

ANNUAL REPORT

2023



NUTRITION SUPPORTING *Treatment*

FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR *Julie Lock*

At Food Outreach, we know good nutrition supports chronic illness treatment and plays a major role in our clients' overall wellness. Our services disrupt the cycle of nutrition insecurity, malnutrition, and poor health by connecting clients to the resources they need to maintain a balanced diet and manage their diagnoses. As research demonstrates, providing Medically Tailored Meals (MTM) to individuals living with nutrition insecurity and chronic illness is one of the least expensive and most effective ways to achieve improved and more equitable health outcomes.

More community members need our services each year. Through intakes provided by our registered dietitians, Food Outreach welcomed 592 new clients in 2023, a 10% increase over 2022. Moreover, 39% of these individuals were experiencing moderate to severe malnutrition, indicating issues which need to be addressed quickly as nutrition emergencies. Along with this and the many other stressors our clients experience each day, 83% of these individuals live at or below 100% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), or \$15,060 in annual income.

Our clients tell us that Food Outreach's strengths are the nutrition which fuels their bodies and the dependability of our team of volunteers and staff. Our volunteers consistently show up for our clients. During 2023, Food Outreach benefited from the work and support of 1,705 volunteers—the equivalent of 10 full-time employees. We never have to sell our mission to our volunteers; many have battled cancer treatment themselves or with their loved ones, have lost partners to AIDS, or have parents and family members who struggle to manage chronic illnesses. Our volunteers, alongside Food Outreach's 17 employees, understand that our bodies must have proper nutrition to work with treatments for improved health. Each member of the Food Outreach team plays a vital role in providing our services with care and expertise in every aspect of this special agency.

Our clients and their individual stories guide Food Outreach's critical nutrition program and demonstrate the impact of providing services with respect, kindness, and care. Jim's experience, shared in the following pages, reflects our legacy as an agency rooted in the devastating history of the AIDS epidemic and Food Outreach's compassionate and impactful response. Jim's health story also situates the relevance and importance of our registered dietitians as they address pre-existing and emerging diagnoses in the lives of our clients and provide helpful information about nutrition and exercise. Joan's story emphasizes that our scratch-prepared entrées and sides help not only with her treatments, but in the experience of enjoying good food. Joan also affirms the importance of our connections to one another as she treasures the handmade cards she receives in her monthly home-delivery box. I am reminded from reading both Joan and Jim's stories that I should never underestimate the acts of love and kindness so many people from our agency provide to elevate our clients' lives.

Food Outreach remains steadfast in improving and expanding services to deepen its regional impact and eliminate barriers to nutrition. This past year, we significantly expanded our meal home-delivery services and began operating co-located services with our community partner, DOORWAYS. These strategic investments solve issues of access as well as emergency needs for nutrition. This report highlights Rudi's long history of supporting both Food Outreach and DOORWAYS with his late husband, Paul, and speaks to the establishment and legacy of these sister agencies. Furthermore, we continue to build capacity with local farmers to provide our clients with locally grown fresh produce and collaborate with local food distributors to rescue food that can be prepared into new menu options. This ensures clients receive high-quality nutrition in a way that supports our local food community and contributes to reduced food waste.

As we look toward 2024, Food Outreach celebrates its growth and recommits to addressing food insecurity as a social determinant of health and utilizing nutrition as a powerful tool in chronic illness treatment.



MEET FOOD OUTREACH CLIENT *Jim*

Jim was diagnosed HIV Positive in 1989. At that time, there was no treatment for patients and many people passed from the disease. "I lost my friends. I had a large group of friends and I'm the only one left. Most of them, once they found out and were diagnosed—they got sick and found out they're dying. Most of them didn't live a year. I had one friend, Frank, and he was the only one that lasted more than two years and then he passed away. It was scary."

Jim's doctor referred him to Food Outreach for nutritional support. When Jim first became a client, Food Outreach operated out of the basement of Union Avenue Christian Church. While many things have changed through the years, Jim still views Food Outreach as a lifeline. "I was grateful because at that time a lot of us were struggling. It was in the beginning of all of this—the AIDS pandemic and trying to help people. I was grateful to get the food and the Ensure. It made a big difference, especially when funds are limited. You must use what you can to pay for a roof over your head and the bills, and so that little bit of extra food helped so much."

Things changed with the introduction of protease inhibitors, and Jim went from taking 26 pills a day to only one. "I can remember a whole palm full of pills, and sometimes the side effects from the medications were worse than the disease itself. I was sick all the time, and often too full from the pills to eat anything."

Food Outreach changed as well, adding registered dietitians to the staff and serving patients with cancer as well as HIV. Today, Jim values the advice he receives from the registered dietitians even more since he has cardiovascular disease that impacts what he eats. He had a massive heart attack in 2008. Last June, he collapsed in his home and went into cardiac arrest when his heart stopped. His partner Tim revived him, but his heart stopped two more times on the way to the hospital.

