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Food Gatherers launches new find food tool and website

Ann Arbor, MI (April 28, 2021)— Food Gatherers, the food bank and food rescue program serving Washtenaw County, launched a new website and an updated searchable find food tool on April 23rd. The creation of the new website was funded by a grant from the UPS Foundation.

"We are so grateful to the UPS Foundation for this grant, which will allow us to better support our neighbors facing food insecurity," said Eileen Spring, Food Gatherers president and CEO. "Since the beginning of the pandemic, more people than ever before are accessing emergency food assistance, many for the first time in their lives. When someone is looking for food, the need is often time-sensitive — *they need food now*. The new website and enhanced find food tool will better support the increased number of people searching for resources. And, because it is online, they can search 24/7."

In the first few months of the pandemic, Food Gatherers' network of partner programs, which includes more than 170 local agencies and programs providing free groceries and meals to the community, reported a 30-300% increase in people seeking assistance. There was also an exponential increase in visits to Food Gatherers' website according Lauren Grossman, Food Gatherers communications coordinator.

"At the beginning of the pandemic, the number of callers and web-visitors looking for information on emergency food assistance skyrocketed. Today, those numbers remain elevated," said Grossman. The former find food map and list weren't always intuitive, making it difficult for some users to easily access food assistance. "We wanted to make the new find food tool as user-friendly as possible and accessible on a computer, phone, or tablet."

Visitors to Food Gatherers' new website can search for food pantries and meal distributions using their address and the tool also includes options to filter by date, time, city, as well as other options such as home delivery and SNAP (food stamps) assistance. Food distribution information can be displayed on a map, list, or calendar. The new website also includes a "Select Language" option to translate the website from English to Arabic, Chinese, or Spanish.

The website and find food tool were designed by R.J. Conlin Marketing and Design, a creative marketing agency based in Ann Arbor.

"We've been honored to help Food Gatherers develop their new website," said Bob Conlin, R.J. Conlin founder and president. "We're proud to serve an organization that our neighbors in need can look to, especially during these tough times. The Food Gatherers crew has been a joy to work with. We look forward to continuing to support them as they strive to end hunger in our community."

People in need of food are encouraged to use the find food tool online or to call Food Gatherers if they need assistance. "If you don't have access to a computer, aren't comfortable navigating online, or prefer to talk to a person, please give us a call and our staff will be happy to help," says Grossman. People in need of assistance can use the find food tool online at www.foodgatherers.org/findfood or call 734-761-2796 for assistance.

About Food Gatherers

Food Gatherers' mission is to alleviate hunger and eliminate its root causes in Washtenaw County. The food bank and food rescue program for the county, we distributed 7.8 million pounds of food to 170 non-profit programs serving adults, seniors and children last year. For a list of our partner programs or to learn how you can become involved in the fight against hunger locally, please visit www.foodgatherers.org or call 734-761-2796.

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