



2020 IMPACT REPORT



Thank you!



Dear MEND Supporters,

Consider this my love letter to you! Through your generous donations of time, food, and funds, you helped the MEND network not only survive – but thrive – in 2020!

What began in January 2020 as an exciting 40th anniversary year with our selection as the Impact100 Essex 2019 grant winner for our Fresh Food Hub proposal quickly evolved just two months later into a year fraught with challenges. Our monthly advisory board meetings with pantry leaders became weekly virtual check-ins to provide connection, support, and guidance.

The Hub couldn't come soon enough, as pantry leaders navigated increasing numbers of people needing food and other assistance, decreasing numbers of volunteers, closures of pantry buildings, new and ever-changing health and safety protocols, and a food supply chain and food donations that were limited and inconsistent, at best. Beyond the pantries, additional food needs arose, and numerous community partners also looked to us for assistance. Getting the Hub operational in a matter of months was key to supporting the community in the ways they needed during this time.

As we look toward the next 40 years, **we continue to focus on ensuring that everyone in our community has access to fresh and healthy, high-quality, culturally relevant food.** We are also **adding pantries, expanding programming to support residents who cannot regularly access the pantries,** and **increasing advocacy and outreach efforts.**

To say we couldn't have done this without you would be an extreme understatement. Every interaction with each of you over the course of the year showed how much you care about our community, and allowed MEND to continue to meet the essential needs of our residents with dignity.

Thank you!

Robin S. Peacock

About MEND

Meeting Essential Needs With Dignity (MEND) is an interfaith hunger relief network of 22 food pantries located throughout Essex County, NJ (two new pantries were added in 2021).

The MEND network includes eleven pantries in Newark, four in East Orange, and the remaining seven in Bloomfield, Irvington, Maplewood, Montclair, Orange, South Orange, and West Orange.

MEND works to alleviate hunger by providing fresh and healthy food, funds, volunteers, and a collaborative forum for its member pantries, so that they may share ideas and resources, and make a greater impact on the communities they serve. MEND also advocates for policies to eliminate food insecurity and to improve the lives of our patrons.

Board of Trustees:

- A. Jabbar Abdi, Chair
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- Benjamin Eyler
- Sister Linda Klaiss
- Dyanna Moon*
- Margaret Santana
- Rick Wessler

Staff:

- Robin Peacock, Executive Director
- Alicia Harrison, Program Manager
- Keily Hayes, Program Manager*
- Cameron Johnson, Operations Manager*
- Albertine Pierre, Administrative Assistant*

*Added in 2021

YOU MADE A TREMENDOUS DIFFERENCE IN A YEAR LIKE NO OTHER!

2020 BY THE NUMBERS



410,779 lbs of food
collected, packaged,
and distributed



Including
258,124 lbs of fresh
food



to provide
102,695 meals



and feed
397,892 people



in collaboration with
20 food pantries



and
**25+ community
partners**



with the help of
**125+ dedicated
volunteers**



2020: A YEAR OF GROWTH

What a difference a year makes!

In 2019, MEND operated largely remotely, with the Green Bean bus as its main way to support the food pantries through targeted food drives and fundraising for same-day fresh food distributions.

The **Impact100 Grant in January 2020**, combined with the **Green Bean Gala in March 2020**, enabled MEND to significantly accelerate the **creation of a Fresh Food Hub** in support of the member pantries at a time when it was most needed.

- Centralized refrigeration equipment and storage space allowed for large-scale donations and purchases of nutritious foods not available from other sources.
- The addition of the Sweet Pea van made it easier to transport more fresh and healthy food.
- Physical space allowed us to welcome volunteers to support the cause!

The **Fresh Food Hub is key to ensuring fresh food access for all**, in a manner that respects the dignity of each patron. It also **eases the logistical burdens** on pantry volunteers and staff. At just over 4,000 square feet, with two walk-in refrigerators, three freezers, and industrial shelving, it has helped to **increase fresh food access significantly**.



2020: A YEAR OF COLLABORATION

MEND entered 2020 primed to open its new Fresh Food Hub by year-end. COVID quickly accelerated that timeline, as **MEND member pantries faced an extreme increase in the number of patrons seeking food.**

Simultaneously, the South Mountain YMCA found itself with unused space as COVID forced its facilities to close. The Y offered the space to MEND, enabling us to operate a temporary Hub as we searched for a permanent location.

COVID also brought food insecurity to the forefront for other Essex County organizations. Collaborating with United Way of Greater Newark, MEND leveraged its partnership with the Community Food Bank of New Jersey and **served as a connector**, enabling several community organizations to meet their clients' food needs during this time.

