



Battling food insecurity: A2 and everywhere

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349 million people around the world don't have an adequate supply of food. Over 34 million people in the United States are food insecure. Every zip code in Washtenaw County experiences food insecurity. But it's not that simple.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines food insecurity as the lack of access to enough healthy food to live a healthy lifestyle.

There are many factors that can lead to food insecurity like poverty, income, employment and disability. Many times, people are forced to make a decision between paying for food and paying for other essentials like medication, rent or other utility bills. Often, food is what gets sacrificed, and having limited access to food supply can be largely affected by transportation and location.

Food Gatherers, a local food bank and rescue program, is the largest anti-hunger program in Washtenaw County. They partner with 170 agencies and programs that make up their hunger relief network and distribute food out to the community.

Last year, they distributed 7.3 million pounds of food, which is the equivalent of about six million meals.

Food Gatherers recently helped two of their partners secure a grant to purchase a van that they can use to deliver food to more rural areas.

"We're actively trying to address not just the food, but also some of these root causes," Communications Coordinator Lauren Grossman said. "Our mission is that Food Gatherers exists to alleviate hunger and eliminate its causes."

Another major component of food insecurity is race. According to the USDA, around 20 percent of Black-American households and 16 percent of Hispanic-American households experienced food insecurity in 2022. The national average is 10.2 percent, and the Washtenaw County average is 10.4 percent. This is in part due to the fact that Black and Hispanic neighborhoods are less likely to have as many supermarkets and grocery stores as other areas. LGBTQ households and single parent households also experience higher rates of food insecurity.

Food Gatherers has many programs in place working towards stopping food insecurity in Washtenaw County. They put more funds into zip codes with higher food insecurity rates and are actively talking to their agency partners to find out what the needs of the community are.

They started a program called the Health Care and Food Bank Partnership Initiative in which they have partnered with healthcare professionals to increase access to healthy food by

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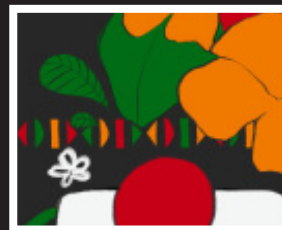
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