

2024

IMPACT REPORT



HOMETOWN
FOOD SECURITY PROJECT
MOWER COUNTY, MN



HometownFoodSecurity.org



Photos: Hormel Foods

Building a Stronger Food Security Future for Mower County

In 2024, we laid a strong foundation for the Hometown Food Security Project, prioritizing practical, community-driven solutions. Our new mobile app is making it easier for residents to access food resources while helping volunteers maximize their impact. Through social media and our email newsletter, we've connected with more than 30,000 people, fostering awareness and engagement across Mower County.

This work thrives because of our community's commitment. Students dedicate time to food distribution events and use their creativity to raise funds. Healthcare partners provide wellness screenings to bolster mobile pantry efforts. Businesses, nonprofits and community organizations contribute resources, ensuring that no one in our county faces food insecurity alone. We are especially grateful that we were able to support Hormel Foods with their Hometown Turkey Takeover at Thanksgiving. Together, we provided approximately 90,000 meals to our community.* These efforts reflect a unique and ambitious model of cross-sector collaboration—not easily replicated, but a testament to what can happen when communities, institutions and businesses unite.

Food insecurity is a complex and ever-changing challenge, but with a strong coalition in place, we are prepared to adapt and innovate. Together, we are not just addressing hunger—we are pioneering a sustainable model of community care that can inspire others across the state and beyond.

This impact report highlights the progress we've made and outlines our vision for the future. Thank you to everyone who has played a role in making this work possible. Your dedication is transforming lives and strengthening our community.

Molly & Gema
Co-leads, Hometown Food Security Project



Molly Lanke
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
UNITED WAY OF MOWER



Gema Alvarado-Guerrero
WORKFORCE WELLNESS FACILITATOR,
HORMEL FOODS

Photos: Hometown Food Security Project

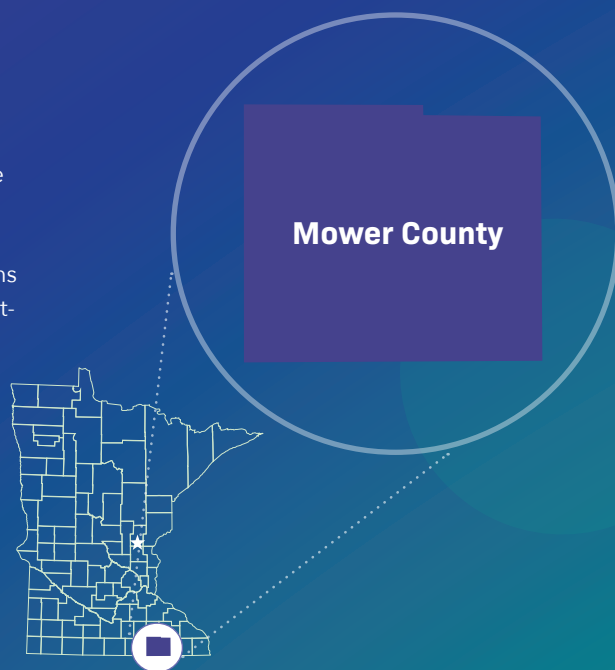
*Based on USDA guidelines, a meal is equal to 1.2 pounds of food.



OUR MISSION: A COMMUNITY-DRIVEN APPROACH TO FOOD INSECURITY

Our goal is clear: bridge the food insecurity gap in Mower County by strengthening collaboration among stakeholders and improving access to resources.

Ensuring food security requires a community-wide effort, and no single organization can solve it alone. That’s why we continue to strengthen a cross-sector coalition of partners—including businesses, schools, healthcare providers, government agencies and nonprofits—united in a shared commitment to ending hunger in Mower County. Since 2022, we have worked together to identify gaps, remove barriers and implement practical solutions tailored to our community’s needs. Through rapid pilots and long-term strategies, we are creating a model of sustainable food resources that balances immediate support with systemic change.



