Our communities face significant economic hardship in the wake of COVID and inflation.

Everyone has struggled in some way, but the impact has fallen hardest on lower-income households. Now, the cost of food, fuel, and housing, and the end of COVID benefits and stays on evictions are making it harder for so many to put enough food on the table. For agencies like the Amherst Survival Center, the extra COVID funding is also coming to an end. We face more need with fewer resources. In this year’s Gift Catalog, you will find information about our accomplishments and goals as well as suggestions for gifts you can give to keep our work going.

Project Bread charts rising rates of food insecurity in Massachusetts – 18.3% overall in August, very close to its pandemic peak and more than two times higher than the pre-pandemic rate of 8.2%. If you have children, your chances are 1 in 4 of not always knowing where your next meal is coming from. Due to the long-term impact of systemic racism, if you’re Black or Latino and have children, those chances are 1 in 3. Here at the Center, we are seeing these statistics face-to-face, with record numbers of people coming for food, exceeding our highest pandemic surges.

The Center has always been more than just a place to access food. It is a place where people find acceptance, friendship, community, and hope. This fall, our building has fully re-opened. Regulars are greeted by name, newcomers are welcomed, and the banter is lively once again. We have returned to being a one-stop shop for access to concrete, personalized assistance and connection.

Your collective caring has made it possible for us to respond nimbly and effectively to rapidly evolving and unprecedented need in our community. The pandemic has helped us see our mission more clearly and has made our connections dearer. We hope the stories and information in this Catalog will inspire you to share your time, energy, and resources so that the Center can continue to be a place where our neighbors can turn for nourishment of both body and spirit.

Lev BenEzra, Executive Director
Building Community: Feeding Body & Soul

The Amherst Survival Center’s role as a community hub has been central to our mission since our organization’s founding and remains critical today. When people feel welcome and respected, they are more likely to return.

Food, chosen, delivered. Food that is chosen based on one’s tastes and cultural preferences is more likely to be consumed. Our Food Pantry is open again for full choice shopping. During the pandemic, we added curbside pick-up and home delivery of food, and we learned how critical these are to removing barriers to access, pandemic or no. These will continue.

Food and conversation. In September, we reopened our dining room after a two-and-a-half-year hiatus. It has been a welcome reprieve from the isolation that so many people suffered over the last couple years. Guests who want a to-go meal still have that option.

Fun and growth. We also resumed community activities in September, such as movement classes, wellness workshops, and special events that celebrate the rich diversity of our community. These activities build connection and decrease isolation. They feed the whole person.

Access. Visitors can also access our medical clinic and other community resources such as health insurance and SNAP enrollment, housing support, and Salvation Army vouchers to shop for needed items.

Clean and secure. A hot shower, laundry facilities, lockers, and mail service provide much needed support for people experiencing homelessness.

Our doors are open and we’re here to welcome you!

$50 Community Activities and Resources
Classes, workshops, and access to other community resources.

$100 Laundry, Showers, and Mail Service
Critical support for people experiencing homelessness.

$1,080 Lunch for 300 People
Providing a hot lunch remains at the heart of our operations.

Last year, we provided more than a million meals – prepared and groceries – to more than 7,000 community members.
More Food for More People

The Amherst Survival Center is a lifeline for thousands of people. With food insecurity well above pre-pandemic levels and rising, we need to increase our capacity.

It’s been our goal to increase our monthly Pantry allocation from one to two weeks’ worth of food, an amount that reflects the true level of need. Recently, we met that goal through fundraising and food drives! Pantry shoppers can now do their monthly full shopping and return for a second pick-up of fresh produce and perishables, or can have this “Fresh Boost” delivered to their door. We continue to expand food options that meet dietary restrictions, such as a nut or gluten allergy, and that match cultural preferences, offering items such as halal meat and masa.

To distribute this much food, we of course have higher expenses. We must use our vehicles to make more deliveries, more trips to the Food Bank, and collect more food from retail donors. While we get lots of food donated, we also purchase additional food. With our commitment to having more fresh food and more choices, we will be purchasing a greater proportion of food than we did in the past.

