



Building Community Despite Distance

When you support Food Link, You Also Support African Cultural Services Inc. in Waltham

African Cultural Services Inc. (aka Africano Waltham) is a place for local immigrants, mainly Ugandan, to engage, connect, and share resources. Most of the families served are below the poverty line.

Since March 2020, Africano Waltham expanded services and outreach into the community focusing on hunger relief. "Ugandan immigrants are intensely private and reluctant to share their personal lives with outsiders," said Juliet Najjumba, CEO and Founder. "This makes a trusted agency like Africano Waltham especially important to ensuring their welfare in troubled times."

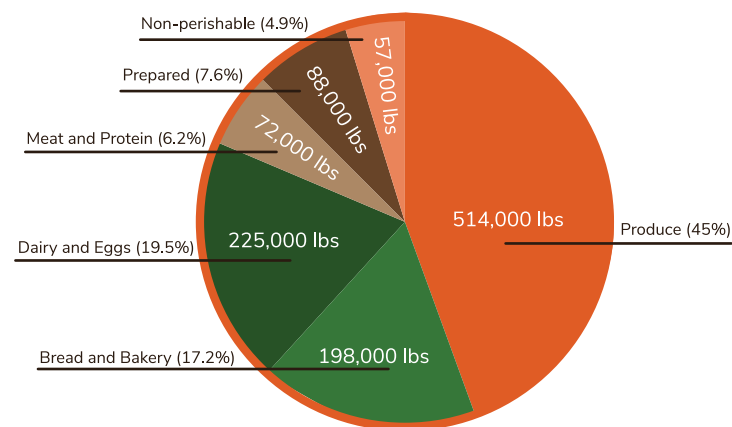
Because of the hard work of dedicated volunteers, donors, and partners like Food Link, when the center closed to programs at the start of the pandemic, Africano Waltham shifted support to youth and families in their homes by delivering weekly care packages consisting of fresh groceries, supplies, and toiletries.

"Many African immigrants are frontline workers in health care and senior care. They must keep working while their children are left home. Others have lost their income and are fearful. Those who are COVID-19 positive may not have the space needed to self-isolate safely in their homes. Many of the resources the community relies on have stopped and many people are desperate," said Juliet.

"Food Link helps us to consistently show up and help fill the gap. The food is all fresh, healthy, and often organic. Some of us never dreamed of buying food from Whole Foods given that it's expensive, and now it's available to us every Saturday."

"Thank you to the Food Link volunteers and donors who make the organization — and our ability to expand our efforts — possible."

Types of Food Rescued in 2020



2020 Impact Report



Stepping up to meet the needs of our community during a global pandemic

In 2020, a year unlike any other we have known, we were awed and humbled by all that you enabled Food Link volunteers and staff to achieve in the face of unknown risks. Your efforts provided the equivalent of 1,000,000 meals to those in need and kept an equal amount of food from entering the waste stream. Additionally, you made it possible for Food Link to increase distribution to 60 new community partners.

Because of you, your dedication, and your selflessness, we reached an amazing milestone: more than 4 million pounds of food collected since Food Link's inception. There is no mistaking the simple fact that we certainly could not have achieved this without you.

The combination of your efforts and support enabled us to grow and expand our reach throughout Eastern Massachusetts. You enabled Food Link to take steps to safely provide food and other resources for those in need, including those who may have been in quarantine or suffering from the economic downturn of the pandemic.

Sadly, as the pandemic gained traction in Massachusetts, the number of individuals facing food insecurity marched in lockstep along with it. What was once one in sixteen individuals living with food insecurity is now one in seven.

Food Link's services remain essential to aid those in need and, due in no small part to your support, we are well-positioned to not only continue to provide nutritious food at the heightened level that we did in 2020, but also to increase the amount of food we collect and distribute. The Food Link Hub, which came to fruition as a result of your generosity, is slated to open in a few weeks with an increased fleet of refrigerated vehicles that will soon include a refrigerated box truck

As we all embark upon the year 2021, please know that there are not enough words to express our gratitude to you. We remain truly appreciative of your hard work, support, and investment in Food Link. Together, we have made and continue to make a positive difference in the lives of many.

We hope that 2021 brings health and calm to all of us and increased food security to the residents of greater Boston and Eastern Massachusetts.

With gratitude,



Pivoting to Respond to Increased Need

When you support Food Link, You Also Support the Community Cupboard Food Pantry in Medford.

The pandemic had a significant impact on the Community Cupboard Food Pantry. “We have seen an increased number of people from communities hardest hit by the disease and the economic hardship it’s creating. Our community tends to come from Medford, but now we’re seeing people from Everett, Chelsea, and Revere,” said Elizabeth Ammons, Co-Coordinator. “Without Food Link — and all the people who make Food Link possible — the amount of food we offer would be greatly diminished.”

The food pantry serves 60-80 people each week. Some are elders on fixed incomes, while others have disabilities. Many have lost their jobs, while others are the primary breadwinners for their families, working full-time at poverty-level wages, including high-risk jobs in places like nursing homes. Much of the food goes to children.

Like Food Link, the Community Cupboard is volunteer driven. Community Cupboard volunteers prepare bags of food for their community using groceries that Food Link delivers weekly. This includes produce and prepared foods such as salads and sandwiches as well as excess meats, dairy and a variety of baked goods.

Rather than end up in a landfill, Food Link rescues the food and ensures its distribution to those in need.

“Because of donor support, dedicated volunteers, and our partners at Food Link, we can give every client a bag full of fresh produce and another bag full of baked goods, in addition to the bag of nonperishable food that we receive from other sources,” said Elizabeth. “It makes a huge difference, and we’re glad that we can continue to provide food assistance to others.”



Food Link’s Impact by the Numbers

The year 2020 brought with it many challenges, including an increase in the need for nutritious food in our community, and a drop in volunteers due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We’re proud that we rose to this challenge — and then some. Your investment in Food Link enabled us to do so. Through your support and the dedication of our volunteers and staff, we had a much greater impact than ever before. Your commitment to our mission, especially in the face of a pandemic, demonstrates just how valuable you are to our community.

TOGETHER, we:



Rescued **1,200,000+** pounds of food, enough food for **1,000,000+** meals. **⬆️ 90%** growth from 2019



Worked with **250+** volunteers who invested more than **10,000** hours.



Have more than **100** Community Partners. **⬆️ 98%** growth from 2019



Distributed to **28** communities. **⬆️ 87%** growth from 2019



Served **80,000+** people. **⬆️ 300%** growth from 2019

Since inception in 2012, Food Link rescued more than **4 million pounds of food.**