Food Insecurity Rate

Source: Feeding America, 2022

MOWER COUNTY

10.2%

CHILDREN IN MOWER COUNTY

16.4%

Our Goal

WORK TOWARD FOOD SECURITY IN MOWER COUNTY
DEFINED AS A FOOD INSECURITY RATE OF:

UNDER 3%

2024 IMPACT

2,000+

VOLUNTEER HOURS

40+

OUTREACH EVENTS & PRESENTATIONS CONDUCTED

420

APP DOWNLOADS

570+

FAMILIES ASSISTED WITH S-EBT

Photo: Hormel Foods

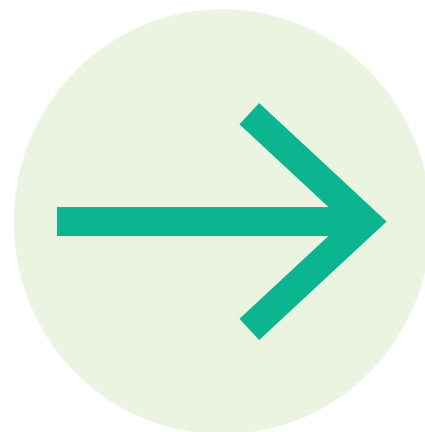
Photo: Hormel Foods

Photo: Hometown Food Security Project

Photo: Hormel Foods

Coalition Members





ACTION TEAMS: TURNING PLANS INTO ACTION

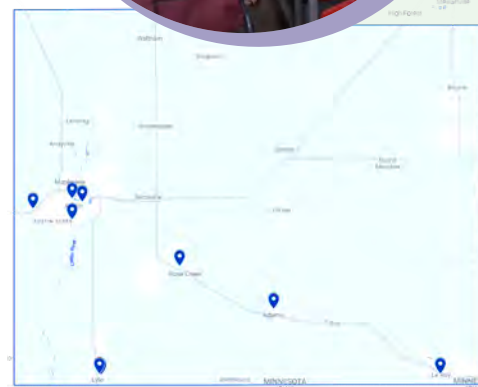
Our action teams are a critical component of how we tackle food insecurity in our community. From expanding food access to helping community members navigate SNAP benefits and providing essential resources, these teams are making a direct impact. Take a peek at their progress in 2024.

→ Mobile Food Pantry

The Mobile Food Pantry Action Team plays a crucial role in expanding food access by bringing essential food supplies directly to underserved areas. This approach is designed to reduce barriers to access and to make it easier for families and seniors in particular to receive the support they need. The team's efforts are driven by a committed group of volunteers who help at each event, ensuring smooth operations and meaningful community engagement.

Operating on a bi-monthly schedule, the team has strengthened partnerships with local organizations to expand reach. The Austin Salvation Army played a key role in sourcing food items, ensuring a consistent and reliable supply for families in need. A pilot collaboration with Wellness on Wheels provided free health screenings, offering additional support for community members. Ongoing efforts showcase the power of community-driven solutions in addressing food insecurity.

Photo: Hometown Food Security Project



MOBILE FOOD PANTRY LOCATIONS, MOWER COUNTY

13
MOBILE FOOD PANTRY
EVENTS HELD

1,000+
PEOPLE SERVED*

150+
VOLUNTEER HOURS

6,000+
POUNDS OF FOOD
DISTRIBUTED

* Based on U.S. Census: Mower County avg. household = 2.5 people.

→ SNAP Advocacy and Engagement

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is one of the most effective programs for reducing hunger and food insecurity in the United States, including in Mower County. SNAP works by providing monthly food benefits to income-qualifying families, seniors and those with disabilities to help ensure they have enough food.

In 2023, about 4,000 Mower County residents were enrolled in SNAP. Still more are eligible but face barriers to access, including difficulties navigating the enrollment process, disabilities, stigma and lack of awareness. That's where the SNAP Action Team comes in: raising awareness, reducing stigma and helping people enroll and make the most of their benefits.

