



End of Summer Fun for a Cause!

Fresh Produce, Fitness
Fundraisers, and a Family
Volunteer Effort to Meet
Growing Needs

Farm to Pantry

This summer, we once again partnered with two farms: [America's Grow-a-Row](#) in Pittstown, and the [Wagner Farm Arboretum's Giving Garden](#) in Warren, to increase our food pantry patrons' access to fresh produce.

In August, 28 MEND volunteers hit the corn fields for a "U-Pick" Harvest Day at America's Grow-a-Row (AGAR) to benefit the MEND food pantry network. Many volunteers brought their families - and, together, they picked 832 ears of corn (and had great fun stomping down the corn stalks after they harvested them)!

Then, MEND volunteers distributed the freshly-picked corn to attendees at the Montclair Community Health Fair (organized by the First SDA Church of Montclair, home of one of the MEND food pantries).

In addition to the U-Pick Harvest Day, AGAR runs a Free Farm Market at MEND's Pierre Toussaint Food Pantry in Newark every 4th Saturday of the month, from July through October. There, food pantry patrons select fresh produce already harvested by AGAR volunteers.

The Wagner Farm Arboretum in Warren has a fresh produce harvesting and donation program, known as the "Giving Garden."

Volunteers harvest produce every Wednesday morning during the summer and fall for the MEND food pantries and other hunger relief organizations.

MEND volunteers pick up the produce from the Giving Garden, and deliver it to one of the 17 MEND food pantries designated each week.

"What beautiful corn, apples, and tomatoes. Thank you so much!"

- Pastor Doris Peterson, Food Pantry Manager at the Elizabeth Avenue Presbyterian Church Food Pantry in Newark

In only three weeks, Giving Garden volunteers have already harvested and donated 1,110 pounds of fresh produce to two MEND food pantries!







September Volunteer Opportunities

Have a few hours to spare this month? Help us provide more fresh and healthy food throughout our food pantry network!

- We head back to America's Grow-a-Row on Monday, September 17th, from 9:00 - 11:30 a.m. for another MEND Harvest Day.
- Our next Green Bean distribution event will be at the New Hope Baptist Church Food Pantry in East Orange on Tuesday, September 18th, from 4:00 - 7:00 p.m.

- We have Giving Garden driving shifts - and lots of other opportunities - available!

Volunteer Now!



More Patrons Visiting
MEND Pantries

Each month, MEND pantries share information about the number of patrons they serve, why patrons are visiting the pantry, whether the pantries had enough food, and what types of food the pantries most need. MEND also meets with the food pantry managers monthly to learn more about their patrons and needs, so that we can continue to strengthen and support their efforts.

Halfway through 2018, the number of patrons visiting MEND pantries is much higher than last year. For the 6 months ended 6/30/18, MEND pantries served 21% more patrons than the same period in 2017. At this rate, we will likely exceed the 117,679 patrons we served in 2017.

While the percentage of children our pantries served so far this year remains steady at 37%, it is still far too high.

How MEND Helps

In addition to using our Green Bean mobile food pantry to collect and distribute more fresh and healthy food to our patrons, MEND also raises funds to provide supplemental financial support for our pantries. The pantries use the funds to purchase much-needed food and equipment, and to help defray some of their food transportation costs.

This summer, for example, thanks to

the generosity of The Reitman Foundation and Orange Orphan Society, each of the 17 MEND food pantries received grocery store gift cards totaling \$1,000. This allowed them to purchase supplemental food for families with school-aged children who often lose access to their Federal school-based feeding programs over the summer months.



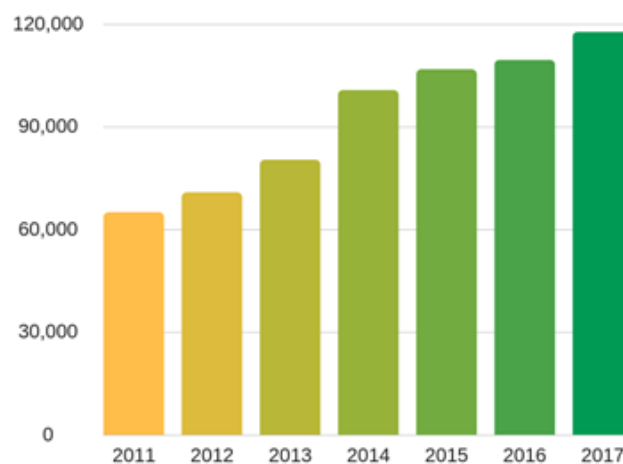
**Number of Patrons
Served as of 6/30/17:**
52,241



**Number of Patrons
Served as of 6/30/18:**
63,394

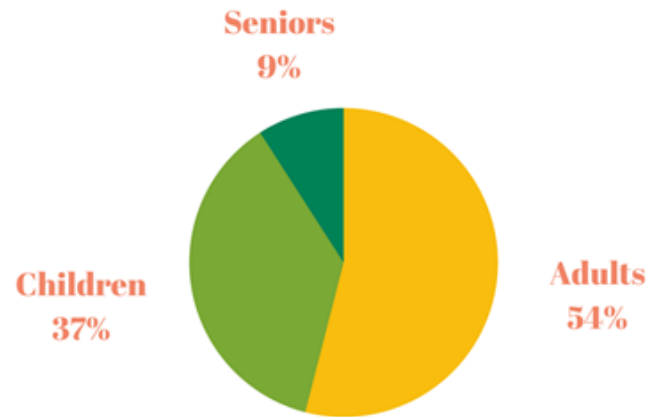


**Number of Food
Pantry Patrons
2011-2017**





MEND Patrons - by age (as of 6/30/18)



MEND Pantry Support 1/1/18 - 9/6/18



[Donate Now!](#)

Fitness Fundraisers

Swimming, Biking, Running...we did it all! Community members organized and participated in several fitness-themed events to benefit MEND this

summer!