People feel so relieved knowing they can find nutritious food at the Center. One senior recently said, “The money I’m saving on groceries covers the cost of my over-the-counter medicine. I need these and they aren’t covered by my insurance.” Please help support the nutritious core of the Center’s operation.

$27 Fresh Boost
More fresh food midway through the month.

$134 Groceries for a Household of 4
Two weeks’ worth of nutritious groceries from the pantry.

$180 Lunch for 50 People
Hot, nutritious lunches served in our dining room or taken to go.

Want to sponsor a full day of lunch? See page 3.

Pet Care Package

When times are hard, the companionship of a pet can be priceless. But often budgets are so tight that some forego feeding themselves in order to feed their pets. Having free pet provisions at the Center means that our furry friends are cared for and all the human food we give can go to their people.

$25 Pet Care Package
Make a gift in honor of or in memory of a favorite furry friend!

6,290 bags of pet food were distributed in the last year
“It’s nice. It’s warm. It’s friendly. It’s a safe place.”

“I first visited the Center a few years ago. My niece kept saying ‘Auntie, you need to go down there.’ I started coming for lunch, but then I branched out and did all the rest—fresh food, bread, and groceries. I live alone, and I’m a senior on a limited income, so it actually has saved a lot on my food bill. And I’ve made a little network of friends here. We socialize and look out for each other. When we closed down because of COVID, it was different, but we still looked out for each other and kept in contact.”

— Margaret
“I think it’s such a great place.”

“I moved from LA in 2015 and had no winter clothes. I got a whole bunch of warm stuff from the store. Not having to worry about buying as much food is a huge deal for someone who is working, but still on a tight budget. The Amherst Survival Center helps in so many ways. It’s more than just free stuff. It’s counter-intuitive to the way things usually are, where every place costs money to be at. Our sense of public good is waning, but here at ASC, it’s strong. It’s a free place to come for food and to hang out.”

— Aschleigh
Access: Reaching More People

The pandemic forced us to innovate and figure out new ways to get food to people. We are now moving into the future with a combination of our tried-and-true pre-pandemic services along with the best of lessons learned over the last few years.

As the pandemic descended upon us all, the Center closed the full-choice Pantry and developed systems for curbside pick-up and grocery delivery across our service area. We did this to allow for social distancing and safety from infection, but these strategies quickly proved their tremendous value to our neighbors who have mobility issues or limited access to transportation, or who are home-bound or just not able to get to the Center when it’s open. With the full-choice Pantry now open, we are committed to keeping them going.

Last year, we delivered monthly groceries to about 1,340 people. Our new refrigerated van will allow us to serve more people in the future and bring a second mid-month delivery of produce and perishables to all of our grocery delivery participants. Please help us reach those in our communities facing the greatest challenges to food access.

$100 Delivery Vehicle Maintenance
Gas and repairs to connect more people with the food they need.

$200 Evening Curbside Pickup
Expanded hours make food accessible to those who work during the day.

$500 Grocery Delivery for 5 New Households
When families contact us for the first time, help us say “Yes! We’d love to help.”
“One of the things I appreciate about coming to the Center is that I know I’m going to have one meal a day that’s balanced.”

Meals Provided

- OCT 2019 - SEP 2020: 754,265
- OCT 2020 - SEP 2021: 1,147,240
- OCT 2021 - SEP 2022: 1,148,598 total meals for over 7,000 people (prepared plus groceries for meals at home)

Daily Lunches (on average)

- OCT 2019 - SEP 2020: 45,198
- OCT 2020 - SEP 2021: 103,298
- OCT 2021 - SEP 2022: 108,005 prepared meals served

284 lunches served each day
Due to the pandemic, surging inflation, and expiration of pandemic-related government assistance, the number of people coming to the Amherst Survival Center for food has been steadily increasing. In response, we are providing more food, making it more accessible, and reaching out so that more people know we are here to help.

**Fresh Food Distributed**

PRODUCE AND BREAD RECOVERED FROM LOCAL FARMS AND STORES

- **110 people/day**
- **200,000 lbs total**

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“I am thankful to get food that helps me maintain my health issues, mainly low sodium products, and delivery since I do not have a vehicle.”

