

# WEST SIDE SUMMER SUPPORT 2021

An effort of WSPN  
FOOD SECURITY  
COUNCIL



*West Side Promise Neighborhood supported  
by SUNY Buffalo State College in partnership  
with African Heritage Food Co-op.*

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# WEST SIDE SUMMER SUPPORT 2021

An effort of neighbors  
helping neighbors

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## WHO ARE WE?

West Side Promise Neighborhood



14207

14213

14201

The West Side Promise Neighborhood Initiative is a diverse group of community members that are committed to improving the lives of children and their families living on Buffalo's West Side. We work together and support one another while implementing a continuum of supports including early learning through high school graduation, family and community supports, and college and career readiness creating a brighter future for the neighborhood. Our vision is to make Buffalo's West Side a vibrant, safe, healthy, and inclusive neighborhood. We envision a community where families and individuals are strong, children are healthy, and every youth succeeds in schools and achieves lifelong success. This report will summarize our successes and findings from our first summer implementing a direct service project.

## WSPN FOOD SECURITY COUNCIL

### In August of 2020 ...

A group of neighbors united to strengthen the local food system by empowering communities of the food vulnerable, building relationships, and supporting innovation.



WSPN's Food Security Council utilizes resources from our collective partners to continue to directly empower neighbors by providing resources and capacity building.

The Food Security Council partnered with communities in 14207 and 14213 to support summer lunch sites on the city's West Side. Our communities rallied together to create opportunity zones where children and families could access resources and food in their own backyards.

Our neighbors were happy to have the extra help.

# WHO DID WE MOBILIZE?

Stakeholders of food-vulnerable communities to engage in food work. WSPN engaged with neighbors to address food trauma and learn about barriers. We sought to honor the experiences and attitudes about food from all people.

01

## YOUTH ACTION BOARD MEMBERS

WNY Homeless Alliance

02

## RESIDENTS OF

City of Buffalo

03

## WSPN MEMBERS

Organizational members

04

## STUDENTS

WSPN supports students from food-vulnerable communities.

05

## WSPN LEADERS

WSPN Change Leaders

06

## BLOCK CLUBS

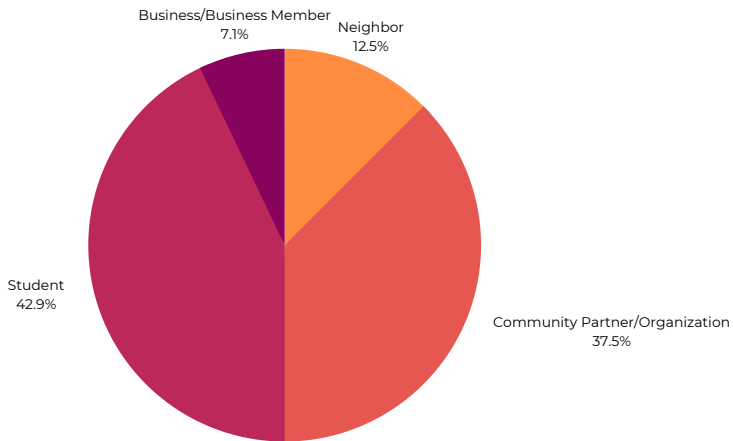
City of Buffalo

Our summer AmeriCorps and Youth Action Board members, community volunteers, and student volunteers supported our summer lunch sites.

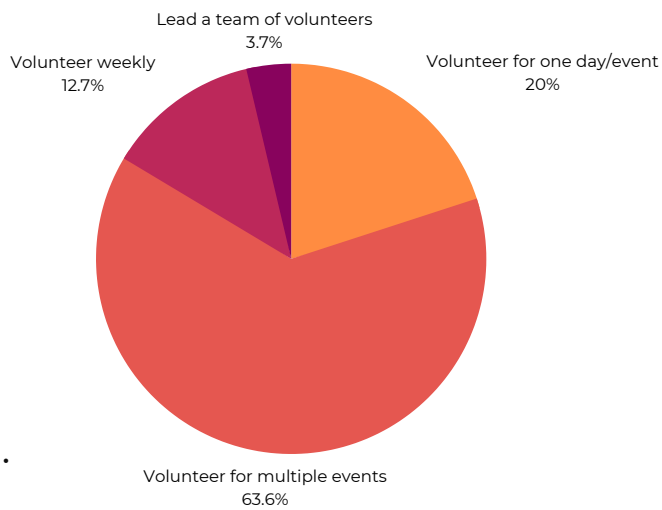


# WHO WERE OUR VOLUNTEERS?

I am a...



I want to...





# WSPN

## SUMMER LUNCH

### OUR PLAN

We intended to make the summer food system stronger by reducing barriers to information, enhancing access points, and increasing stakeholder efficacy by providing free food and sustaining community level conversations. We co-located food resources and information about food resources in key locations throughout our city's urban core. We called the community to act by providing community-level conversations around food.

We teamed up with our neighbors, as trust agents, to address food trauma and encouraged individuals in our network to actively participate in the food conversation. We surveyed with our neighbors about their attitudes and realities around food, honored their lived experiences, and empowered them to make informed decisions about food and health.

Now we have information to share about what our neighbors said and news to share about who we met and helped feed over the summer. WSPN's summer lunch initiatives involved over 70 volunteers, various corporations and not-for-profits, and neighbors from all over Western New York! We had a successful summer 2021.

## MISSION, VISION, AND GOALS

WE CREATED OPPORTUNITIES WHERE ALL PARTS OF THE FOOD SECURITY SYSTEM WERE INTEGRATED.