These collaborations have since given rise to MEND's newest program, **MEND on the Move ("MOTM")**, piloted in 2021. MOTM leverages MEND's strategic partnerships and volunteers to offer home deliveries and free farmers markets to up to 1,500 food-insecure Essex County residents identified by community organizations as **unable to regularly access the food pantries.**



2020: A YEAR OF RESILIENCE

COVID impacted pantry operations by **limiting the availability of volunteers, severely curtailing local food drives and other local donation sources such as grocery stores, and restricting the pantries' ability to operate in their existing facilities.**

Though difficult, the challenges of 2020 also created unique opportunities for MEND and its member pantries to adjust operations. Pantries implemented drive-thru and outdoor distributions. Teams of volunteers came together to pack food at home and deliver it to patrons' doorsteps. **Having an established network allowed for the sharing of information, resources, and connections among pantry leaders.**

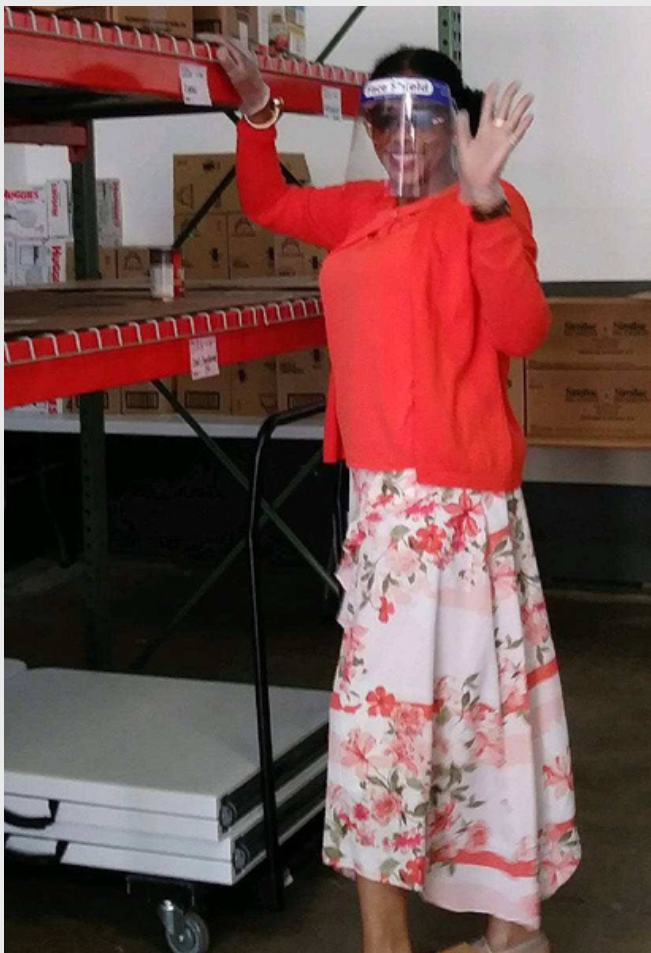
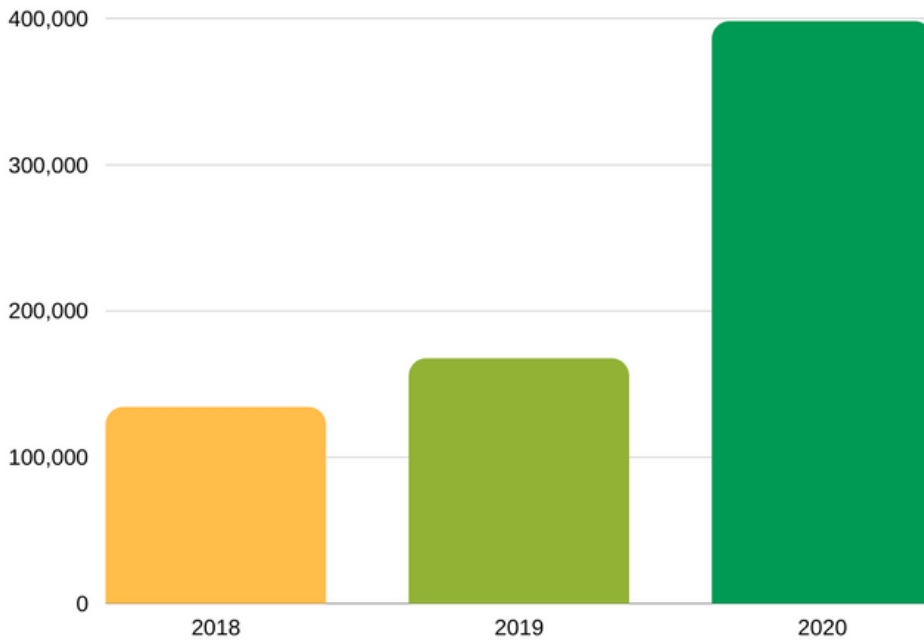
With your generosity, MEND was able to support the community by:

