



**Rachel's
TABLE**
Feeding Western Massachusetts
Reduce Waste. Relieve Hunger.

Highlights of the Month

September/October 2023 Issue

Dear RTWM Family,

Our world has certainly changed since the last time we sent the highlights of the month. The war in the Middle East is horrifying. Together, we've had to take a collective breath, and another, and another again. We condemn terrorism, and we uphold the value of life. My email from early October to you all still holds – we are a family of many, and we need to take care of each other. Our service work, together, is our response to global instability. We need each other, and we need to continue making a difference, one drive, one glean, or one garden at a time. Thank you for making sure our world is one of kindness, generosity, and love.

Housewarming

Last month RTWM welcomed board members, volunteers, JCC staff, supporters, community members and Representative Brian Ashe to our new office. We celebrated the new space as a continuation of our recent chapter as a standalone nonprofit. Thank you to everyone who came out and a special thank you to the JCC for being so welcoming.

Welcome Kathy

RTWM has hired a new Operations Manager Kathy Henry. Get to know Kathy more in our next issue, but join us in wishing her a very warm welcome to the RTWM family. Welcome Kathy!

October Food Stats: Pounds Rescued from January - October



549,036.6 lbs



Rescue and Gleaning donations have increased by 100,000 lbs since August.

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Member Kathy!**

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Upcoming Events

11/28 - Giving Tuesday
Ongoing - Gleaning

RT Van

In September & October the Van Team delivered over 73,239 pounds of food. This brings the total delivered by the van for the year to over 266,245 lbs. 72% of the food the Van Team delivered in the two months was meat, dairy, and fresh produce. The van and van team give us the opportunity to save food from a lot of different sources and allowed us to accept and distribute food in unplanned ways. Below are some the examples from the last two months.



Big E donation



Swordfish from performance food services

- Big E: Members of the Van Team picked up food from the Big E at the end of the fair at 9:00 pm. More was picked up the next day. This donation included baking potatoes, blueberry pies and apple cider, among other items, for a total of 4,554 pounds rescued which was delivered to 10 Agencies.
- Cherry tomatoes- One day when the Van Team was making a delivery to Springfield Rescue Mission, they asked us to distribute over 1,300 lbs of cherry tomatoes they couldn't use. We brought them to 10 Agencies. On another day we got a call from trucker who had a pallet of cherry tomatoes he didn't need, so he dropped it off at the JCC. The Van Team interrupted their normal schedule for the day, and we loaded the 775 lbs of tomatoes into the van, and it was distributed to 6 Agencies.
- Trade Shows- We picked up food from two different trade shows where food companies were presenting their product. At one, put on by Performance Food Services, using the van and cars of Van Team members, other RT volunteers and RT staff 7,829 lbs of food were rescued including a whole 37 lb swordfish, other seafood and meat, lots of produce, and other great food. This was delivered to 15 different Agencies.

New Food Donors

The [School Nutrition Association of MA Food Expo](#), [Yosi's Kosher Catering](#), [Flan Enterprises \(the trucking company with the cherry tomatoes\)](#), and a local Carvel distributor were all first time Food Donors. We also had a good meeting with MGM Springfield and hope and expect them to become regular donors again.

Thank you Point32Health

We are so happy to share that Point32Health has gifted RTWM \$25,000 to continue reducing food insecurity in western mass. Thank you Point32Health for supporting our mission to Reduce Waste and Relieve Hunger.

Point32Health

Growing Gardens

As the agencies are putting their gardens to bed for the winter, we are reflecting on lessons learned:

~ Agency staff have requested more hands-on learning opportunities beyond our Spring and Summer trainings. We are exploring how and when to offer additional skills workshops, for example Art & Science of Composting and Winter Seed Sowing.

~ Youth engagement is a priority. We will continue to find ways to support initiatives like a Garden Club at Robinson Gardens, teen employment at each of the garden sites, and youth participation in Growing Gardens trainings.

~ HIP (Healthy Incentives Program) is a valuable resource that remains underutilized and inaccessible by many for reasons related to English language proficiency, access to internet, and access to transportation. We are looking at ways to include more HIP education and access support through Growing Gardens.

Gleaning

We are so grateful to all of the farms who have welcomed us out so far this year! Thank you to Atlas Farm, Old Friends Farm, Next Barn Over Farm, Riverland Farm, Mountain Orchard, Plow Farms, Brookfield Farm, Baggot Family Farm and Oxen Hill Farm.

Between **July 1** and **October 31**, volunteers gleaned **14,757.34** pounds of apples, potatoes, sweet potatoes, carrots, leafy greens, and more. We still have gleans scheduled throughout much of November, so there's still time to join us! You can sign up here: <https://signup.com/go/kmAbDzF>.



2 - Girls Inc. of Holyoke laughing and working hard to glean sweet potatoes at Next Barn Over Farm



1,3 - Employees of Arbella Insurance Foundation, Steve Korn, and senior officers at Westfield Bank digging in and climbing high at this year's Sponsor Glean days

Volunteer Appreciation

On September 27 Rachel's Table had its Volunteer Appreciation event at Sinai Temple to thank all of you for the the effort and care you all put in every year, and without whom Rachel's Table wouldn't/couldn't exist. There were speeches from volunteers about their experiences with Rachel's Table, a musical performance from representatives at the Community Music School of Springfield, and a presentation from Jason Reed, Executive Director of the Boys and Girls Club of Chicopee, an Agency we started working with just this year in both our rescue and garden programs.



Jamie from the Chicopee boys and girls club and Nina from Sinai Temple



Jason Reed of the Chicopee Boys and Girl Club



Steve showing off his new van team hat

Teen Board

At the last teen board meeting the teen board spoke about food access, including government assistance programs like SNAP and WIC. They talked about the many barriers, especially cultural, that food insecure people can face when trying to receive benefits and social programs.

The Teen Board meets two times per month, follow our Instagram, @rachelstableteens to stay up to date with our most recent events and meetings.

Upcoming Teen Board Events:

11/19/23 - November Meeting

Giving Tuesday

Tuesday 11/28 is Giving Tuesday. This is a wonderful day to share your support of your favorite local nonprofits and the work they are doing in the community. If you'd like, post about Rachel's Table in your social media platforms, tag us, and feel free to donate as well. That evening from 5-7pm we are the invited nonprofit from the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce to be in attendance at the Feel Good Shop Local Event at the Mercedes-Benz dealership in Springfield. Come by to see the local vendors and share your story of how you love Rachel's Table of Western Massachusetts!!!!

Jewish Family Services Needs Help!

JFS has reached out to ask for help with the influx of refugees as shelters are at capacity. They are asking for urgent assistance in terms of temporary shelter, emergency food, clothing, and essentials, or to purchase items on their [wish list](#). Head to the [JFS website](#) to see other ways to help.

**Warm regards,
Jodi, Jay, Kathy, Chana Laila, Cara & Sarah**