Our mission was to encourage the rigorous improvement of the food systems in our adopted areas. We engaged members of communities of the food insecure to take a participatory role in improving the system by providing them a voice through surveying and by bringing more food to their neighbors - for free.

Vision: Use food as a unifier and as the foundation of events that address public health. At each one of our sites over the summer, our neighbors were given fresh produce, Buffalo Public School lunches, and hot meals for adults and children throughout the summer.

Goals:

- Encourage our neighbors to utilize pantry options
- Bring needed resources to urban communities that lack needed transportation.
- Engage residents in improving the food system by providing free food.



## THE SCOPE:

**WHO CAN EAT?  
ANYONE UNDER THE AGE OF**

18

**SUMMER LUNCH DAYS PER  
WEEK:**

5

**WSPN SUPPORTED SUMMER  
LUNCH SITES:**

2

AT WSPN WE KNOW... kids who lack consistent access to quality food are more likely to be sick, less focused on learning, hyperactive, undernourished, and overweight. They are also more likely to experience anxiety and have less energy.

We know youth, families, and individuals must have their basic needs met. According to the Oishei Foundation Numbers in Needs report, areas of the city where childhood poverty is most concentrated may also be underserved by resources meant to alleviate poverty. Their report shows that the most noticeable service gaps exist in the Forest, Black Rock, and Riverside neighborhoods.







14207  
14201  
14213



PARTNER WITH US FOR SUMMER OUTREACH

## WSPN SUMMER LUNCH SERIES

KICK OFF: July 06th  
July 08th, July 19th, July 22nd,  
August 02nd, August 05th  
Closing day: August 13th

**COME MEET OUR NEIGHBORS!**

SUMMER LUNCH IS OPEN TO ALL CHILDREN 18 YEARS AND YOUNGER

# MASS AVE PARK:



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# WSPN SUMMER LUNCH AT MASS AVE PARK

14213



Massachusetts Ave Park is a park nestled in the heart of the West Side. It is bordered by the Butler Mitchell Boys and Girls Club and the Massachusetts Ave Project.

WSPN activated a summer lunch site at the park and our neighbors joined us for lunch!

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Summer lunch began July 6th and ended August 13th.

Throughout the summer neighbors received 5lb produce bags provided by the African Heritage Food Co-Op, along with their summer lunch. Each family who received a bag completed a short survey. Over the course of 6 outreach days, we provided 3000lbs of produce.

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Throughout the summer, we distributed over 250 "WSPN snack packs," containing non-perishable food for families to enjoy over the weekend.

Our Summer Hunger AmeriCorps member collected food and constructed the bags as a part of her service with our project.

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# OPEN FOR BUSINESS



## JULY 2021

125

Lunches daily

125

Snacks daily

## AUGUST 2021

220

Lunches daily

220

Snacks daily



# 14213

64%

Children speak a language other than English at home

59%

Children live in poverty

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## CRAFTS & SUPPLIES

14213



A collaboration of RICH FAMILY FOUNDATION games, craft supplies, and sports equipment was purchased for our park.



**RICH FAMILY**  
FOUNDATION

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Our children were in search of enrichment. Each volunteer-led day through the summer, WSPN organizations and the RICH Family Foundation made sure our children had tangible activities to engage them. Neighbors received science kits, summer fun kits from Explore and More, Project Play Bags, loads, and loads of old fashion fun like chalk, construction, paper, paint, and art supplies.

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Sports equipment including basketballs, soccer balls, bubbles, and other summer fun were available and were stewarded very well by our neighbors - we had a 100% return rate on our shared resources!

## TABLERS & PARENT SUPPORT

14213



We invited our WSPN organizations out to join our neighbors! Bringing needed resources to our neighbors!

10 + organizations!

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According to the Oisehi Foundation's Numbers in Need Report, Seniors, who are more at risk of poverty in the community, are also more likely to not have a car. (Households Without Vehicles, 2017). Bringing resources to our neighbors is important when 24% of neighbors under 65 years old do not have transportation and 32% of neighbors over 65 years old lack transportation.

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Neighbors were able to connect with the Buffalo Public Library, Department of Social Services, Best Self, WNY Homeless Alliance, and sign up for a tablet on site!

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## BACKPACKS & UNIFORMS

14213



A collaboration of WSPN, United Health Care and the Massachusetts Ave Community.

35 Uniforms & Backpacks with supplies



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School supplies are essential and kids can't learn properly without having supplies.

For children of low income families, having adequate school supplies can drastically help pave a path to a successful future.

Studies show that children having school supplies of their own can improve grades, creativity, attitudes towards learning, behavior, peer relationships, and self-image.

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The average planned back-to-school spending per household in the United States has gradually increased year-on-year to reach 848.9 U.S. dollars in 2021. This is an increase of over 350 dollars since the beginning of the survey period in 2004.

# Shaffer Village :





# OPEN FOR BUSINESS



## JULY 2021

125

Breakfast daily

250

Lunches daily

## AUGUST 2021

50

Breakfast daily

150

Lunches daily



# 14207

48%

Children speak a language other than English at home

52%

People live in poverty

### NEIGHBORS IN THE SHAFFER VILLAGE COMMUNITY



33

Children under 5 years old

64

Children ages 5 to 9

69

Children ages 10 to 14

75

Children ages 15 to 18



202

Families in Total

38%

Children living in poverty

14207

Zip Code

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## TABLERS & PARENT SUPPORT

14213



We invited our WSPN organizations out to join our neighbors! Bringing needed resources to our neighbors!

