the families we serve.

Food Rescued



What Makes The Food Brigade Different?

At The Food Brigade, how we treat people is just as important as the food we provide. Our work goes beyond meeting an immediate need: we strive to help our neighbors build lasting food security through compassion, meaningful choices, and support for the whole person.



Our volunteers and our organizational culture:

Our volunteers are the heart of The Food Brigade. Their kindness and caring help create an organizational culture in which dignity and respect guide every interaction. We want everyone who comes to us for assistance to feel welcome, valued, and supported—not judged for needing help.



A client-centered, customer-service approach:

We see ourselves as being in the customer service business. Our operations are designed around the needs and experiences of the people we serve. In our free Community Markets, guests shop by appointment in a welcoming, grocery-store setting and choose food for their own households, rather than receiving a one-size-fits-all bag or box.



Nutritious food—and the knowledge to use it:

We emphasize fresh produce, milk and other dairy products, eggs, meats, and seafood. Our commitment to nutrition also includes education: encouraging our clients to choose healthy foods and teaching them how to prepare nourishing meals for their families.



Support beyond food assistance:

Our holistic approach focuses on support services such as workforce readiness, English as a Second Language (ESL) education, and financial literacy and budgeting workshops. These services are intended to help our neighbors build skills, expand their opportunities, and move toward greater financial stability.



A safe environment where clients have a voice:

We incorporate trauma-informed principles into our work, striving to create an environment that is physically, psychologically, and emotionally safe. We respect our guests' choices and encourage their feedback on our policies, procedures, and practices. The people we serve should have a meaningful voice in how we serve them.

Upcoming Projects

Mobile Farmer's Market

The Food Brigade has been awarded \$499,655—nearly half a million dollars—through the New Jersey Economic Development Authority's FEED NJ program to launch our Mobile Farmer's Market. This initiative will bring fresh produce directly into 11 of New Jersey's 50 designated Food Desert Communities (FDCs), extending our commitment to nutritious food beyond the walls of our Community Markets.

In New Jersey, a Food Desert Community is a designated geographic area where residents have limited access to nutritious foods, including fresh fruits and vegetables, through supermarkets and grocery stores. The designation considers more than distance to a supermarket: it also takes into account factors such as poverty, access to a vehicle, and local economic and health conditions. A neighborhood may have places to buy food while still lacking adequate access to nutritious choices.

Our presence in Bergen, Hudson, and Passaic Counties, with locations in Dumont, Union City, and Clifton, provides the three-county foundation that will make this reach possible. Building on these existing operations, the Mobile Farmer's Market will bring fresh produce to community sites within the 11 targeted FDCs, rather than requiring every resident to travel to one of our permanent locations.

By bringing the market to the neighborhood, we aim to reduce transportation barriers and make healthy food more accessible to families facing food insecurity. This project represents an important next step in our mission: not simply making food available, but helping ensure that nutritious food is within reach of the people who need it.



Major Donors, Funders, and Sponsors



GARES FOUNDATION



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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:

