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COMMUNITY FOODBANK OF NEW JERSEY, MERCER STREET FRIENDS, AND NORWESCAP CONFER GRANT AWARDS TO
292 COMMUNITY PARTNERS ACROSS 18 COUNTIES

Food pantries and soup kitchens throughout the state receive critical funding to serve more people in need

HILLSIDE, NJ—May 7, 2021

The Community FoodBank of New Jersey (CFBNJ), Mercer Street Friends, and NORWESCAP today announced the selection of 292 partner food pantries, soup kitchens, and other local food assistance charities to receive grants through a \$3.5 million investment in network capacity. Awards ranging from \$5,000 to \$15,000 were given to help community organizations sustain their operations and expand their capabilities during this time of heightened food insecurity by funding additional refrigeration, household and hygiene items for clients, equipment to enable outdoor distributions, and other critical needs.

This first round of the larger, multi-year Network Investment Initiative was launched in collaboration with the New Jersey Pandemic Relief Fund's Endurance Grants program. Looking ahead, funds provided by the State of New Jersey through the CARES Act will allow the three food banks to continue building on this initiative. Distribution of grants was facilitated by the Community Foundation of New Jersey.

"We at CFBNJ are proud of our community partners who have never wavered in their resolve to continue serving those in need, even in the face of an unprecedented health crisis," said Carlos Rodriguez, President & CEO of the Community FoodBank of New Jersey. "Unfortunately, many food pantries and soup kitchens are struggling with financial uncertainty during this time when they are needed most. CFBNJ is happy to provide much-needed funds that will help them continue their critically important work."

For Atlantic, Bergen, Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Essex, Hudson, Middlesex, Morris, Passaic, Salem, Somerset, and Union counties, funds were awarded by CFBNJ. For Mercer County, grants were provided by Mercer Street Friends, and in Hunterdon, Sussex, and Warren Counties, grants were administered by Norwescap.

"Mercer Street Friends has been fortunate to partner with over 100 agencies in Trenton and Mercer County to provide hunger relief to those in need," said Bernie Flynn, CEO of Mercer Street Friends. "The Network Investment Initiative was one more opportunity for us to offer support to our local partners and stand with them as they continue their efforts to address food insecurity during the pandemic. Their work is essential and thanks to the support of New Jersey Pandemic Relief Fund and through the Network Investment Initiative, our partners have been given support to do what they do best – serve their neighbors who are most in need."

"We know that we aren't reaching everyone struggling with food insecurity, and the best way to reach more people is to help our local partners build their capacity to supply more food to more people," said Mark Valli, CEO of NORWESCAP. "These grants represent a first step in that direction and more families will get the food they need to sustain themselves because of it."

Approximately 95% of the grant applications received reported significant increases in demand for food assistance over the past year, and elevated levels of food insecurity precipitated by COVID-19 will likely persist long after the pandemic has ended. In the months and years ahead, the work of New Jersey's food pantries and soup kitchens will remain more important than ever before.

View the full list of organizations that received grants at cfbnj.org/network-investment-grants.

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ABOUT THE COMMUNITY FOODBANK OF NEW JERSEY

[The Community FoodBank of New Jersey \(CFBNJ\)](https://cfbnj.org), a member of Feeding America®, has been delivering food, help and hope across the state for 45 years. Last year, CFBNJ provided nutritious food for over 66 million meals through its network of more than 1,000 community partners including pantries, soup kitchens, emergency shelters, mobile pantries, and child and senior feeding programs throughout the 15 New Jersey counties it serves. For our hungry neighbors, the Community FoodBank of New Jersey is the powerful agent of change that fills the emptiness caused by hunger and provides resources that are essential to earning a sustainable living.

ABOUT MERCER STREET FRIENDS

As a Quaker-affiliated, nonsectarian 501(c)(3) organization, Mercer Street Friends is dedicated to nourishing minds and bodies, empowering families and communities by providing comprehensive programs to address poverty and the physical and emotional trauma it creates for children, families and the community. Our programs focus on: food, families and education.

As the primary source of government and privately donated food, Mercer Street Friends Food Bank leads the community response to hunger in Mercer County. In 2020, the Food Bank channeled more than 5.5 million pounds of food to a network of more than 100 food pantries, shelters, school districts, soup kitchens, meal sites, senior centers, programs for the disabled and low-income housing sites. Throughout the year, Mercer Street Friends served over 100,000 individuals, providing 50,000 weekend Community Food Bags, totaling 800,000 weekend meals to families throughout the County.

ABOUT NORWESCAP

Norwescap provides vital and life-sustaining services to over 30,000 individuals and families in need in Northwest New Jersey. Our programs include strategies that address the critical areas of education, health and wellness, employment, housing, volunteerism and financial empowerment. Since our inception, we have been dedicated to achieving the mission of creating opportunities to transform lives through innovative programs and partnerships. For more information, please visit www.norwescap.org.