10 + organizations!

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The Shaffer Village was visited by many of our partners this summer including Blue Cross Blue Shield, Hearts for the Homeless, the Buffalo Library, The Erie County Health Department, and others. This outreach revitalized our neighbor's connections needed services in their community room. Rain or shine our partners were on hand to provide their specialized support including Veterans One Stop!

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The Albright Knox Art Truck visited our neighbors this summer and distributed art kits and was very well received!

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# TO PACK A BACKPACK

14207



A collaboration of WSPN Summer Lunch, FeedMore WNY, and the Shaffer Village Tenet Council

**2700 meals**  
**+2,475 lbs of food**  
**+675 backpacks**

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FeedMore WNY's BackPack Program assists students by providing easily prepared, nutritious food in take-home bags each Friday throughout the school year and over the summer. This program is offered to elementary schools in which at least 50% of students are eligible for free school lunch.

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# BACKPACKS



71

backpacks (25 stuffed with school supplies) given at the Shaffer Village

# BOOKS



**+600**

Books were given in partnership with City of Buffalo Police Athletic, Project Flight and Volunteers

# SHARED VALUES:

We empowered our neighbors and started a healthy and strong conversation about food attitudes and health realities in our neighborhood utilizing the following values in implementation, planning, and review.

- 01** EMPOWERMENT
- 02** DIGNITY
- 03** GOOD CITIZENSHIP
- 04** JUSTICE
- 05** REVERENCE FOR LIFE
- 06** COMMITMENT TO PLACE

# OUR PARTNERS IN FRESH PRODUCE:

## FRESH PRODUCE



# FOOD IS A CONVERSATION STARTER

In exchange for fresh produce, we asked our neighbors to spend 3 minutes talking to us about their food realities



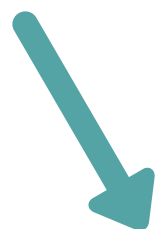
**Do you have a doctor?**

**Do you have children?**

**Where do you get your food from?**

**How do you get it home?**

**Do you have wifi?**





## WHAT WE LEARNED

Our neighbors shared that..



