

MEALS THAT HEAL, COMMUNITIES THAT THRIVE



open arms

FISCAL YEAR 23-24

IMPACT
REPORT

DEAR FRIENDS,

As I reflect on this past year, I am filled with gratitude for the incredible community that sustains Open Arms of Minnesota. Our mission—providing food as medicine to nourish our clients and build community—has never been more vital. In Fiscal Year 23-24, we witnessed growth, resilience, and innovation, all driven by our shared belief that no one facing a life-threatening illness should go without nourishing food and compassionate care.

This year, we delivered almost 1.5 million medically tailored meals to our neighbors in need, a testament to the hard work of our staff, volunteers, and partners. It's not just the number of meals that matters, but the stories behind each one—stories of people like the caregivers, dependents, and clients managing serious illnesses, all of whom rely on us for compassion and nourishment. This year we expanded our Cultural Meals Program to meet the growing diversity of our clients, introducing a Hmong menu in summer 2023, an East African menu in fall 2024, and planning to launch a Latinx menu in spring 2025.

One of our proudest achievements this year was earning accreditation from the Food Is Medicine Coalition (FIMC). This prestigious recognition underscores the quality and impact of our Medically Tailored Meal Program, which continues to be at the center of improving health outcomes for thousands of Minnesotans.

Propelling these successes are our volunteers—the heart and soul of Open Arms. After facing a volunteer shortage during the pandemic, this year we welcomed back over 6,300 individuals who gave their time, talent, and energy to our clients. Their dedication is unparalleled, and we are endlessly grateful for the spirit of service that powers our work every day.

Our partnerships, too, have expanded. From healthcare collaborations to urban farming at Open Farms, we've grown stronger in addressing not only critical illness among the food insecure, but also the broader social and environmental challenges affecting our community. With over 13,000 pounds of organic produce harvested, Open Farms is a shining example of how we cultivate abundance through sustainable practices.

Thank you for being part of our journey this past year. Your generosity, support, and belief in the power of **food as medicine** has helped us create a stronger, healthier, and more hopeful community. Together, we will continue to nourish our neighbors, one meal at a time.

With gratitude,

Leah Hebert Welles

CEO, Open Arms of Minnesota



Open Arms has earned Accreditation from the Food Is Medicine Coalition (FIMC)



Our Critical Role

IT'S A SIMPLE NOTION: people who are sick should not be without food. Yet, every day, our neighbors with life-threatening illnesses find themselves unable to shop or cook — and, often, without the support network to help.

That's where we come in. Open Arms of Minnesota is a nonprofit organization that prepares and delivers medically tailored meals at no cost to critically ill Minnesotans and their loved ones.

Our Core Values

COMMUNITY: As neighbors feeding neighbors, we are committed to creating an inclusive community that celebrates life and honors dignity. We intentionally cultivate a joyful community where all members feel genuinely welcome and personally known. We are deeply connected in our work to achieve a common goal and engage in sharing ideas to enhance our collective efforts. We believe that all people who are ill — no matter their economic status — should have access to appropriate nutrition.

ABUNDANCE: We operate on the abundance model, believing that the resources and compassion we need to support our work are available in our community. We strive to always be able to say, "Yes, there is room for one more at our table."

INNOVATION: We take calculated risks to expand our thinking, programming, and worldview. We actively seek creative solutions to challenges. We are committed.

HOPE: Hope is the secret ingredient in all our recipes and in every interaction with our stakeholders. It is how we provide an experience that is as transformative for our donors, volunteers, staff, and clients as it is for our community. Hope is grounded in and generated in our physical space and is delivered with every meal.

Our Mission:

By providing food as medicine, we nourish our clients and build community.

Our Purpose:

We create an inclusive and joyful community to provide high-quality medically tailored meals, nutrition education and hope to our clients.



Meals

A MEDICALLY TAILORED MEAL (MTM), as defined by the Food is Medicine Coalition, does not simply mean putting someone on a diet. It is more than a meal. Medically tailored meals are medically appropriate meals delivered to the homes of individuals living with complex, severe or chronic illnesses who are too sick to shop or cook for themselves. At Open Arms, we serve clients living with HIV/AIDS, Cancer, Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), Multiple Sclerosis (MS), End Stage Renal Disease (ESRD), Congestive Heart Failure (CHF), and/or Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD). Our Registered Dietitians work with our Chefs to create delicious, medically tailored menus using fresh, preservative-free ingredients instead of heavily processed food. The meals are prepared in our state-of-the-art kitchens, with organic produce from our very own Open Farms Program when possible.