Food Outreach helps Jim maintain a healthy lifestyle. "I go to the gym three days a week and I try to eat as healthily as possible and drink plenty of water. And that's the thing, they give you a lot of good tips at Food Outreach. There's pamphlets and recipes you can get on every subject from the different high protein foods to information on the amount of sodium in different food items to the best way to get a cardio exercise. That's really helped me. Plus, you can tailor your food choices a lot. I really want low sodium items, and the dietitian has helped me with that a lot. It's not just the food, but the informative people there that can help get you to where you need to be in improving your health."

Jim's favorite items from Food Outreach are the stuffed shells and candied peaches. He also likes to cook with items from the Nutrition Center. "The other day, I just took a couple cans of black beans, a can of corn, and a can of tomatoes with green chilies, and I threw that all together with cumin, paprika, and chili powder. I served the mixture with whole wheat tortillas and that's dinner with some fresh spinach."

Jim and Tim have been together almost 25 years. They love to spend time with their six grandchildren ages 13 to 33. In their free time, they enjoy movies and shopping at estate sales.

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COMMUNITY *Impact*

Food Outreach is **THE ONLY** organization and nonprofit in Missouri and western Illinois providing nutritional support to individuals of all ages living with HIV or cancer. In 2023, we provided dietetic counseling, nutrition, and education to 1,953 people at no charge:

- who live with limited resources or access to food
- whose illness and treatments can make it difficult to prepare healthy meals
- who struggle with co-morbidities which complicate their health



1,953

Clients Served

592

New Clients
(Largest in
Agency History)

564,450

Meals Served



64%

Black

32%

Caucasian

1%

Hispanic

1%

Asian

2%

Other



61%

Male

38%

Female

1%

Transgender

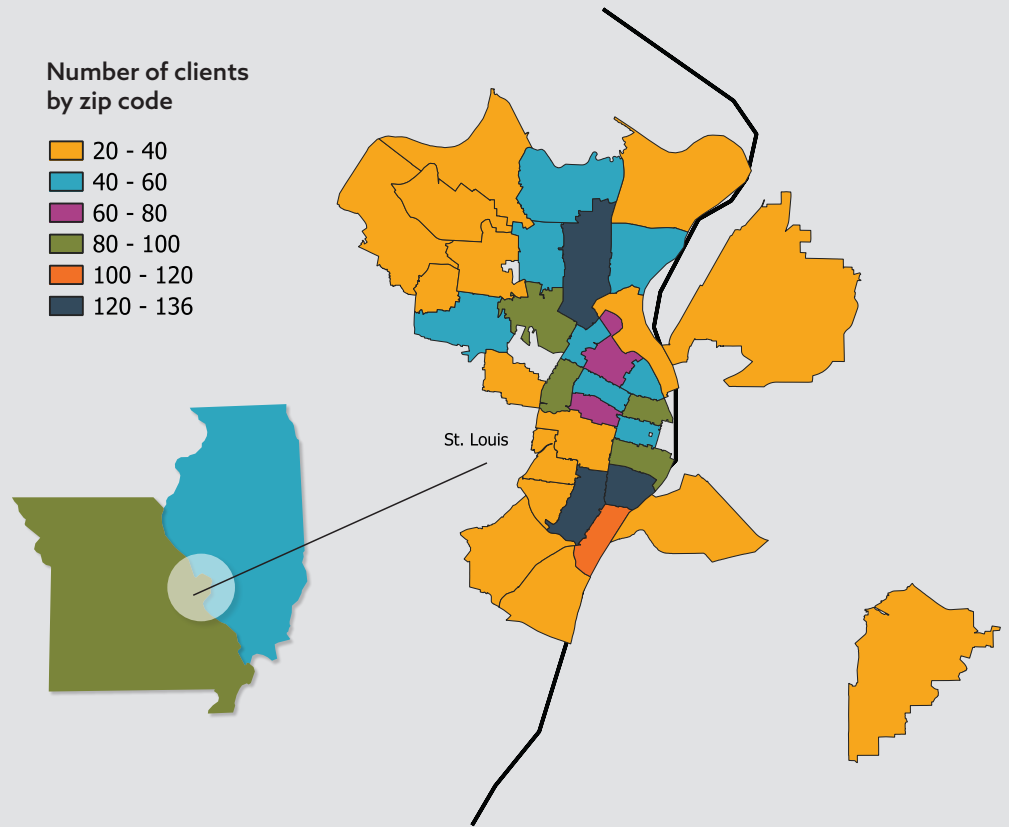




Food Outreach serves nearly **2,000** clients living across 160+ zip codes in Missouri and Western Illinois. Most clients (80%) live in St. Louis City or County.