**3.8%**

Veterans



**10.9%**

Disabled



**2.72%**

Pregnant

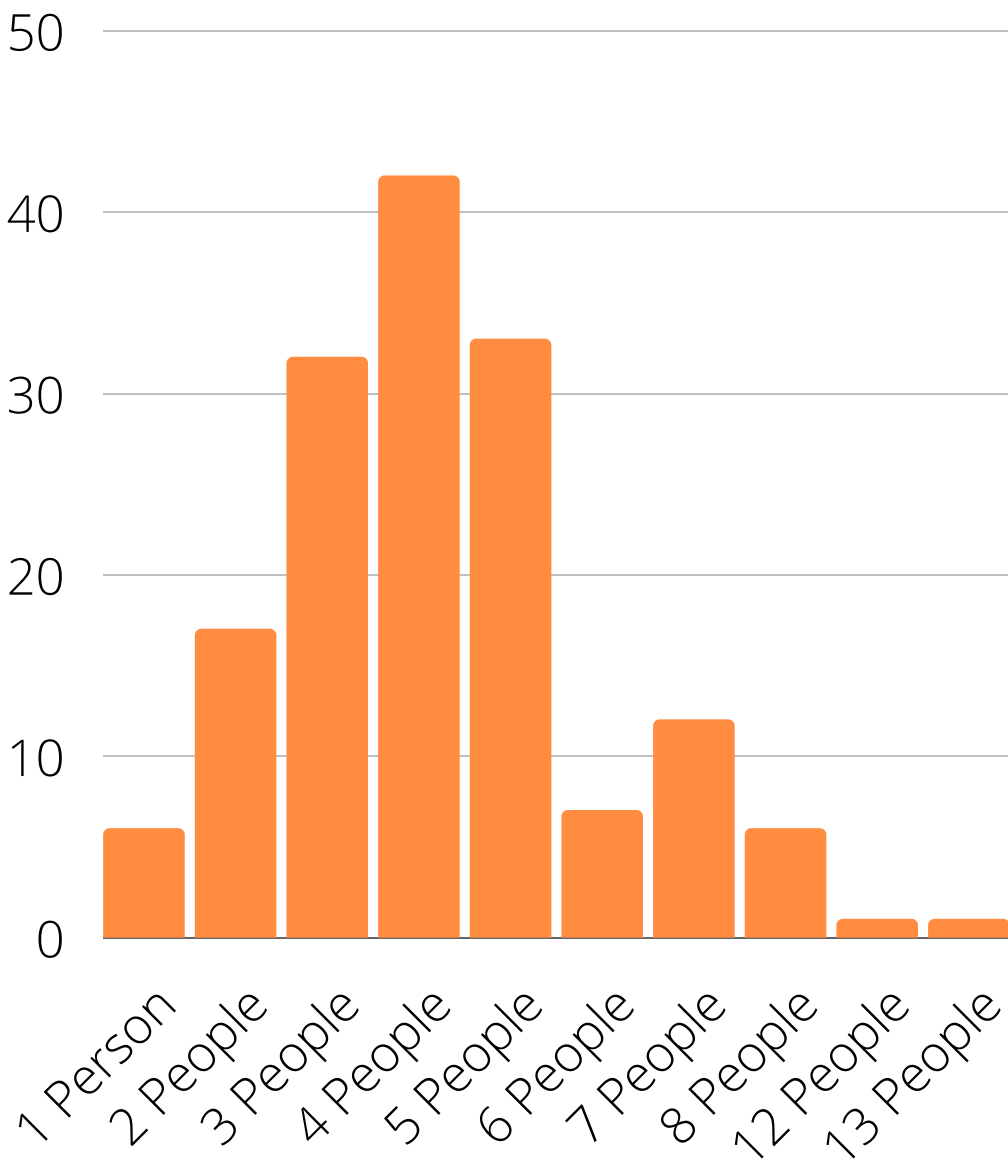


**27.2%**

Receiving SNAP Benefits

# WHAT WE LEARNED

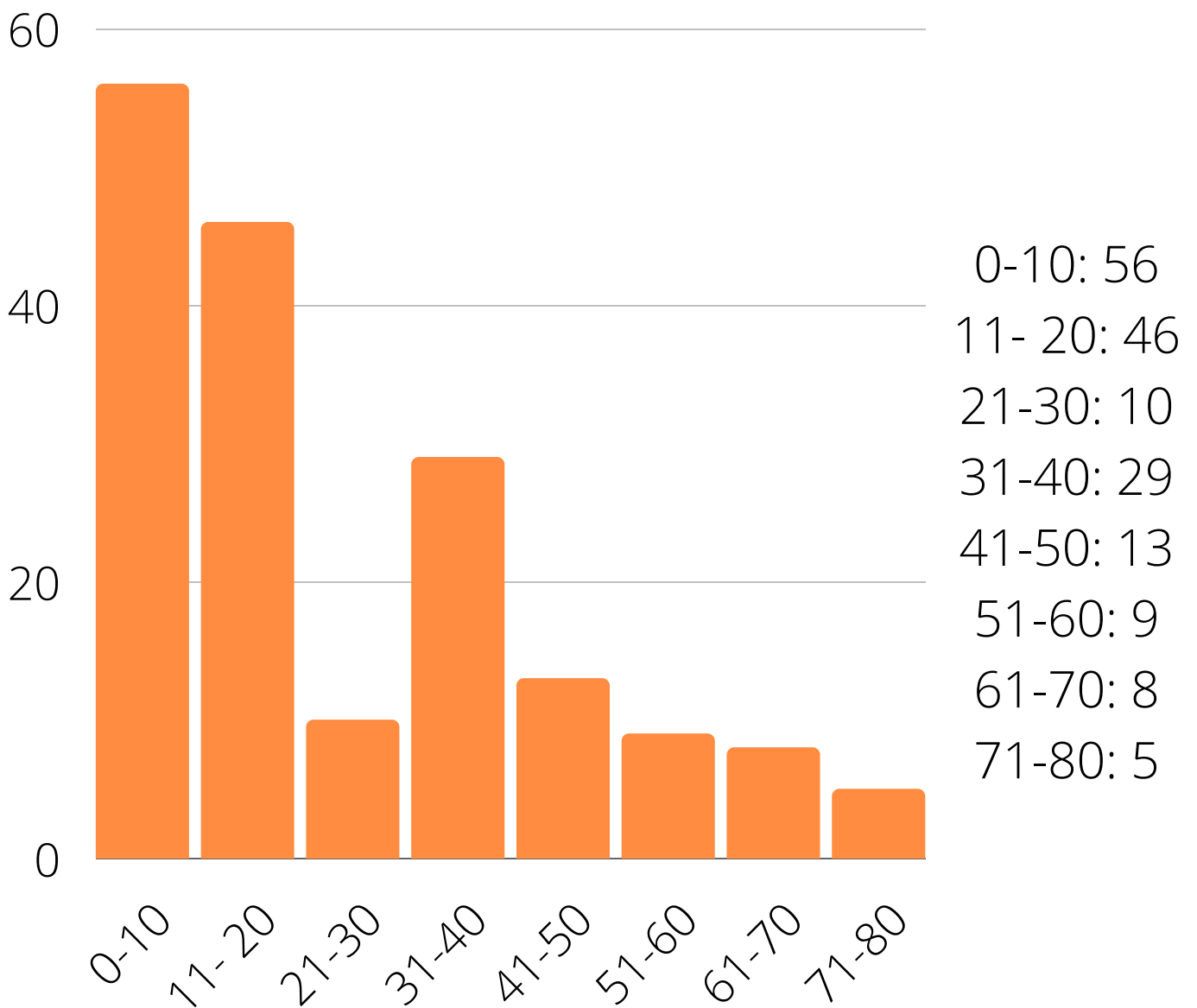
## House Count



1 Person: 6  
2 People: 17  
3 People: 32  
4 People: 42  
5 People: 33  
6 People: 7  
7 People: 12  
8 People: 6  
12 People: 1  
13 People: 1