Our Medically Tailored Meals Program has continued to expand with the development of our Cultural Meals Program. Launched in 2022, this initiative was designed to better serve our diverse client community by creating accessible, culturally appropriate meals for Hmong, East African, and Latin American clients—populations disproportionately affected by the illnesses we address. The Hmong menu was proudly introduced in the fall of 2023, with the East African menu released in the fall of 2024, and the Latin American menu to follow in spring of 2025.

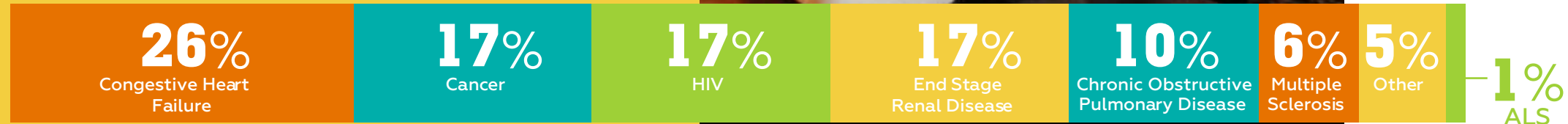
1,425,942* meals produced in our two commercial kitchens
*13+ million meals served to date

Core Medically Tailored Meals Program:

873,630 meals delivered to **3,640** people

2,809 living with life threatening illnesses	673 caregivers	158 dependents
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Breakdown of meals delivered to clients affected by:



Clients

OUR CLIENTS ARE THE DRIVING FORCE behind everything we do. Every choice we make—from program development to volunteer engagement—is centered around meeting their needs. Our clients face life-altering illnesses and heart conditions, and the majority of our clients are over the age of 60. For greater than 80% of them, food insecurity is an added burden on top of managing a critical health condition. And on top of all that, 32.4% of clients had a malnutrition score that indicated they were at risk for being malnourished upon application. However, of those clients, 77.3% decreased their risk while on service. These are our neighbors, people who can no longer shop or cook for themselves, and they depend on us for nourishing meals. We believe no one should have to face an illness without the support of healthy food.

To meet the growing needs of the region, we expanded our delivery zone and created new partnerships with health care providers. In October of 2023, we began delivering meals to clients living in Spring Lake Park, Shoreview, North Oaks, White Bear Lake, Hugo, Mahtomedi, Gem Lake, Lake Elmo and Mounds View for the first time in the organization's history. On top of an expanded delivery area, our programming also grew via a Healthy Pregnancy Pilot Program with Hennepin Healthcare, Integrated Kidney Care Program with DaVita Dialysis, Prepared Meals Program with M Health Fairview, and Cardiovascular Health Program with the Minnesota Department of Health, funded by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

77.3%
of clients who were at risk of malnutrition upon joining Open Arms decreased their risk while receiving medically tailored meals.



Volunteers

ONE OF THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES Open Arms faced after the COVID-19 pandemic was a significant shortage of volunteers. The pressing question on our minds was, "Will volunteers return?" Two years after our volunteer numbers were cut in half, we now have our answer: **YES!**

Companies, organizations, and groups resumed sending their employees and members to volunteer, reaffirming their commitment to social responsibility and community service at pre-pandemic levels. As a testament to the unwavering dedication of our volunteers, their **73,493 service hours** represent a historic milestone for Open Arms. Yet, beyond the impressive numbers lies something even more profound: a commitment to community and the kindness that fuels it.

But don't just take our word for it. Here's what our volunteers had to say:

"I want to say thank you to Open Arms for allowing me the opportunity to volunteer. It has really made an impact on my life, and I think what Open Arms does is wonderful."

"Having volunteered for Open Arms, I see firsthand that Open Arms truly fulfills their mission on a daily basis. I feel so fulfilled when I have finished my shift, knowing I have contributed in a small way. But most importantly, helping those persons/families who need assistance when faced with health challenges that unfortunately came their way."