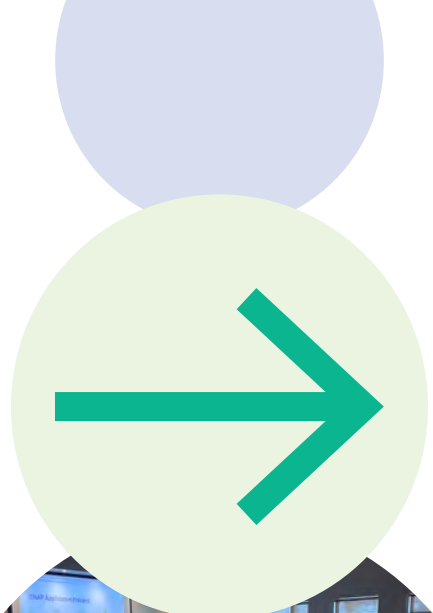
In 2024, the team—composed of 15 community members from various organizations—met regularly to advance the work through collaboration and targeted initiatives. Key initiatives included outreach events, educational materials and training opportunities, including:

Train the Trainer Workshop

Held in the spring, these sessions educated more than 30 service providers on SNAP, the applications and available resources.

Summer-EBT Awareness Campaign

Between March and August, the team distributed 1,500 flyers, used digital outreach to parents, educators and community members, and assisted 540 families in navigating the process.



SNAP is the number one resource to address food insecurity. Through the work led by the SNAP Action Team, we want to raise awareness and end the stigma around applying for SNAP. It can help everyone, from all walks of life.

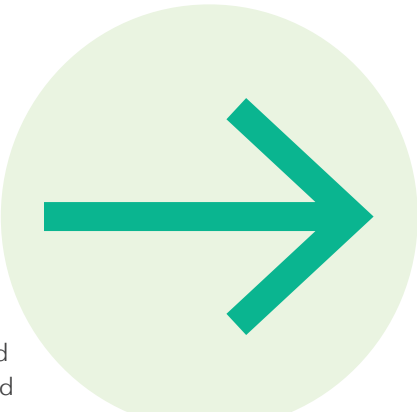
JENNIE CREWS
Financial Assistance Supervisor, Mower County
Health & Human Services

→ Volunteer Mobilization

Our coalition began with the belief that there was untapped time, talent and interest among volunteers who were ready to roll up their sleeves to reduce hunger. That proved correct, as we quickly encountered many people eager to support the effort. The Volunteer Mobilization Action Team’s mission is to figure out how best to harness that energy effectively.

The six-member team spent the year developing and executing a strategy to rally community support for coalition activities. Meeting regularly, they created and managed a variety of volunteer opportunities resulting in an engaged and growing support network across Mower County.

The team’s efforts led to strong results, with volunteers showing up to support mobile food pantries, food distribution and community events.



2,000+
VOLUNTEER HOURS

65+
ENGAGED VOLUNTEERS
/ MONTH

20+
VOLUNTEER-
SUPPORTED EVENTS



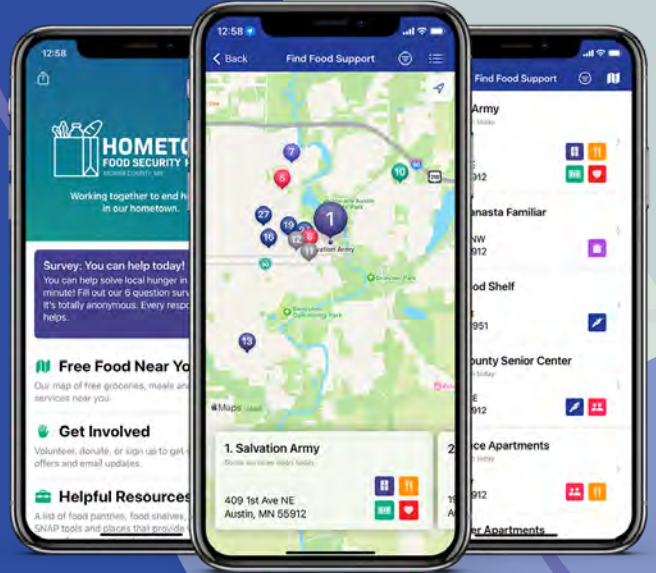
“ There’s something in it for you, too. You get this good feeling from helping. And when you connect with people face-to-face—not from a distance—you can see that it really means something to them.