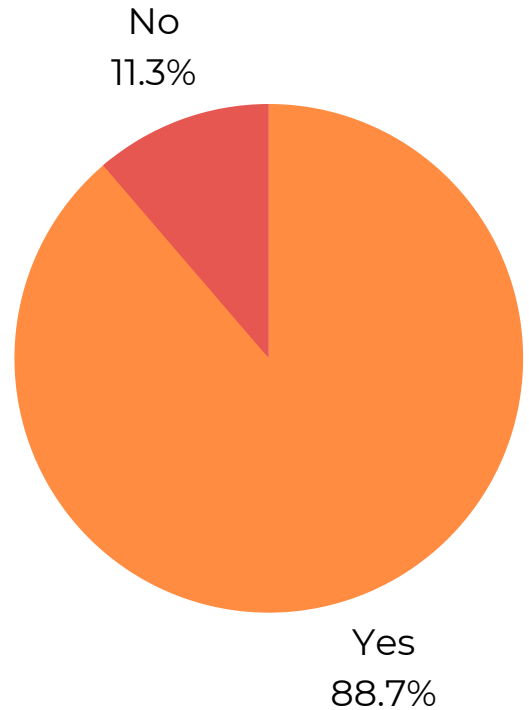
# WHAT WE LEARNED

## Age Count

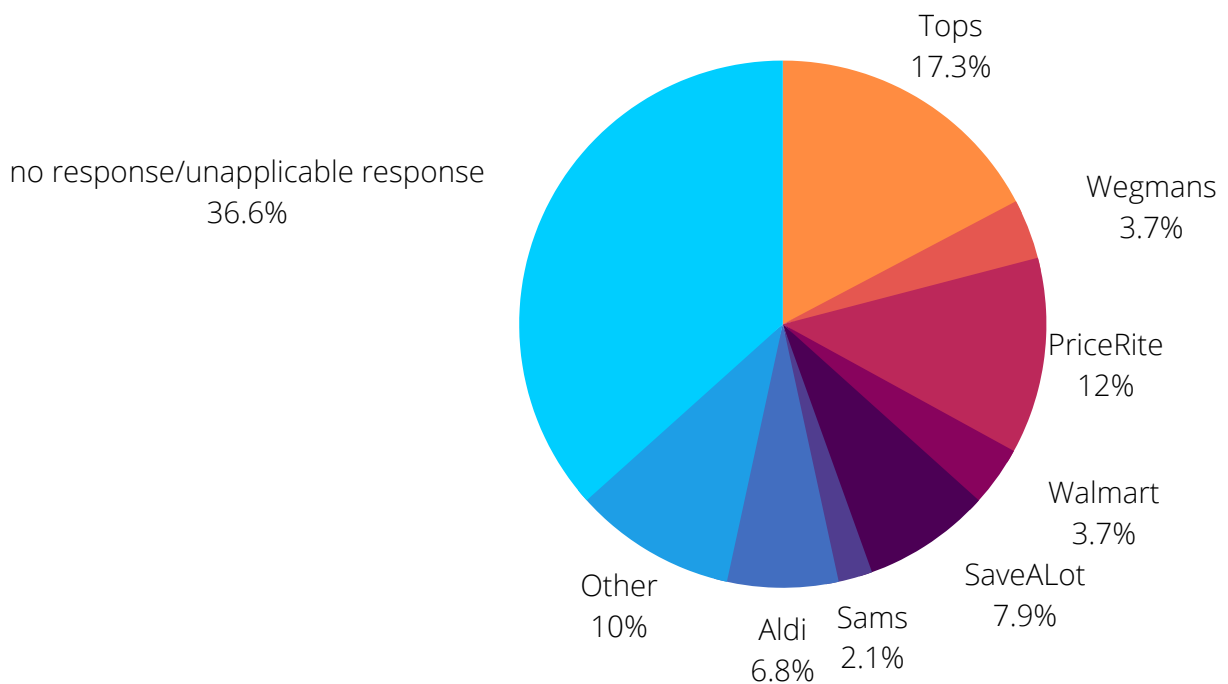


# WHAT WE LEARNED

**Do you have a doctor?  
(124 responses)**

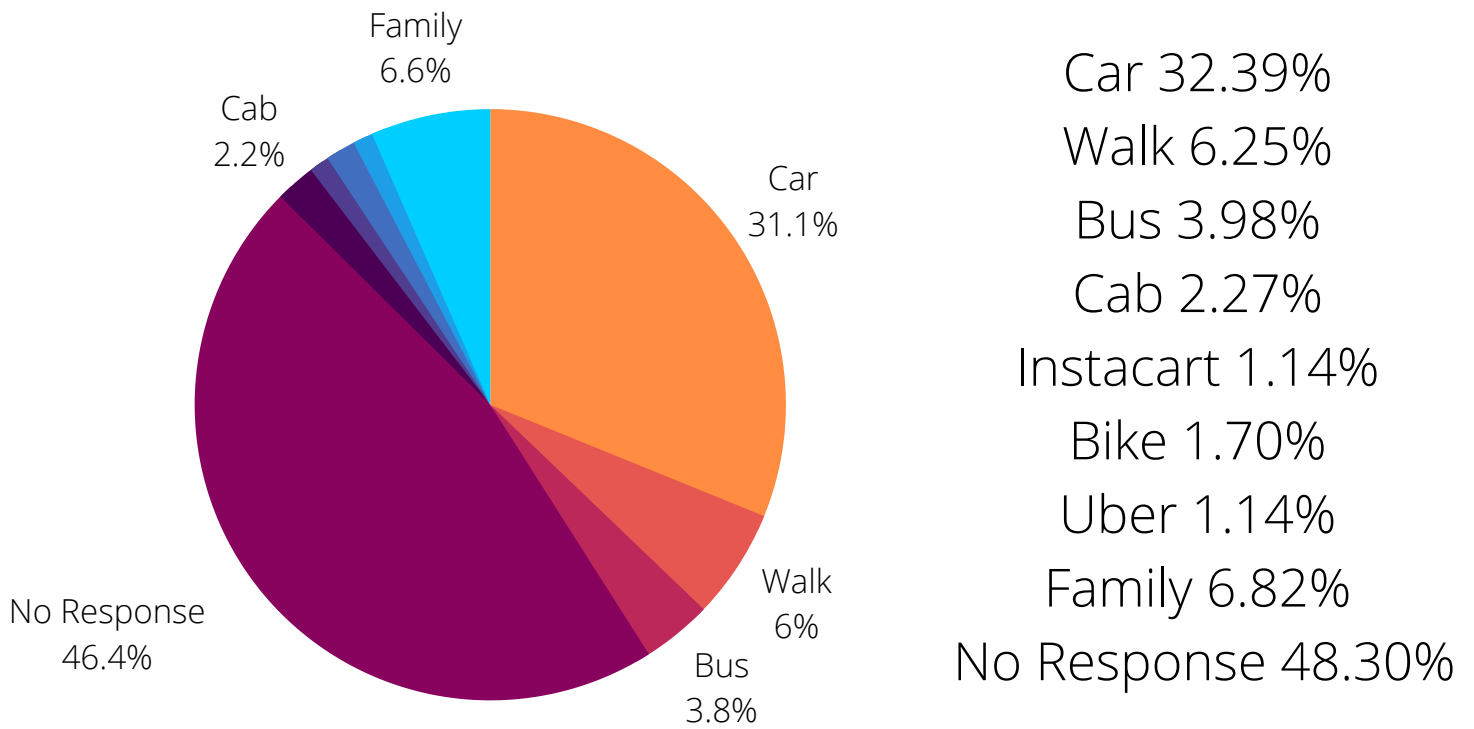


**Where do you get your food from? (multiple answers for question resulted in larger total percentage)**



# WHAT WE LEARNED

How do you get your food home? (multiple answers for question resulted in larger total percentage)



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## WHAT WE LEARNED

Our neighbors shared that..



