



Delivering Wholesome Food to Our Neighbors in Need

Fall 2017 News



Dear Friends,

Our recipient organizations tell us in our yearly survey that our deliveries of free nutritious food significantly alleviate hunger and foster healthier eating in the community. We hear directly from those who benefit from our work that Willing Hands improves the quality of life for those in need. Yet it is not easy to quantify the impact of our work. This summer we undertook an ambitious project to survey a statistically significant percentage of the estimated 10,000 food insecure individuals in the Upper Valley. We wanted to gain a deeper understanding of how Willing Hands impacts the lives of our neighbors. Over the past two months, we have conducted a series of in-person, written and online surveys, and we have received responses from 365 households representing over 900 people.

I am excited to share some highlights from this survey:

- Among respondents, 31.7% said they, or a member of their household, had skipped a meal due to a lack of food in the past 12 months.
- 25% are under 18 years of age, and 26% are over 63.
- 65% receive our food from a food shelf, and 49% from a community meal site.
- More than half said that they often or sometimes cannot afford to eat a balanced meal.
- More than half said that they often or sometimes worried that their food supply would run out before they could afford to buy more.



Willing Hands strives for an Upper Valley where everyone has affordable access to the foods that make up a healthy diet.

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Featured Food Donor: Riverview Farm

Paul and Nancy Franklin have owned and operated Riverview Farm on River Road in Plainfield, NH, for over 36 years. Their farm is one of the Upper Valley's hidden fall gems. From August through October, they invite the public to visit and pick apples, raspberries, blueberries, currants, and squash. Visitors can also make their way through the corn maze, enjoy cider and donuts, and take a ride on a horse-drawn wagon on the weekends.

Willing Hands has had an ongoing relationship with Riverview Farm for a number of years. Volunteers have gleaned squash, apples and berries in the past. Riverview has stored apples for us and worked with us to press excess apples into cider. This year Willing Hands, and our recipients, were the beneficiaries of an incredible apple harvest. Our volunteers have been picking beautiful first quality apples from Riverview's trees since mid-August. By the end of the season we expect to have gleaned over 10,000 pounds or roughly 30,000 apples.

Thank you to Nancy, Paul, and everyone at Riverview for making our community stronger!

Clockwise from top: Gleaners in Riverview Farm's orchards, Paul Franklin with pumpkins, a gleaner reaches for apples.



Behind the scenes

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◀ *Director's Letter, continued from page 1*

We will be releasing more information from the survey this winter. So far, our biggest take-away is that Willing Hands and our partners have a lot of work to do. Survey respondents were selected among individuals who currently receive food from our 60-plus recipient organizations. This charitable food safety net is not sufficient if more than half of those we serve still worry that they will run out of food before they can afford to buy more. With continued support from our community, we hope to make an even bigger difference in the years to come. It is exciting to now have a baseline from which to measure this impact.

Sincerely,

Gabe Zoerheide, executive director

Clockwise from top: Chris Castle delivering to the Haven, Willing Hands pickup at Blue Ox Farm, gleaners harvesting carrots.



Stories from Our Survey



Remy, left, conducting a survey.

One of the benefits of collecting in-person stories is that you begin to get a strong sense of what Willing Hands means to individuals. Here are a sampling of stories from Remy Eisendrath, who has been working for Willing Hands this summer and conducted the majority of the surveys.

One male veteran was in a rush and said he was not able to take our survey. But when I said I was with Willing Hands and handed him a paper copy, his demeanor changed immediately from in a rush to sincerely grateful. "I only take a little bit of food now," he said, "but four or five years ago, I really

needed this." There are people who rely on Willing Hands produce week-in week-out for years, but there are also many people who use it when they are faced with a really tough stretch. Our service is both a staple and a safety net. It made a big impact on this man.

More voices from the surveys:



"I am on oxygen 24 hours a day, so it limits my mobility and it's demoralizing asking for rides. With portable tanks, **I can walk with a walker to the rec hall to get produce** from the Willing Hands delivery. When I am unable to go, my friend picks up things there for me."