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**Groceries Distributed**

MORE FOOD TO EACH FAMILY

- **15 days of groceries (216 lbs) each month for a family of 4**

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“Just knowing that the ASC is in my life is comforting. To be able to see friendly faces and get a delicious lunch is so appreciated.”
Providing Health Essentials

Good food is not the only thing that’s essential to good health. Expensive items like diapers, tampons, and incontinence products are not covered by food stamps and are often “out-of-budget,” and many people go without. The Center has filled this need, too.

A parent without enough money to buy diapers may be forced to leave diapers on too long. A senior who cannot afford incontinence products may shut themselves in at home or suffer humiliation. Without hand sanitizer or menstrual products, people are put at unnecessary risk. The Center provides all these personal care items free of charge. We also have distributed more than 100,000 KN95 and surgical masks and more than 40,000 COVID test kits. Your support helps the Center purchase needed items when they’re not available through donations.

The Free Clinic

Health care can be very expensive, even with insurance. People with limited income often do not seek care because they can’t afford it. But not treating a problem can be even more expensive in the long run. Without access to the wonderful volunteer healthcare professionals in our clinic, our patients would be at risk for missed diagnoses, worsening symptoms, and unnecessary suffering.

Our health clinic team diagnoses illness, makes referrals to specialists and diagnostic tests, provides wound care, and writes prescriptions. They may also do something as simple as writing a note to clear a child to play sports, or a parent to apply for a job or return to work. Simple, but critical. Help us continue to deliver this important care.

$30  Diapers for Four Children
Help wipe out diaper need.

$50  Toiletries & Personal Care Pantry
The bare necessities of toilet paper, soap, toothpaste, or menstrual products.

$100  Supplies for the Health Clinic
Support daily operations of the clinic.
“Along with a few friends, this place has helped me survive.”

"At 17, I joined the Marines, and after active duty, I worked and went through college. I didn’t realize I was dealing with PTSD, and most doctors didn’t either. I went through some tough years of substance use and homelessness. At the Leeds VA Medical Center, I’ve found the recovery help and medical care I need. The Amherst Survival Center has been part of my life for about 30 years. Along with some really good friends, this place has kept me alive. All the stuff that I’ve gotten from the Center to camp out and survive—and food for me and my service dog, too. I also come for lunch and the company."

— James
“**It’s a very pleasant experience, enjoying a meal with good company.**”

“For 40-some years, the Amherst Survival Center has been there when I needed it, first when I was just starting out with a wife and young children, then in the 90s when I was working and needed help occasionally, and then for the past 20 years after a bad car accident left me unable to work. I got food and volunteered once a week doing food recovery after my rehab. It made me feel productive and useful. The Amherst Survival Center feeds my body and spirit.”

— Derek


“**I just want everyone to know we’re here to help. There’s no shame.**”

“I got my internship here during my sophomore year at UMass in March 2021. I also became a participant and do a monthly shop when I need it. We are here for everyone, even if it’s something small. It’s saving money for gas, it’s saving money for textbooks, rent and utilities. Being here is such an important part of my life and connection to the community. Also, it feels like a step forward to what I want to do in the future. This feels like something I’m supposed to do.”

— Emma
Thank You, Volunteers!

The Center could not operate on any given day without our incredible volunteers. Volunteering is a meaningful way to engage with and contribute to the community, filling hundreds of essential roles. Many program participants choose to volunteer. This is central to our approach and mission, fostering a community where we know that we all have gifts to offer, we all have needs, and that together, we have enough.

We also deeply appreciate the volunteer members of our Board and its committees who help with fundraising, financial oversight, policy making, and strategic planning.

If you are interested in volunteering, now is a great time to get involved! Email volunteer@amherstsurvival.org to learn more.

Thank you to our dedicated Staff, Board of Directors, and Committees!

