



SUMMER 2024

# METROWEST FOOD COLLABORATIVE NEWSLETTER

***Dear MetroWest Community,***

*It's hard to believe it's already September - and Hunger Action Month! Summer offered a vibrant display of regional food system activities, from farmers markets, to community meals, to back to school events. As we transition into fall and a new school year, I'm happy to share some highlights in this Summer 2024 edition of the MetroWest Food Collaborative (MWFC) quarterly newsletter. **We also have some big news about a new hire** and information about ways you can get involved.*

*With appreciation,*

***Kali Coughlan***  
*MetroWest Food Collaborative Manager*



## In the News

- **Have you taken a look at our blog recently?** We've published a few new posts this summer, including our latest - a retrospective on the Massachusetts State Budget process that wrapped up in July. [Check it out here!](#)
- **The MetroWest farmers market scene keeps expanding!** We recently met with the Marlborough Farmers Market organizer and learned about their SNAP match. Westborough Farmers Market now has a flyer on our website. [Learn more here!](#)
- **It's Hunger Action Month!** [Take a look at this important blog post](#) from MWFC member Spoonfuls about the state of hunger in Massachusetts and ways you can take action for food recovery.

# MWFC UPDATES



## INTRODUCING GIULIANA!

We are thrilled to announce that we've hired **Giuliana Bacoccini** as our first-ever SNAP & WIC Outreach Coordinator! This is a new full-time pilot position funded by a grant from the MetroWest Health Foundation that will involve designing and implementing a SNAP and WIC Pilot Outreach Program with partners in Framingham, Hudson, and Milford.

Giuliana has experience working in social services, most recently at SMOC, and with diverse populations. She is bilingual in English and Portuguese and conversational in Spanish. She's working on finishing up her B.A. in psychology at SNHU and plans to graduate in December. Welcome Giuliana!

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Over the summer, Kali joined community partners - including A Place to Turn - at farmers markets, summer meals events, and the back to school extravaganza. She talked with community members about HIP, SNAP, and permanent universal free school breakfast (made possible by School Meals for All legislation).

As part of MWFC's ongoing community engagement plans, we will be partnering with community leaders to create more digestible, easy to understand, and tailored educational materials about food access to share at future events.



## ANNUAL FARM TOUR

Kali recently joined the Massachusetts Food System Collaborative, Congressman Jim McGovern, and various MA agencies and advocates at the annual MA Farm Tour. It was wonderful to be in community with people who care about food system issues, explore ways MWFC can get more involved in federal advocacy, build new relationships to support information exchange with local partners, and learn more about how to help area farms thrive. BONUS: she also got to pet goats and cows!



# MWFC UPDATES

## SUMMER EBT REFLECTIONS

Summer EBT was an important *new* federal program rolled out this summer. It provided low-income Massachusetts families \$120 for every school-aged child to spend on food during the summer months, while school was out.

In speaking with community partners in MetroWest, we learned that:

- Overall families were excited to receive this benefit.
- Families faced language barriers with DTA communications sent only in English.
- The process to receive the benefit was not entirely clear or simple.
- The DTA hotline was overloaded, making it hard for families to access support.
- Some people didn't receive Summer EBT cards who should have been automatically enrolled, and not everyone who already had SNAP knew that the Summer EBT benefit went automatically onto their EBT card.

We support the continuation of this program. We hope to see the first-year challenges addressed in future years, with community feedback and our work with coalition partners informing this process!



## LUNCH & LEARN FOLLOW-UP

In April, we facilitated a Lunch & Learn on Dignity in Food Choice, hosted by the MetroWest Nonprofit Network (MWNN), with panelists Joanne Barry from A Place To Turn, Dan Shea from Natick Service Council, and Erica Solitro from Project Just Because. (We've since published a series of clips to social media - [check out our Instagram](#)).

On September 11, in the midst of Hunger Action Month, we once again joined MWNN, for a follow-up Lunch & Learn on the same theme. This time, we heard from a panel of recipients of mini-grants we awarded this past May about how they used these funds to enhance food dignity for older adults in their programs. Watch the full recording here and stay tuned for shorter highlight clips to be published on our socials!

***Interested in joining our working group?***

Email us at: [MetroWestFoodCollaborative@gmail.com](mailto:MetroWestFoodCollaborative@gmail.com)

# ADVOCACY OPPORTUNITIES

## 1 Spread the Word about Free School Breakfast!

Many families already know about free lunch, but not all families know that with the passage of School Meals for All last year, *all* public school students in MA now can access permanent universal free breakfast! You can help raise awareness with friends, neighbors, parents, and others. [Learn more and find shareable materials from Project Bread.](#)



## 2 Thank Speaker Pro Tempore Hogan

Thanks to the efforts of Speaker Pro Tempore Kate Hogan and her staff, a \$50,000 earmark for the MWFC was secured in this year's state budget to keep strengthening our work in the coming year! This was a significant investment in the work for positive food system change in MetroWest, in a challenging fiscal climate. If you are excited about joining us in continuing to evolve MWFC's role, please take a moment to thank her for championing this earmark: [Kate.Hogan@mahouse.gov](mailto:Kate.Hogan@mahouse.gov) | (617) 722-2600



## 3 Raise HIP Awareness

To ensure that the Healthy Incentives Program (HIP) remains a state funding priority, we need to keep raising awareness about the program's benefits - from promoting accessible fresh produce for all SNAP users, to supporting local farms. Here's how you can help:

- Download and share our [educational flyers](#).
- Want to partner with us to [invite legislators](#) to see HIP in action at your local market? Reach out at: [MetroWestFoodCollaborative@gmail.com](mailto:MetroWestFoodCollaborative@gmail.com)



## Questions about Advocacy?

Contact us: [MetroWestFoodCollaborative@gmail.com](mailto:MetroWestFoodCollaborative@gmail.com)

# RESOURCES FOR YOU

## Food Access Calendars & Food Resource Flyers by City/Town

*(In English, Spanish, Portuguese,  
and Haitian Creole)*

[Click here](#)

## Project Bread's FoodSource Hotline: 1-800-645-8333

Monday-Friday: 8am-7pm  
Saturday: 10am - 2pm

*Assistance in 180 languages.*

## Local Farmers' Markets Info & Educational Flyers

[Click here](#)

## Community Supported Agriculture

[Click here](#)

## Trouble with SNAP? Get Help When you Can't Reach DTA

[Click here](#)

## What to Do If You've Experienced Benefit Theft

[Click here](#)