**55%**

**Attend Public School**

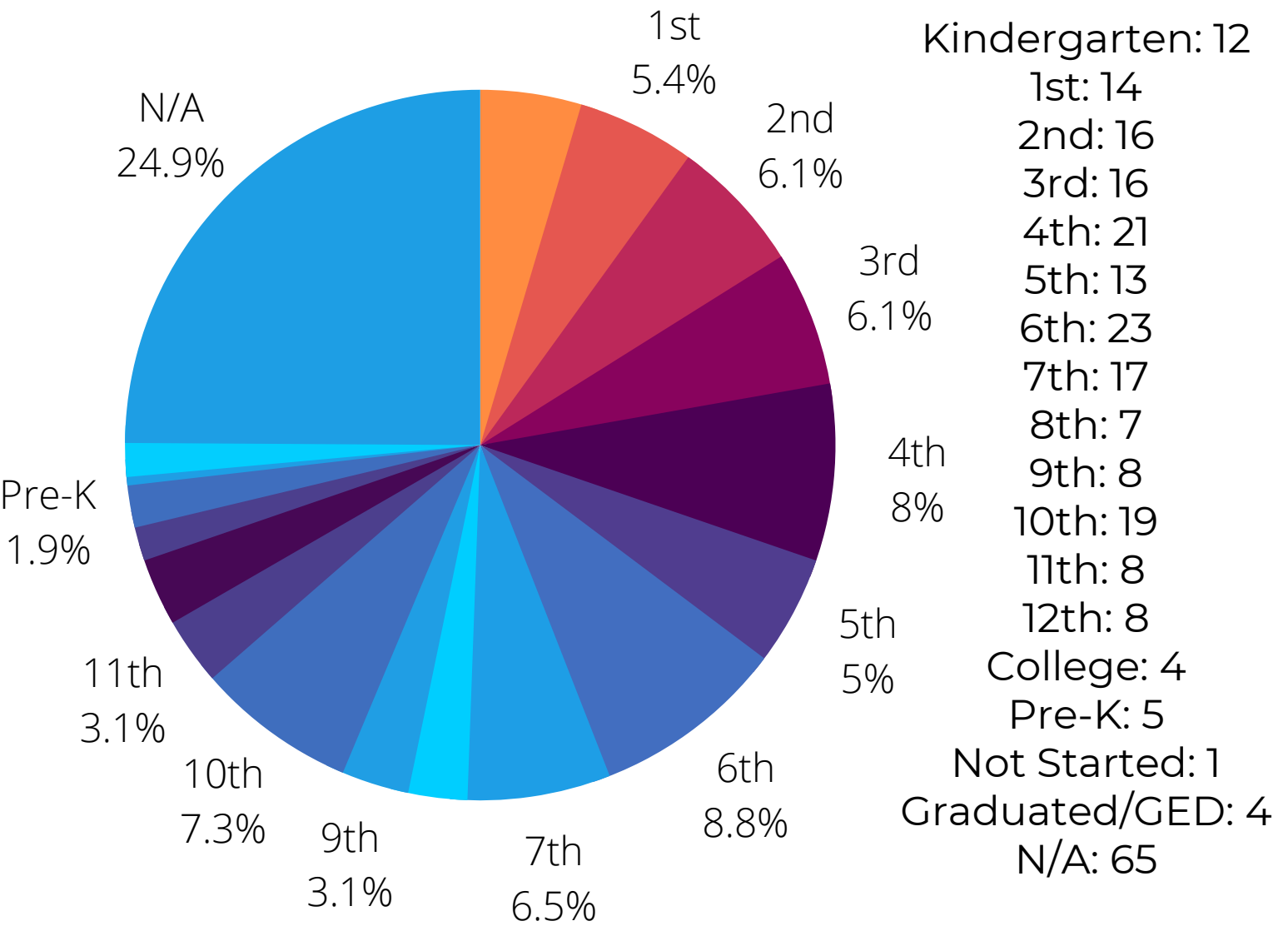


**41%**

**Attend Charter School**

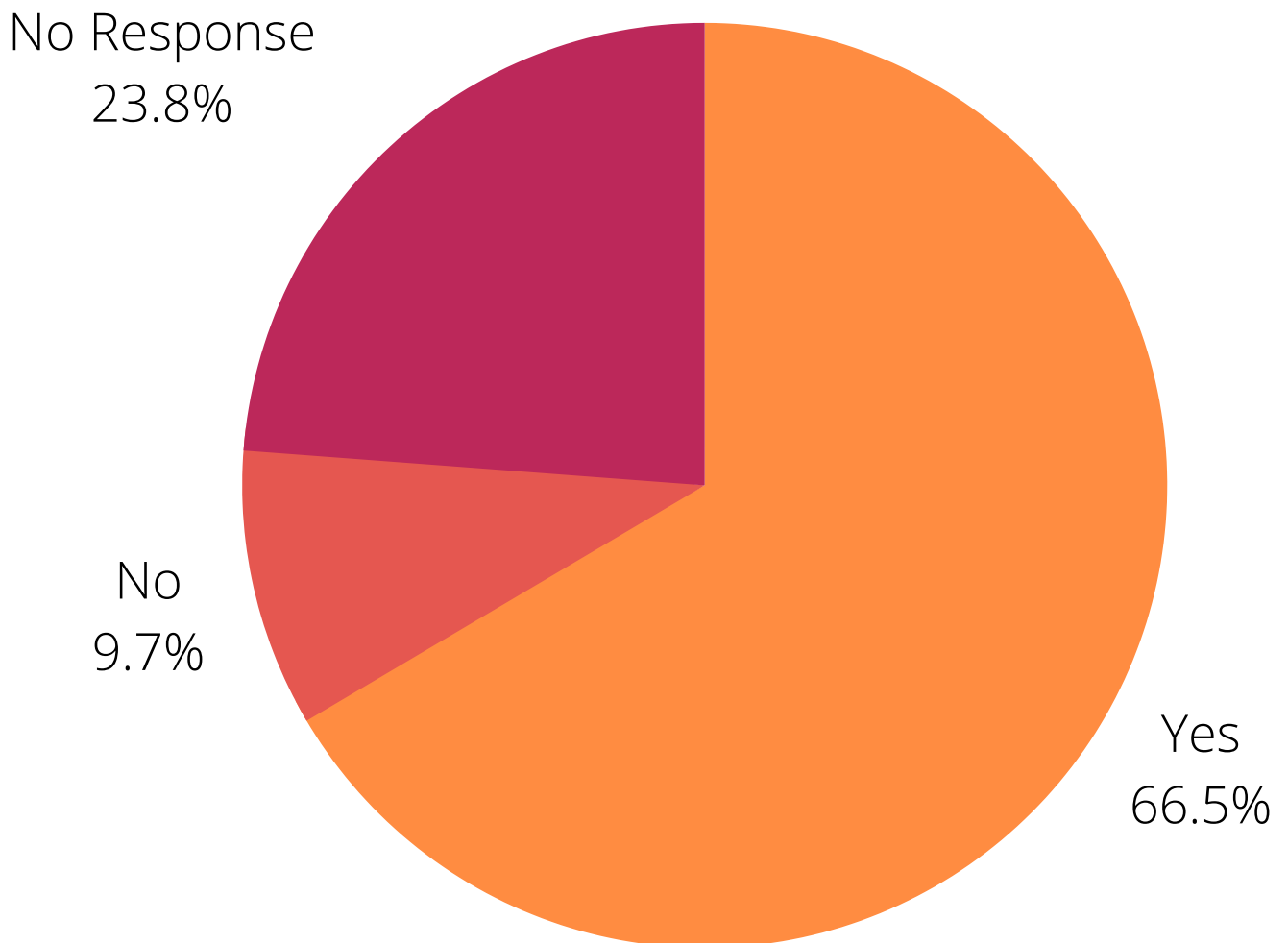
# WHAT WE LEARNED

## Grade Level of Children



## WHAT WE LEARNED

### Do you have Wi-Fi?





There are 4,500 families with children that live in poverty in the community of the West Side. Most of these families (74%) live in block groups where childhood poverty rates are over 50%.



Only 33% of related service providers in the community are located in these block groups. The most noticeable service gaps exist in the Forest, Black Rock, and Riverside neighborhoods.

More than 10,600 children and almost half of single-parent families live in poverty in areas west of Main Street in Buffalo.

## WHAT WE LEARNED

### West Side Promise Neighborhood / BCBS / Youth Action Board Youth Action Board Report

#### “Food means everything. It brings us together”

Youth Action Board members participated in Summer Lunch outreach events in the City of Buffalo from July 6th, 2021 to August 5th, 2021, to provide information on housing resources for youth and to collect narratives directly from youth about experiences accessing food.

Our Youth Action Board’s goal was to collect narratives by conducting a survey and asking people what food means to them, educate our community on resources that are there for them, and to just be there to engage with the youth and families and learn from them. In this report we’ve included quotes from community members, feedback we received from surveys and our conversations, and recommendations to increase food security in our community.

#### What we learned:

- Many young people and folks over the age of 24 did not consider themselves as “food insecure” or lacking access to food, potentially pointing to the stigma that surrounds it.
- The majority of attendees were young children and their parents. This could mean more outreach is needed to older youth to find out what their needs are.
- We handed out about 100 youth services resource guides and general services resource guides, and talked to attendees about available community services. We found that many people had no idea they existed in the community.
- Families are acquiring food at the Belle Center, Pantries, PriceRite, Family Dollar, Tops, Save A Lot, Sam’s Club, and Meals on Wheels.

