

IT'S SUMMER IN WI!

Summer in Wisconsin means so many exciting things – Door County beach trips, camping at Devil's Lake, county fairs and brunch on the patio. **Late summer is also Farm Link's busiest time of year, with so much of our produce coming in from our hard working producers.** We're seeing cucumbers, zucchini, tomatoes, green beans, cantaloupe, sweet corn and more.

Distributing fresh, locally grown produce to our member pantries is a team effort.

When a farm has a load ready, they contact Farm Link so we can get the paperwork ready and alert the various teams involved in getting this product out to our members while it is fresh. The type and amount of produce is recorded, the routes and pick-up times get scheduled, the product gets properly stored or repacked by volunteers, and our members get notified so they can order through our online portal or even pick up directly from the farm!

For this newsletter, we reached out to some of our regular 'customer' pantries to ask them about their experiences distributing Farm Link produce.

Virginia Paine, Farm Link Associate

Feeding America Eastern Wisconsin members **SHARE** the **FARM LINK HARVEST**



At Feeding America Eastern Wisconsin, we work with pantries of all sizes and demographics.

In this edition, we spotlight a couple of our members, their excitement about the Farm Link season, and the benefits and challenges of distributing fresh produce to their clients.

FEATURED MEMBERS



**HEART OF THE VALLEY
FOOD PANTRY**
KIMBERLY, WISCONSIN

**KINGDOM MANNA
FOOD PANTRY**
RACINE, WISCONSIN

In Their Own Words:

1. We really appreciate you sharing Farm Link produce with your clients. How many clients or families does your pantry typically serve, and how does your pantry decide which fresh fruits and vegetables to provide?
2. We know you work hard to provide your clients with great food. What are some of the challenges your pantry faces in providing fresh fruits and vegetables to your clients?
3. What positive effects do you see from providing fresh fruits and vegetables to your clients?
4. Do you hope to provide more Farm Link produce in the future?



HEART OF THE VALLEY FOOD PANTRY — KIMBERLY, WISCONSIN



For the past two seasons, Tina Simmons, Food & Operations Manager at Heart of the Valley Food Pantry in Kimberly, Wisconsin, has been personally picking up Farm Link produce at Riverview Gardens. Riverview Gardens, located in Appleton, Wisconsin, is in their second year of growing food for Farm Link and will be producing over 35,000 pounds of tomatoes, beans, cucumbers, radishes, lettuce, squash and more for our Outagamie County members over the course of the 2021 growing season.

“Our pantry is an outreach of Fox Valley Christian Fellowship and has been serving the community for six years,” Tina shares. “We are all volunteers, there are no paid positions in our pantry. I have been part of the pantry for four years, but have stepped into the daily Food & Operations Manager role since the beginning of Covid-19. Like you, we have had to make continuing changes to accommodate what is going on around us.

We are currently serving about 80 families at each of our twice a month distributions. We use the Riverview Gardens vegetables each time. Our patrons really love fresh fruits and vegetables, and we do what we can to provide what we

The very best part about picking up at the garden directly is how fresh the vegetables are! These are the only donations we get that are so fresh!

Tina Simmons, Food & Operations Manager at
Heart of the Valley Food Pantry

are able - it all depends on what donations we were able to get. Sometimes we have an abundant amount and other times we have less. Some vegetables and fruits are also seasonal. We sometimes get fruits and vegetables on the Fresh Stop program (a Feeding America Eastern Wisconsin program connecting members to retail donations in their area.) Depending on the freshness of the items, we can sometimes use them at our Tuesday distributions.

Clients love the fresh vegetables and fruits because it helps balance their diets and gives them healthier choices. We do our best to provide ALL the food groups at our distributions. Of course, there can be many challenges in providing fresh food items, especially in the summer. We need to continually assess the items to select what is usable and discard what is not and extreme weather affects that process.

On a positive note, we have just

received approval to get a larger walk-in cooler, which will help us store more of the fruits and vegetables to keep them fresh until distribution.

We are always grateful to receive whatever is possible from Riverview Gardens. The very best part about picking up at the garden directly is how fresh the vegetables are! These are the only donations we get that are so fresh!”