Staff

Philip Avila, Community Meals Coordinator
Alex Ayala-Palacin, Program Assistant
Carleen Basler, Program Director
Lev BenEzra, Executive Director
Felix Caban, Food Pantry Assistant
Chris Dyson, Food Pantry Assistant
Phil Gilfeather-Girton, Director of Finance & Administration
Miranda Groux, Resource Coordinator
Sam Guerin, Operations Coordinator
Elizabeth Morrissey, Food Pantry Coordinator
Marcus Opalenik, Food Pantry Assistant
Lisa Queenin, Development Manager
Joseph Rogers, Food Pantry Assistant
Lisa Solowiej, Volunteer & Outreach Coordinator
Kendell Sweeney-Thomas, Food Pantry Coordinator
Karolyne Symonds, Community Meals Assistant

Board of Directors

Ted Parker, President
Jennifer Moyston, Vice President
Deron Estes, Treasurer
Christopher Howland, Clerk
Risha Hess
Cammie McGovern
Matthew Morin
Benjamin Peters
Liesl Swogger
Nicola Usher
Allison van der Velden

Thank you to our interns and support staff who are an essential part of our team.
Food Recovery Is Essential to Our Food Programs

We are fortunate to live in an area where nutritious fresh food is abundant, and we believe everyone should have access to the bounty grown locally. Luckily, our food recovery partners agree. Thank you to the local farms, grocery stores, and community members with backyard gardens who generously make in-kind donations of fresh produce, baked goods, and surplus food for our neighbors every day.

Thank you to our Food Recovery Partners...

Aldi, Atkins Farms, Big Y, Bruegger’s Bagels, Mi Tierra, Panera Bread, Starbucks, Stop & Shop, Tandem Bagels, Target, Trader Joe’s, Walmart, Whole Foods Market

...and to Local Farms Fighting Hunger!

Amherst College Book and Plow Farm, Ancient Ponies Farm, Astarte Farm, Bloody Brook Farm, Brookfield Farm, Buffam Brook Farm, Food Bank of Western Mass Farm, Jekanowski Farm, Joe Czajkowski Farm, Kitchen Garden Farm, Laurenitis Farm, Many Hands Farm, Mycoterra Farm, Next Barn Over Farm, Old Friends Farm, Riverland Farm, Simple Gifts Farm, Small Ones Farm, UMass Student Farm

Area businesses are vital partners in our mission, providing financial support or goods and services, running food drives, and supplying volunteers. At a time when many local businesses are themselves struggling, we have been so touched and honored by the ways they have continued to support their communities. Please join us in thanking them!

For a list of business supporters, visit amherstsurvival.org/business-partners
Together we can!

The outpouring of community support over the last few years has been nothing short of phenomenal. You donate financially, volunteer your time, organize food drives, drop off bags and egg cartons for us to reuse, and respond every time we convey a need. Thanks to your generosity and compassion, our neighbors still have a place to turn to for help.

Inflationary price increases are particularly devastating to lower-income households with already tight budgets. They have no savings to chip away at; they already have a negative bottom line. More people than ever are relying on our programs to help cover the cost of food and put limited resources toward other necessities like gas, housing, clothing, and medical bills. We see just how critical it is to maintain our expanded food and nutrition programs, and we need your help! Unfortunately, many COVID-specific grants for organizations and resources for individuals have ended.

With your support we will:

✓ Sustain the newly increased amount of food provided in the food pantry, offering two weeks of groceries for all households by providing a second monthly "Fresh Boost" shop or delivery of additional produce and perishables.

✓ Expand the delivery program to new neighborhoods, ensuring reliable access for our neighbors who can’t get to the Center.

✓ Offer more community activities and support services to deepen connections and help people meet their basic needs.

Individual and business donors provide 64% of our operating budget. It is your support that will sustain and expand the Center’s reach in 2023 and beyond.

Cash Revenue: 35% • In-Kind Donations: 65%

Cash Revenue Sources
- Individuals 60%
- Government 24%
- Grants 11%
- Business/Orgs 4%
- Interest/Other 1%
Thank you for your ongoing support!

This holiday season, give the gift of nourishment and health. We invite you to honor your friends, family, or business associates with gifts from this catalog. You can also make an unrestricted gift to support all programs and operations.

We will be delighted to send an ‘in your honor’ acknowledgement card to each of your recipients or, if you prefer, we’ll send the cards to you to distribute yourself.

Join our Sustainer’s Circle

We are in this for the long haul. When you become a Sustaining Partner, you show your neighbors you are here for them. Your monthly gifts allow us to plan effectively, increasing your impact as we care for our neighbors and strengthen our community.

Sign up at www.amherstsurvival.org