

## Cook and Distribute Surplus Produce

*Overview: Grateful Hearts fundamentally provides valuable nutrition, which is incredibly important to those experiencing homelessness as many have not only experienced food insecurity but also health issues impacted by nutrition.*

I am a volunteer to the Grateful Hearts organization. The organization began in Manchester Vermont in 2011 as a solution to turn the bumped, the bruised, and the unsold into nourishing meals for distribution to the food insecure. The all-volunteer, 501(c) (3) organization began with one chapter and one volunteer chef and now has multiple chapters and more than 50 volunteers. An estimated 2 million pounds of Vermont produce goes to waste every year while one in four Vermonters are food insecure.

Since many clients lack the facilities, ability, or wherewithal to create meals from raw ingredients, every season Grateful Hearts transforms donated produce from local farms and producers into meals in certified commercial kitchens. In 2019, they created over 40,000 servings of food that would have otherwise gone to waste. Volunteers gather produce to create meals that are then cooked, packaged, frozen and distributed to 27 organizations and agencies including food cupboards, shelters, backpack programs, Department of Children and Families, and other organizations serving children, families and seniors who are food and nutrition insecure in the communities served. Last week, with less than a dozen volunteers, we produced over 1,100 one bowl meals.

Sustainable practices are employed in all aspects of operation and recipes are designed to be colorful and delicious, full of clean ingredients to maintain a low glycemic load, add fiber, and include plant-based proteins for complete one-bowl meals.

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