BOB ROSEL
Salvation Army Volunteer and Community Advocate

THE MOBILE APP: NEW TOOL TO FIGHT HUNGER LOCALLY

A groundbreaking digital tool to support our mission of ending hunger in Mower County

Launched in the fall of 2024, the award-winning Hometown Food Security Project App, available on iOS and Android, connects users with real-time food access, local resources and opportunities to strengthen our community. With 420 downloads and climbing, it's already making an impact. Developed in partnership with Attention Span and made possible through the support of Hormel Foods, the app helps the community in several important ways:



1 Help Those in Need

The app provides real-time food support, including hours of operation, contact information and locations for local meals, pantries and other resources. It lists:

- Over 35 locally run resources where people can find help with food, finances, SNAP and more.
- Over 40 locations in Mower County that, according to the USDA, accept SNAP-EBT benefits, making it easier than ever for county residents to know about their local SNAP options.

2 Gather Supporters

Through push notifications and email newsletter signups, the app helps local organizations engage with community members around real-time volunteer opportunities, food donation locations, news and more.

3 Generate Insights

Using regular surveys, the app gathers household food insecurity data to generate insights that will help locally, in our other communities, and nationally.



COMMUNITY ACTION EVENTS

A Work of Art

April 2024

A Work of Art: Creating Food Security brought the Austin, MN community together at the SPAM® Museum to highlight food insecurity through artwork created by local students. More than 400 attendees engaged with over 200 works of art—paintings, pottery, essays and photographs—each offering a personal perspective on hunger. The event raised \$4,000 for local food security initiatives supporting youth and infant nutrition.

Organized by Hormel Foods, the Hometown Food Security Project and Austin High School, the event showcased how art sparks dialogue and action. Local partners like the Hormel Institute and Mayo Clinic Health System also contributed, emphasizing the vital link between food security and health.



COMMUNITY MEMBERS PARTICIPATED

420+

STUDENT-CREATED ARTWORKS

200+



Nourishing Champions

September 2024

The **Nourishing Champions** event brought together students, volunteers and community partners at Austin High School to assemble snack packs for local food programs. Over the course of an hour, participants packed thousands of snacks to support after-school programs, food pantries and community organizations across Mower County. Organized by Hormel Foods, Austin Public Schools, United Way of Mower County and the Hometown Food Security Project, the event combined hands-on service with education, helping students understand their role in addressing food insecurity. Hormel Foods partnered with MATTER, a nonprofit organization based in Minnesota, to provide the snack pack items and assist with event logistics.



STUDENTS
1,500

FOOD DISTRIBUTED
9,000 LBS.

VOLUNTEERS
150

LARGEST
SCHOOL EVENT MATTER HAS PARTNERED ON

SNACK PACKS ASSEMBLED
24,000

% OF PARTICIPANTS WHO GAINED AWARENESS OF FOOD INSECURITY*
60%



“ Participating in events like this definitely raises awareness about food insecurity among students. It’s inspiring to see the student body uniting and supporting one another to learn how we can collectively solve this issue.

AILANI THIRAVONG
Austin High School sophomore and student council vice president

*Survey of 235 APS students and staff following the event.

World Food Prize

October 2024

The partnership between Hormel Foods and the World Food Prize Foundation has provided Austin High School students with the opportunity to engage in real-world food insecurity relief challenges.

Students researched critical global issues such as agriculture sustainability, food waste, climate change and hunger and presented their ideas for solutions. They received mentorship through the process from Hormel Foods employees. In the effort's first year, top APS students advanced to the **Minnesota Youth Institute**, where they collaborated with peers and global leaders. Four of the students were then selected to attend the Global Youth Institute in Des Moines, Iowa, furthering their knowledge and commitment to addressing food security issues.

“

I think this whole project is opening their eyes to the fact that food insecurity is not something only in [other countries]. Food insecurity happens all over in our own community and they are the voice of the future. They are going to be the ones to solve this problem.

LISA SANDERS

Austin High School social studies teacher



Photo: Hormel Foods



Mayo Symposium: Transforming Rural and Community Healthcare

October 2024

Hormel Foods CEO Jim Snee, alongside community advocate Tammy Snee and Dr. Craig Gundersen, a leading expert on food insecurity and Professor of Economics at Baylor University, took the stage at **Mayo Clinic Health System's Rural and Community Healthcare Symposium**. Together, they highlighted the Hometown Food Security Project (HFSP) and the role of partnerships in addressing food insecurity.