"Serving the community through your organization has been one of the finest experiences of my lifetime. I want to take this opportunity to thank you and your team for your outstanding leadership. Your detailed focus on the clients and volunteers is amazing."

"Reflecting on hitting 600 volunteer hours today! I don't know where this time went, but I do know one thing looking back since starting my volunteering two years ago: EVERY SINGLE SHIFT I have worked, I have been thanked and supported by multiple staff members at Open Arms...not something that happened regularly when I was working in the corporate world."



Open Farms

WITH OVER 10 YEARS OF SERVICE to the organization, Open Farms Manager Kelly Wilson has consistently grown the Open Arms urban farms. Kelly and her small but mighty team successfully produced more than 13,000 pounds of organic vegetables and herbs, which were used year round in client meals, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) boxes, and at special Open Arms fundraising dinners. The program has never been more popular among volunteer groups and continues to be a success story for the impact of fresh produce in client menus.

Open Farms reputation in the community contributed to Open Arms being one of 16 organizations awarded 2024 funding through the City of Minneapolis's City Climate Legacy Initiative. Open Farms received \$22,536 to support our North and South Minneapolis gardens, enabling us to install a drip irrigation system, establish a compost system, and expand growing space. These improvements allow us to increase production of ingredients for our core meal program and our new Cultural Meals Program.

Summer 2023

5 Open Farms locations
1,875 acres in production
41 different crops grown
52 CSA members
7,000 seedlings started indoors
13,000-plus pounds of produce harvested

6,392

Total number of individual
VOLUNTEERS



73,493

**VOLUNTEER
HOURS**

Equivalent to 35.5 full time employees!

Total number of individual volunteers:

6,392 4,707 previous year

Volunteers who came as part of a group

3,518 2,018 previous year

Aprons donned (in our kitchens and bakery)

21,002 10,354 previous year

Volunteer delivery driver trunks filled:

7,549 6,959 previous year



145,840

miles covered by
volunteer meal
delivery drivers

That's FIVE TIMES around the earth!



100

delivery drivers on
Thanksgiving Day



Open Arms' Kelly Wilson (Open Farms Manager) and Dayna Adams (Senior Manager of Program Compliance & Reporting) shown with Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey.



What Our Clients Say...

"The food I receive from Open Arms has changed my life and health in such a positive way. Thank you for this service – a game changer."
 – client with illness

Nutrition Services

NOT JUST A MEAL. We believe medically tailored meals are most effective for our clients when accompanied by work with a nutrition team. Together, our Nutrition Education and Nutrition Counseling services make up our comprehensive Nutrition Services program. This is what distinguishes our Medically Tailored Meals program from other meals programs. 100% of clients receive a nutrition assessment, and all clients are able to work one-on-one with an on-staff Registered Dietitian (RD). At Open Arms, our Registered Dietitians and Dietetic Technicians (DTRs) design medically tailored menus and offer personalized guidance on diet, food choices, and overall nutrition. Understanding proper nutrition is essential for everyone, but it becomes especially crucial when managing a serious illness.

Our nutrition services team is available to assist with everything from nutritional screenings and assessments to recommending additional food resources. Managing the complexities of a serious illness can be overwhelming, but we are here to provide free nutrition education and counseling whenever it's needed. This included the development of new 2024 **Nutrition Fact Sheets** tailored to each of the illnesses we serve, giving our clients easy access to valuable information at the click of a button.

This year:

1,015
 clients received nutrition education or counseling through phone calls, virtual visits and written information

2,243
 nutrition education and counseling sessions were conducted w/clients

94% of clients report that receiving meals from Open Arms has made a difference in improving or maintaining their health.

Getting meals from Open Arms helps them:

Save money	98%
Eat a variety of foods	95%
Continue to live at home and remain independent	97%
Add comfort to their day	96%
Follow treatment for their condition	90%
Stay out of the hospital and/or emergency room	90%

1,000+
 in-person visits to clients' homes:

- **7,684** nausea relief packs delivered to clients with various illnesses
- **1,205** birthday cakes delivered to clients
- **2,076** protein and calories packs delivered to clients with low BMI or at-risk for malnutrition
- **749** medically tailored grocery bags delivered to HIV+ and high-risk pregnancy clients