- Hosting weekly calls with pantry managers to assess evolving food and operational needs and share leads and best practices;
- Leveraging relationships with local residents and businesses to collect needed food and other essentials;
- Recruiting new volunteers to assist with pantry needs;
- Moving food from closed pantries to pantries that remained open;
- Sourcing fresh food in bulk and storing it until the pantries could distribute it;
- Advocating for increased SNAP benefits for pantry patrons; and
- Coordinating hunger relief efforts among local organizations.

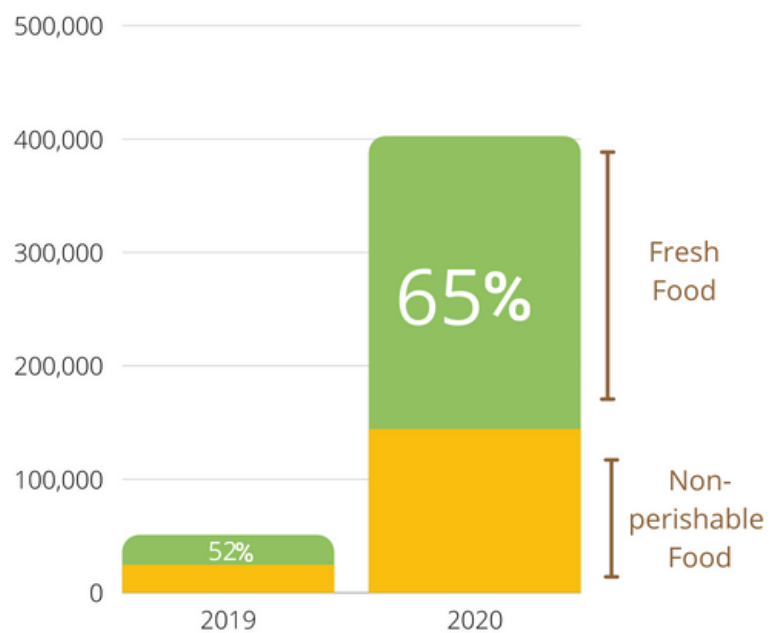


2020: A YEAR OF IMPACT

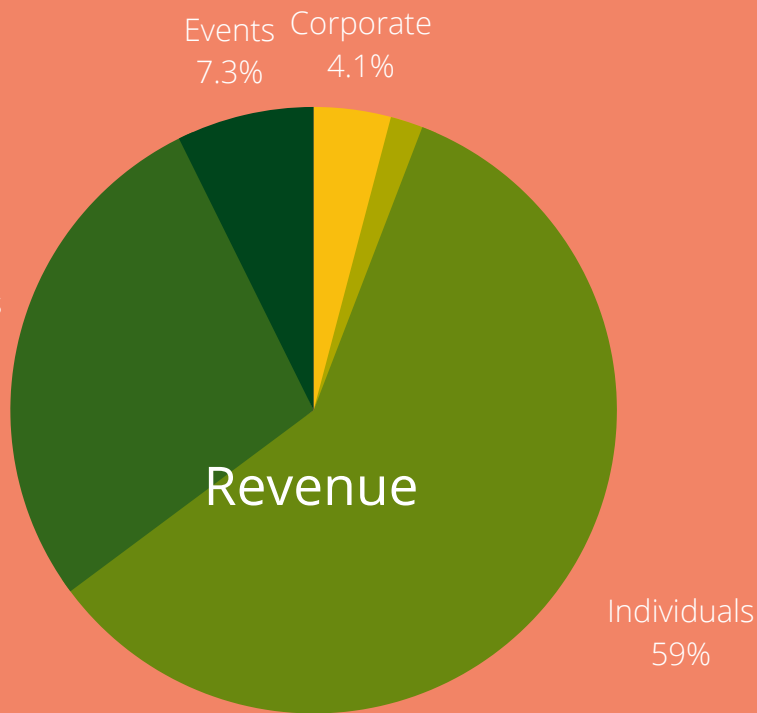
Number of People served by MEND member pantries (2018 - 2020)