The group participated in a panel discussion where they shared lessons learned from HFSP's hands-on, collaborative model—emphasizing the importance of trust, community engagement and shared leadership—with more than 300 healthcare leaders, researchers and community partners.

“We [Hormel Foods] can always write a check, but that's not who we are as an organization. We want to roll up our sleeves and do the work,” Jim Snee said. The discussion underscored how strategic cross-sector collaboration can drive meaningful change in rural communities. Snee joined a second panel on how collaboration can strengthen rural community health, urging healthcare providers, businesses and organizations to unite in pursuit of meaningful solutions.



Photo: Attention Span Media



Hometown Turkey Takeover

November 2024

Hormel Foods and hundreds of volunteers came together for the **Hometown Turkey Takeover**, a drive-thru event at the Mower County Fairgrounds that provided holiday meals to families across Mower County. Volunteers, including Hormel Foods employees, Austin High School students and members of local organizations, kept the energy high as they distributed turkeys and shared in the spirit of giving. Local partners like United Way of Mower County and the Austin Salvation Army played key roles in making the event a success. The Hometown Food Security Project team also played a crucial role, supporting volunteer mobilization and community outreach to ensure as many families as possible benefitted from the event.

TURKEYS DISTRIBUTED

5,000

VOLUNTEERS SUPPORTED THE EVENT

250+

MEALS PROVIDED *

90,000+

“Ours is a company that cares deeply about combating food insecurity, and we recognize that there’s a serious need here in Mower County. We’re here to help ensure that the people living in our community have full tables and full hearts this holiday season.”

JEFF BAKER
Group Vice President of Retail Marketing - Value Added Meats
Hormel Foods

*Based on USDA guidelines, a meal is equal to 1.2 pounds of food.



Photo: Hormel Foods



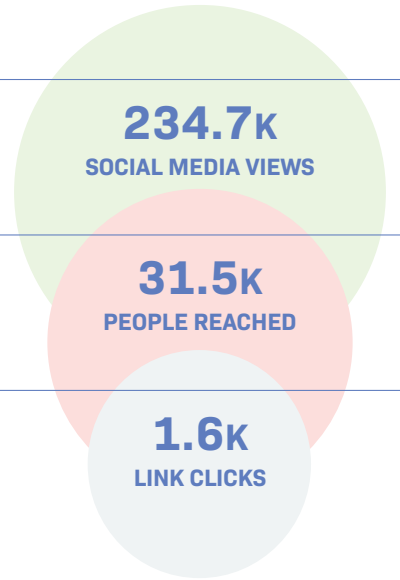
Photo: Hormel Foods



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

In 2024, we deployed a multi-pronged digital approach to connect with Mower County residents to share food security resources, volunteer opportunities, partner profiles and more. The results indicated we had our widest-reaching impact of any coalition year yet.

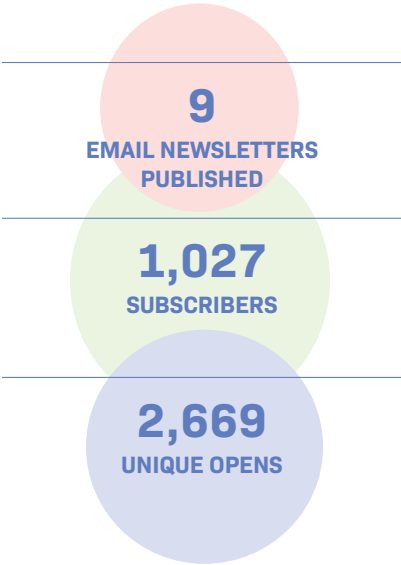
Social Media



Website



Email



Rooted in Service: Reflections on a Shared Journey

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

As I prepare to step away from the Hometown Food Security Project after these transformative two years, I find myself reflecting on the journey that brought us here and the deeper purpose that unites us in this mission.