Heart of the Valley Food Pantry has been **serving the community for six years and providing food for about 80 area families.**



farm link

FEEDING AMERICA
Eastern Wisconsin

MEDICAL COLLEGE OF WISCONSIN



A Feeding America Eastern Wisconsin Initiative. In partnership with the Medical College of Wisconsin.

FeedingAmericaWI.org



This year marks the second season that the Kingdom Manna Food Pantry in Racine will be receiving Farm Link produce. Being only a short distance away from Johnsen Farm, one of Farm Link's veteran growers, Kingdom Manna picks up there twice a week to gather the harvest, and will distribute a total



vegetables, although we serve canned and frozen, people tend to love fresh produce much better." At the Kingdom Manna Food Pantry, carts are prefilled

of 60,000 pounds of fresh produce to Racine county residents over the course of the 2021 growing season.

"Our pantry serves close to 1,000 families per week," explains Debra Brown, Co-Pastor at Kingdom Builders Fellowship Center & Outreach Ministry and Director of the Kingdom Manna Food Pantry. "Our carts consist of foods from all of the four basic food groups, and when it comes to fruits and

When we notify the community in advance of the particular produce we will be giving out, more people will sign up to receive a cart.

Debra Brown, Co-Pastor at Kingdom Builders Fellowship Center & Outreach Ministry and Director of the Kingdom Manna Food Pantry

with food based on the number of people that sign up on a daily basis, allowing distributions to run smoothly and efficiently.

"If available from our suppliers, we will always try and provide the community with BOTH fruits and vegetables. Sometimes the fresh fruits and vegetables that we retrieve from the local grocery stores have far exceeded their freshness and we cannot serve them. And other times, the

fruits and veggies are not handled properly which damages them beyond usage.

Satisfied people who have balanced diets realize the importance of incorporating fruits and vegetables. They also comment on our social media page with great appreciation for the fresh produce. When we notify the community in advance of the particular produce we will be giving out, more people will sign up to receive a cart. People will take these Farm Link produce everyday if we had them! The corn and cabbages were fantastic."



This season, Kingdom of Manna Food Pantry will distribute over **60,000 pounds** of fresh Farm Link produce to Racine county residents in need.



2018 – 45,000 Lbs.

2020 – 160,000 Lbs.

2018 - 2021 **475,000+**

2019 – 85,000 Lbs.

2021 – 185,000 Lbs.

POUNDS DISTRIBUTED

To learn more about the Farm Link initiative and how you can get involved, contact:

farmlink@feedingamericawi.org



We Buy Surplus!

If you are a farmer in Wisconsin and have agricultural surplus that could feed someone in need, we want to talk to you!

The Farm Link initiative goes beyond contracting directly with local farms to ensure that no nutritious food is wasted. **LET'S NOT LEAVE IT IN THE FIELD, LET'S ADD IT TO OUR YIELD!**

To find out how this program could benefit your operation, contact our Farm Link team today: farmlink@feedingamericawi.org

TEAM MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



KATINKA HOYER

Medical Anthropologist,
Medical College of Wisconsin

As the newest member to this project team, I am looking forward to using my skills as an anthropologist to impact food justice in Wisconsin. Access to fresh and healthy food is a fundamental right and I am excited to be part of this collective action that attends to this.

Gardening and preparing meals from home-grown vegetables and herbs is one of the things I look forward to most in the summer. I also have been using and studying the medicinal uses of plants for many years after doing fieldwork in Ecuador. I'd be interested to learn how our farmers may be growing and preparing plant medicine - especially in gearing up for winter!"



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Featured Recipe

CUCUMBER TOMATO SALAD

Adapted from the Spend With Pennies Blog

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cucumber, sliced
- 2-3 tomatoes, diced
- ½ red or yellow onion, sliced
- 1 tablespoon fresh or dried herbs such as parsley, basil or dill (optional)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 tablespoon vinegar (red wine or white)
- Salt and pepper to taste

DIRECTIONS

1. Combine all ingredients in a bowl and toss well
2. Refrigerate at least 20 minutes before serving

www.spendwithpennies.com/cucumber-tomato-salad/

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farmlink@feedingamericawi.org