First up was the Maplewood Makos swim team. The team hosts an annual swim-a-thon event, where swimmers raise funds based on the number of laps they can swim, and then donate the proceeds to a local charity. This year, after taking a tour of our mobile food pantry, The Green Bean, and learning more about hunger in Essex County, the Makos raised over \$6,000 from their swim-a-thon to support MEND!

Next was our inaugural "Bike for the Bean" charity ride at CycleBar Livingston. Riders made a donation of \$100 to reserve a bike, and enjoyed an energizing 45-minute spin class, followed by light (Green Bean-themed) refreshments. This event raised over \$2,000 for MEND!

The runners got into the act, as well: Maplewood resident Jessica Lituchy was inspired to create a "10 Days of 10Ks" challenge to raise funds to fight hunger and support The Green Bean.

With help from fellow runner and friend, Tim Lyons, they mapped out routes and recruited community partners to "host" - and runners to run - daily 10K group runs through Maplewood, South Orange, and West Orange from August 17th - 26th.

Donors gave over \$3,100 to support this event!

Have a fundraising idea to benefit MEND? Let us know by emailing info@mendnj.org.

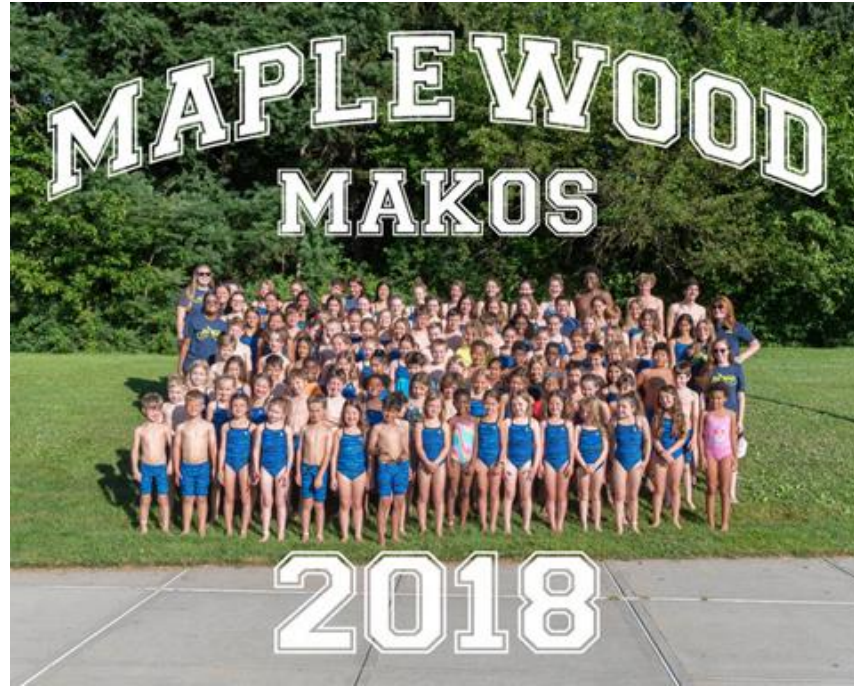


photo credit: Joy Yagid

[Read More About the Swim-a-Thon](#)





[Read More about 10 Days of 10Ks](#)

Volunteer Spotlight: The Salinas-Cavagnaro Family

Santiago Salinas, a senior at West Orange High School, is a big part of why the Salinas-Cavagnaro family got involved with MEND. At age 17, Santiago is already a seasoned volunteer, having helped coach autistic kids in swimming and getting involved in delivering health solutions to the Latino community, among other

efforts. Inspired by his charitable activity, his mom, Jessica Cavagnaro, thought the rest of the family should get into the swing of volunteering as well.

Ms. Cavagnaro joined the Junior League of the Oranges and Short Hills (JLOSH) in the fall of 2017. There, she worked on the conversion of The Green Bean into a mobile food pantry. When the regular bus Green Bean driver had a conflict, she went above and beyond by volunteering her husband, Jeremias Salinas, to step in! As a former moving-truck driver, he was well-suited to the task.

The Salinas-Cavagnaro family then made it a family affair - bringing along their 7-year-old daughter, Isabela to volunteer. Together, they filled their car with freshly-picked peaches donated by The Giving Garden. Isabella shared the backseat with several boxes of peaches (about 400 pounds in all) that the family delivered to the Apostles' House Food Pantry in Newark. They also helped pick corn at the MEND Harvest Day at America's Grow-a-Row last month.

“The fact that we’re able to give people healthy food versus canned goods, that’s great,” Ms. Cavagnaro said.

For Mr. Salinas and Ms. Cavagnaro,

who both teach Spanish in local school districts, pitching in to help boost the amount of fresh food going to pantries for their clients has been gratifying, and keeps them coming back to volunteer!







MEND

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