Number of clients by zip code

- 20 - 40
- 40 - 60
- 60 - 80
- 80 - 100
- 100 - 120
- 120 - 136



164
Zip Codes



1,488

Living with HIV

736

Diagnosed with Cancer

187

Diagnosed with Type 2 Diabetes (Pilot Program)

17

Diagnosed with both HIV and Cancer



80%

Of Our Clients Resided in St. Louis City & St. Louis County



15-101

Our Clients' Age Range

MEET FOOD OUTREACH HOME DELIVERY CLIENT

Joan

After her diagnosis of lung cancer, Joan was struggling to get the nourishment she needed to get through her chemotherapy and immunotherapy. A nurse referred Joan to Food Outreach for nutrition counseling and support, but Joan was worried she wouldn't be able to get to Food Outreach since she and her husband are housebound. Joan was thrilled when she learned that Food Outreach offered a home delivery program and would deliver scratch-prepared entrees and sides as well as nutritious groceries right to her door.

Almost immediately, Joan noticed that the side effects of her cancer treatment lessened. Joan especially likes the chicken dishes and the butternut squash macaroni and cheese. "This food is such a huge help to people with cancer and getting treatments. You get tired. You're tired and having to go and make a meal is very hard. But with Food Outreach you just need to heat it up. It's just so easy and delicious. You look forward to it because it is so good."

The home delivery program enables Joan to receive the monthly box of scratch-prepared entrees and sides along with nutritious groceries and fresh produce. However, it also offers Joan emotional support with the handmade card included in each delivery box. "I always love receiving the hand-drawn card that someone drew for me that has encouragement for the cancer person. It just shows that someone who doesn't know me is rooting for me. And it helps. I'm one of these people, when I get a card, I put it out on my desk so I can see it for a month. I would hang onto that card until the next one came, and then I would put that one on the desk. And just to read it every day gave me encouragement—just to know that people out there don't even know me are praying and rooting for me."

A waitress for 46 years at the original Massa's Italian Restaurant, Joan knows good food. She was their longest serving employee until she was forced to retire due a depressed disc in her neck. "I was lucky to find a job where I could talk and get paid. I loved it. I loved it."

After rounds of chemotherapy, radiation, and immunotherapy, Joan is on the road to recovery. "I'm one of these people that when things go bad, I find a way to laugh at it and go on. And when they gave me the diagnosis of cancer, I didn't get depression or anything. I just said, 'I'm in God's hands' and whatever he did—I'm okay. I could be one of these miracles because my primary doctor told me that my body is responding so well to this immunotherapy. It's how he hopes all his patients would respond to it."

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ACCREDITED
BUSINESS



42%

Of All Meals Were
Home Delivered
in 2023

3,945

Deliveries Were
Made Across
Ten Counties



MEET *Rudi Bertrand*

Long-Time Food Outreach Volunteer and Donor



Rudi Bertrand first started volunteering for Food Outreach in 1995. He was working at Missouri Baptist Hospital as a Certified Medical Dosimetrist and he was looking for opportunities to volunteer as a way to give back to the community.

At Food Outreach, Rudi found a community in the other volunteers. He met his husband Paul Williams there while volunteering. Rudi and Paul were married on November 15, 2015, the anniversary of their first date. Paul passed away in 2022, but Rudi has fond memories of their time volunteering at Food Outreach. "We met across the table from each other, kind of chit-chatting as we portioned food. There was a small group that would go to breakfast every week, and I invited him to our weekly breakfast. We hit it off and our relationship just took off after that breakfast. This was in the late summer of 1995. In November, there was a combined event between DOORWAYS and Food Outreach called Duets. We were both at the event, and we decided to go out on a date afterward. That was our first date—November 15th, 1995."

Thinking back on Food Outreach, Rudi is proud that the community came together to help people diagnosed with HIV and struggling. "The need for Food Outreach came out of one person seeing a couple of her friends not eating and starting to cook for them in her own home and it branched from there. It's cool to know we made a difference and that was something that we as a couple believed in."

When the new Food Outreach Pantry opened at DOORWAYS Jefferson Campus, it was dedicated to Rudi and Paul. "I'm very proud that we were involved with Food Outreach. I am elated that I met my husband there and that we were together 26 and a half years. I wish that he would have known that there was a collaborative effort between Food Outreach and DOORWAYS with the food pantry that we underwrote. I didn't find that out until after he passed away when I did a private tour and saw the sign on the pantry. And that just really touched my heart because both organizations are important to us and the fact that this has come together, like we came together."

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The Food Outreach Pantry at the DOORWAYS Jefferson Campus. The Pantry is dedicated to Rudi and his late husband, Paul.



COMMUNITY OF *Caring*

We are proud to have

11 Weekend Red Aprons and **31** Weekday Red Shirts who serve as our lead volunteers

19 Board members

31
Volunteers Donated
5,600
Hours in 2023



183,451
Scratch Prepared Entrees and Sides Created at Cook and Packs



1,705 Volunteers Contributed **20,318** Hours in 2023,
The Equivalent of 10 full-time Employees



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Saint Louis, MO 63103

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Our agency, located in midtown St. Louis, welcomes all of our clients no matter *where they live, whom they love or which illness they are battling*. In our three decades of service, our clients have *never been charged for our services*.

Through a prescription of healthy meals and meetings with our registered dietitians, our clients build their strength through nutrition, affirmation and compassion.

FOODOUTREACH.ORG

 facebook.com/foodoutreach

 instagram.com/foodoutreachstl