Pounds & Types of Food Sourced 2019 v. 2020

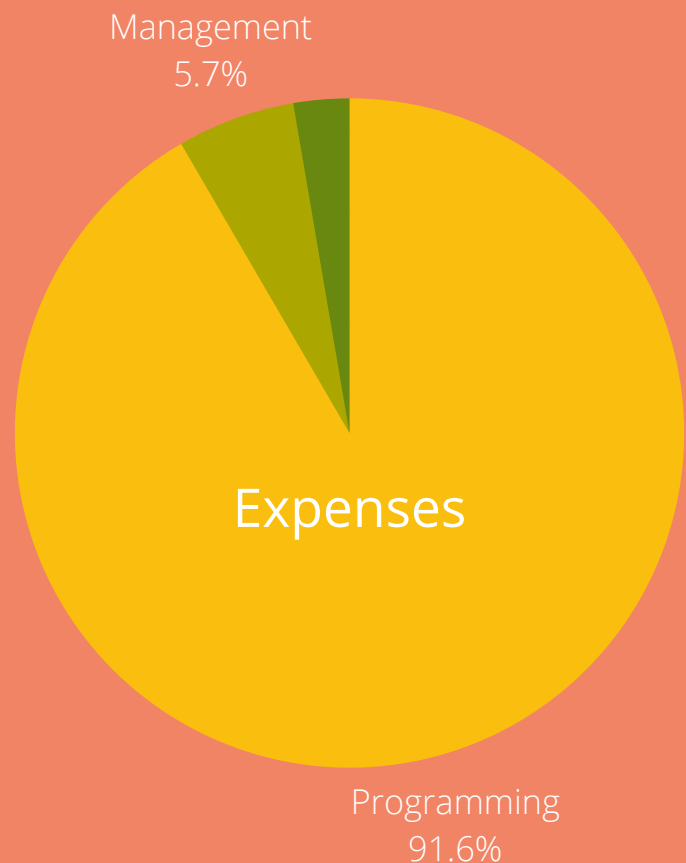


2020 FINANCIALS



Corporations	\$47,096
Houses of Worship	\$19,856
Individuals	\$676,608
Foundations	\$319,605
Donated Food	\$493,614
Donated Services	\$14,025
Special Events	\$84,054
Total Revenue	\$1,654,858


Programming	\$713,649
Management & General	\$44,409
Fundraising	\$20,964
Total Expenses	\$779,022
Increase in Net Assets	\$875,836



As a result of the increased support for MEND in recent years, we are planning to make significant investments in our organization's future in FY2021 & FY2022 – not only in terms of new and expanded programs and personnel, but also to ensure that we are consistently executing against our mission and sustainably supporting our growing food pantry network.

What's Next?


With your support, MEND continues to advance health equity through targeted, community-driven programming that emphasizes access to fresh, healthy, and nutritious food. Looking ahead, MEND is focusing on:



Supporting member pantries in the ways that work best for their leaders and communities



Expanding MEND on the Move from a pilot to a year-round program to extend food access beyond the pantry walls



Renewing our lease of the Fresh Food Hub, increasing fresh food sourcing partners, and adding pantries



Engaging with the community to inform and advocate for policies that support the self-sufficiency of patrons

"MEND helped my pantry by giving us a community in which to receive support, insight, and wisdom this year. Without MEND, this year would have been challenging, because we would not have been able to meet the needs of all our clients."

Pantry Manager, First Hopewell Baptist Church Food Pantry - Newark, NJ

"Without MEND, this year would have been challenging because we were limited in volunteers and our church was closed. MEND helped by packing bags, contributing non-perishables and fresh fruits and vegetables... MEND has been a lifeline for our pantry. THANK YOU!!!!"

Pantry Manager, Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, East Orange - NJ

2020 MEND Member Pantries

- Apostles House, Newark
- Blessed Sacrament Church, Newark
- Bloomfield Presbyterian Church on the Green, Bloomfield
- Church Women United, Irvington
- Elizabeth Avenue Presbyterian Church, Newark
- Elmwood United Presbyterian Church, East Orange
- First Hopewell Baptist Church, Newark
- Grace Pointe Seventh Day Adventist Church, Montclair
- Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, West Orange
- Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, East Orange
- Interfaith Food Pantry of the Oranges, Orange
- Isaiah House Food Pantry, East Orange
- New Hope Baptist Church Food Pantry, East Orange
- Our Lady of Sorrows Church, South Orange
- Parish of the Transfiguration, Newark
- Pierre Toussaint Food Pantry/St. Mary's Church, Newark
- Roseville Presbyterian Church, Newark
- St. James Social Services Corporation, Newark
- St. Joseph's Church, Maplewood
- United Community Corporation, Newark



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Essential Needs with Dignity

Please visit www.mendnj.org to
see our full donor list. Thank
you for your continued support!