

You Can Help Our Community Garden Grow with Monthly Gifts!

We are nurturing our Community Garden, and you can help it continue to grow! The Community Garden group is made up of members who give a monthly gift to support Helping Harvest and our mission to feed neighbors experiencing hunger in Berks & Schuylkill counties.

Community Garden members receive a special welcome packet and gift, have the opportunity for regular access to and conversations with a member of our staff, and receive exclusive behind-the-scenes content throughout the year.

If you are interested in joining the Community Garden and making an ongoing difference in our community, please scan the QR code below or contact Blake Reed at breed@helpingharvest.org or 610-926-5802 x222.



Join the
Community
Garden



Recent Challenges for Neighbors and Food Banks

With the recent federal government shutdown, pause in SNAP benefit payments, and prolonged PA state budget process, 2025 had been a challenging year for neighbors experiencing food insecurity and those of in the charitable food system.

Demand for our services has skyrocketed—October 2025 was our second highest month of distribution by weight ever at 1,130,976 lbs.—and at the same time, there have been periods of time when, with less government support, sourcing food has been particularly challenging. In December, an editorial by President Jay Worrall appeared in the Reading Eagle outlining the many reasons he doesn't anticipate demand for food assistance will decrease in the months ahead.

We are meeting these challenges head-on. Both the great work being done at our new Community Kitchen, and increased efforts to make more connections with retail partners are helping us close the gap between food supply and demand for our services. Increased donations from supporters have also been helpful—every dollar or pound of food donated benefits neighbors in need.

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WHAT'S ON OUR PLATE **WINTER 2026**



INSIDE:
Highlights from
the Community
Kitchen's first
nine months!

Fighting Hunger with Community, Hope, and Awareness

While the last several months have been especially challenging for neighbors experiencing food insecurity and those of us in the charitable food system, we have been simply overwhelmed—in the best way possible—by the support we have received from our community recently.

In April, over 160 friends and neighbors joined us for our Schuylkill County Celebration of Community & Hope at Mountain Valley Golf Course in Barnesville. This October, we celebrated in Berks County with 350 of you at the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel in Reading.

Additionally, this September, we recognized Hunger Action Month (HAM)—one of the biggest months for raising awareness around food insecurity issues. During HAM, our staff wore orange to mark Hunger Action Day on Sept. 9, we adopted the Greater Reading Chamber Alliance's pig mascot, Lucky Penny, for a week, welcomed a number of special volunteer groups, had a boost in food and financial donations, and much more.

4.30.26

Schuylkill County
Celebration of
Community & Hope
5pm, Mountain Valley GC

SAVE

**THE
DATE**

10.1.26

Berks County
Celebration of
Community & Hope
5pm, DoubleTree Reading

The Opening and Early Impact of the



We've served **75,000+** meals to date



Community Kitchen Opening Celebration

August 2025

4,100+ Volunteer Hours



I loved the meal! It was well balanced, and I was very satisfied.



4,000 Congregate Hot Meals



14,386 Thanksgiving Meals

14,000 Units of Bulk Food Repacked



In mid-April 2025, we opened our second location, the new Helping Harvest Community Kitchen at 229 Washington St. in downtown Reading. The nine months since have been spent realizing a dream that had begun just a few years prior to our move in date.

Now, with a state-of-the-art 7,000 sq. ft. commercial kitchen at our disposal and a talented team of three professional chefs, along with the help of volunteers, donors, staff, and our community, we are blowing that dream—and the initial goals we set for the Kitchen—out of the water.

From April-November 2025, we packaged 43,395 frozen heat-and-eat-ready meals and 14,386 frozen Thanksgiving meals, both of which were largely distributed to seniors and other neighbors. We also repackaged approximately 14,000 units of bulk product into 1 lb. packages for distribution to individuals and families. Additionally, we served around 4,000 neighbors with hot congregate meals provided to community partner organizations.

We held an Opening Celebration in August to honor this new project, as well as the people and organizations that helped make it a reality.

“The meals are a pleasant addition to the food distribution. The food was expertly prepared and not overly seasoned—good job!”