My commitment to this work began long before our first official meeting. As a healthcare professional, I have always believed that human health and thriving are impossible when basic needs go unmet. This guiding principle shaped my nursing career, where I witnessed firsthand the profound impact of food insecurity on our community and the undeniable link between access to nutritious food and health.

The inspiration for this project arose from a collective realization: we had a responsibility to address food insecurity right here at home. The Hometown Food Security Project was established to unite local nonprofits, community leaders, businesses and government agencies—building the momentum needed to tackle this challenge in a more coordinated and intentional way. Together, we committed to lead with humility: to listen and understand first, and then to act with purpose.

This work would not have been possible without the founding coalition members and partners whose vision, and commitment, laid the groundwork. I'm grateful to all who've helped us get here—and inspired by those now carrying the mission forward with continued commitment and care.

The coalition's first years have given me many lasting memories. I recall the excitement as volunteer sign-up sheets for Salvation Army kitchen duty filled within a single day. I saw diverse stakeholders gather to share knowledge and brainstorm solutions. I felt the energy of 1,500 high school students rolling up their sleeves at a food-packing event. These moments have reaffirmed my belief in the transformative power of service and civic engagement: caring for others not only benefits those in need but also enriches those who give back.

The challenge of food insecurity remains complex and ever-changing. The project team will continue to navigate shifting policies and economic realities, using data to assess, adapt and respond to our community's evolving needs. I am hopeful that our work will serve as a playbook for other organizations and communities.

I have complete confidence in the foundation we have built together, and in our compassionate community that will carry this mission forward.

With gratitude and hope,
Tammy



Tammy Snee
FOUNDING MEMBER AND COMMUNITY
ADVOCATE HFSP

Photo: Hormel Foods

THE ROAD AHEAD

Adapting to a Changing Landscape

Food insecurity is not a static challenge—it shifts with economic forces, state and national policy decisions, and evolving community needs. Federal programs like SNAP, school meal assistance and housing subsidies are subject to change, sometimes expanding, sometimes contracting, often in ways that directly affect the population of Mower County.

Similarly, macroeconomic conditions, from inflation to shifts in the job market, can suddenly alter the demand for food assistance. The Hometown Food Security Project was built to adapt to these realities.

Our continued success depends on maintaining a strong, flexible and resilient coalition.

We remain vigilant in monitoring policy changes and economic trends that impact food security in our community. Our data-driven approach—bolstered by our mobile app and community feedback—will help us respond proactively rather than reactively. Whether it's increasing mobile pantry events, expanding SNAP education, or forging new partnerships, we are committed to evolving with the needs of the community.

The collaborative foundation we've built will be critical when facing new and unforeseen challenges. By strengthening our cross-sector partnerships with schools, healthcare providers, businesses and nonprofits, we are creating a model of resilience that can withstand shifts in public policy or economic downturns.

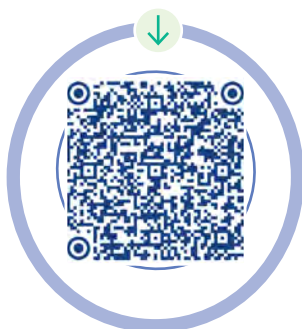
Together, we will ensure that no matter what changes come, Mower County will remain a place where every family has reliable access to the food they need to thrive.



GET INVOLVED

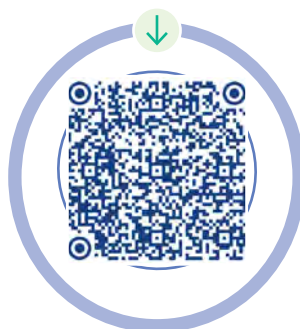
GET THE APP

Download our app to find food resources and help end food insecurity in Mower County.



STAY UPDATED

Get the latest insights, updates and event news delivered to your inbox. Sign up for the HFSP Newsletter today!



GET IN TOUCH!

Have questions or want to get involved? Reach out to our team for more information on SNAP resources and food security efforts in Mower County at:

foodhelp@hometownfoodsecurity.org





HOMETOWN
FOOD SECURITY PROJECT
MOWER COUNTY, MN



HometownFoodSecurity.org