“We love food and mealtime we get to spend with family around the table”

“As a child I was afraid to even reach out to the people I needed to to get the resources for food.”

“The first time I felt food insecure, I was scared, because as a kid you're hungry and your parents are upset, but there's nothing they can do”

We found that many young people did not consider themselves food insecure, and counted on Summer Lunch and other food banks for meals throughout the summer. Many also accessed most of their groceries from local grocery stores. Many young people also thought of Summer Lunch as a way to meet friends or hang out with fellow neighbors, while enjoying a meal.

Many folks over the age of 24 were interested in learning about resources to help young people they know or their own family members. We spoke to many who did not know there were resources available in their communities specifically to help youth experiencing housing instability or homelessness, such as rental assistance programs, family mediation teams, and other supportive services.

Recommendations:

## WHAT WE LEARNED



### West Side Promise Neighborhood / BCBS / Youth Action Board Youth Action Board Report Recommendations:

What can peers and social services workers do?

- Directing people with little or no food to places where they can get some more, spreading the word through social media/word of mouth/ or flyers, developing surveys for community members
  - If there are events helping at those.
  - Spreading information or resources platform of choice
- Brainstorm ideas or solutions on how to serve the community and those who are food insecure in an effective way.

How can communities make food more accessible?

- Do a free food pantry in a area where food insecurity may be more common (downtown buffalo)
- Normalize help (Some people may feel shame in having to access resources)
  - Have events that draw public in and spread word on resources
- Maybe have more mobile food pantries as transportation may be a barrier to some families
- Idea of free food Wednesdays in different locations around surrounding locations. (I do free food Mondays every other monday in south buffalo)
  - Conduct more food drives and free food giveaways.
  - Expand the variety of the low cost or free food that is available.

A Note from Teneva, our Youth Action Board Lead Representative:

**“It was so powerful to be able to take time and be a part of a program that helped myself, my family and many I knew as a child and as youth. I can imagine the fear, when school is out, and students don’t have access to healthy food to fuel their bodies. The summer lunch program and all the community partners that make it happen are a wonderful asset to our community.”**



# Our commitment remains to the children of the West Side.



**We will continue to work with the community to strengthen summer lunch and food supports integrated within.**

# OUR RECOMMENDATIONS



1. Activate summer-oriented programs such as summer youth to conduct outreach and build capacity.
2. Co-locate farmer's markets at summer lunch sites.
3. Provide orientation/information session for Board of Block Clubs in January.
4. Empower neighbors to donate supplies all year by designating a location.
5. Locate summer lunch in city parks and community gardens.
6. Empower tenant councils in BMHA developments to host summer lunch sites at various sites including senior housing.
7. Call local artists to make signage in various languages for summer lunch locations.
8. Create opportunities to address the barriers in access for community members such as the necessity to have access to refrigeration to participate. For example, we could create a fund for refrigerators available to community members.
9. Encourage local universities to use summer lunch as an opportunity to provide free tutoring and engage with the local community.
10. Invite pantries to participate in outreach and engagement.
11. Encourage summer lunch locations where there is free Wi-Fi.

Summer lunch is reliant on communal facilities such as community centers and community rooms located within densely populated residential complexes, and city parks thus the investment and maintenance of such communal and park spaces encourage the ability of the community to be empowered and utilize such facilities for food work and social change. Ideal locations for summer lunch are accessible via public transport, have public bathrooms, access to water and shade, and areas with heavy foot traffic. Co-locating academic and social engagement at summer lunch sites even periodically encourages the utilization and collaboration of summer lunch. Creating a plural space where those who are hoping to reach neighbors with needed resources both food and non food is the key to activating and fully leveraging the government's investment in the summer lunch model nationwide.

**MASSACHUSETTS  
AVENUE  
PARK**

**12,900 meals**

were served to 6,450 individuals on 34 program days in July and August

**SHAFFER  
COMMUNITY  
CENTER**

**10,200 meals**

were served to 6,450 individuals on 34 program days in July and August

**SCHOOL  
SUPPLIES**

**101 backpacks**

were given to students, with 55 containing school supplies and 30 containing a school uniform

**FRESH  
PRODUCE**

**7000 lbs**

of fresh produce was given to community members, containing fruits, vegetables, rice and beans

**PREPARED  
MEALS**

**500 servings**

of prepared taco bowls were distributed at Massachusetts Avenue Park for adults

**WEEKEND  
FOOD**

**3500 lbs**

of food was distributed at the Shaffer Community Center to feed families on the weekends

**VOLUNTEERS**

**68 people**  
volunteered at our 68 events throughout the summer

**COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**11 organizations**  
distributed information about their services to families throughout the summer

**COLLEGES**

**3**  
colleges (Buffalo State College, University at Buffalo, and D'Youville) helped plan and provide volunteers and services for summer lunch

**IMPACT**

**90%**  
of volunteers surveyed felt they had a positive impact on the community

**COMMUNITY PARTNERS**

**+ 50**  
businesses, institutions, and organizations supported WSPN in planning and operating summer lunch

**RETENTION**

**100%**  
of volunteers surveyed said they would volunteer with WSPN again in the future

# ORGANIZATIONS WHO DONATED



THE RALPH C. WILSON, JR.  
CHILDREN'S MUSEUM





# RESOURCES WE BROUGHT TO SITE



 Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences  
University at Buffalo

 University at Buffalo  
School of Public Health and Health Professions