"Before Willing Hands, I very seldom had tossed salads."



"I get enough, but my [adult] daughter just started a job and we go to the Hartford and Woodstock food shelves. We don't take a lot, but **every little bit helps.**"

—recipient at the Bugbee Senior Center

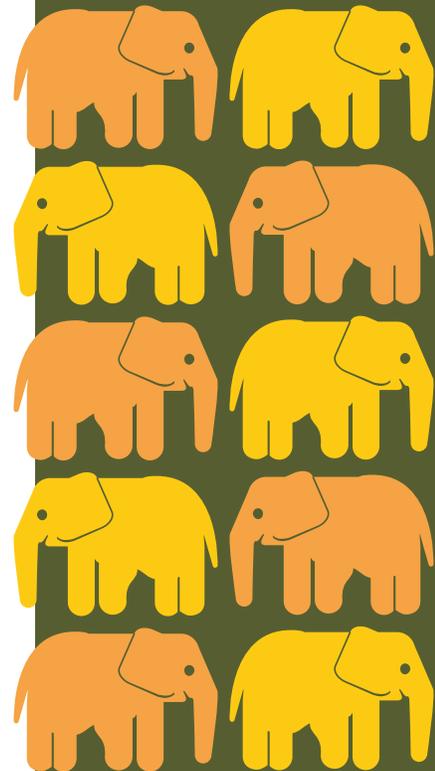


The Impact of Pennies for Change

In the past 12 months, **Coop Food Stores Members** have donated a total of **\$50,916** to Willing Hands through the Pennies for Change program.

This has allowed us to deliver **127,290 pounds** or **339,440 servings of vegetables.**

This is equivalent to **nearly 10 African elephants of food!**





Top, Kim Holzberger, at left, helps cover a row of crops in the Willing Hands garden. Above, a turtle visits the garden.

Volunteer Spotlight: Kim Holzberger

interview by Remy Eisendrath

How she got involved with Willing Hands: I was told by a friend and fellow VT Extension Master Gardener about the Willing Hands garden project. She told me Willing Hands was a *great* organization and the volunteer crew was a really fun group. I wanted to give back to my community in some way. The garden project was the perfect opportunity. Two to four hours a week is a small price to pay to give to a community resource that

helps so many people. Tuesday mornings fit my schedule, fulfilled my desire to be in the garden and, as a bonus, I earned enough volunteer hours to maintain my certification as an Extension Master Gardener.

Why she volunteers: My husband and I are both retired. We feel blessed to live in the beautiful state of Vermont. Our two sons have opted for city life, but we prefer country living. We both know how important it is to stay active. Gardening at the Willing Hands garden gets me a little exercise while helping feed those in need.

A typical day of volunteering: It seems there is no typical day. There's always some new priority to focus on. Whether it's the harvest, the weeds, or some new pest with which to deal, there's never a dull moment. Mother Nature keeps us on our toes.

Her favorite part: Besides the camaraderie, it is getting my hands into the soil. Also, the feeling that someone is benefiting from the fresh food we're growing.

What surprises her: The knowledge I glean from working with my fellow volunteers. They have an amazing wealth of gardening experience. I learn something new and useful every week.

Favorite veggie: Everyone at the garden knows that tomatoes are my favorite!

Thank you to Kim and all of our volunteers!

Visit us online at willinghands.org



Willing Hands

(802) 698-0265

director@willinghands.org

PO Box 172

Lebanon, NH 03766

Willing Hands is a registered 501(c)3, and a network partner of Vermont Food Bank.

Yes, I want to help Willing Hands. Please contact me!

I want to:

- Volunteer in the Willing Hands garden
- Volunteer on a local farm as a gleaner
- Volunteer for _____
- Donate food
- Make a charitable gift of \$ _____
- Other: _____

Please contact me at:

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Email _____ Phone _____