

HARKIN ON WELLNESS REPORT 2019





•Foreword•

The health of our nation is not solely defined as the health of our population. In today's world, we must also address what effect our habits have on the health of our food system.

Although the U.S. food system provides plentiful, inexpensive food, much of it is non-nutritive, energy-dense, unhealthy food. What's more, the agricultural system that underlies it is resource-intensive and not sustainable. One solution is substantial reform of our current food systems. Agriculture and farm policies need to be aligned with national health and nutrition goals. Communities, organizations, and individuals need to facilitate the change and serve as leaders in bridging the disconnect between healthy people and a sustainable food system.

Fortunately, programs already exist in communities and cities across the United States that are doing just that; however, the most innovative and adoptable wellness and nutrition initiatives are not often shared with other communities and community leaders.

It is the goal of this Harkin on Wellness Report, to highlight top wellness and nutrition initiatives that are examples of healthy, sustainable food systems. We encourage others to use this as a tool to build partnerships and create sustainable, cross-sector coalitions within their own communities and beyond.



Senator Tom Harkin (Retired)



Harkin On Wellness Methodology

In the fall of 2018, we began the search for top wellness and nutrition initiatives from across the United States. The call for submissions was distributed nation-wide through professional organizations, public agencies, and publishing resources. We asked that all submissions highlight how their initiative or program strategically connects food systems with health and wellness. A total of 51 submissions were reviewed internally at The Harkin Institute to narrow down the applicant field. The review process included an analysis of each program that helped identify a series of elements necessary to enhance the quality, acceptability, and impact of health programming.

Submissions were rated on relevancy, adaptability, acceptance, implementation, reach, and cost. For this report, we took special care to consider the following questions when selecting the top initiatives:

Is this a relevant wellness or nutrition program for community health?

Can it be easily adopted by the community?

Will members of any community accept the program?

How well will the program be utilized and/or implemented?

Can it reach a wide population of people within the community?

What is the cost to the community? (fiscal, time, leadership, infrastructure)

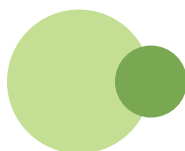
We also used three additional criteria to determine what effect the program has on healthy food systems.

1. Food supply chain impact: Does the program change the way food is processed, distributed and marketed to make healthy, safe food more accessible, affordable, and available?

2. Food environment change: Does the program change the surrounding/physical environment in a way that increases consumers' ability to purchase and consume more nutritious and healthy foods?

3. Consumer orientation: Does the program provide information and education that help lead consumers towards healthier and more sustainable food choices?

Following the internal review, an external group of reviewers was asked to select the top programs based on the same criteria used for the internal review. Based on the responses from the external committee, 10 programs were selected as the best examples of wellness programs and initiatives in the United States.





Boulder Valley School District School Food Project

Serving nearly 14,000 fresh and nutritious meals every day, the BVSD School Food Program (SFP) is a prime example of how a program can introduce flavorful, nutritious food made with wholesome, local ingredients to the next generation. SFP not only feeds their students, they host over 200 lunchroom education events each year to support food literacy and help children make informed decisions about the types and amounts of food they put in their bodies. The nutrition education emphasizes seasonal, fresh menu items, using Harvest of the Month (HOTM) cards and bracelets to encourage students to celebrate the seasonality of local foods. HOTM is just one way SFP engages students in the intricate processes of food, nutrition, and agriculture. SFP hosts Iron Chef competitions, farmer visits, farm field trips, BVSD Day at the Farmers' Market, and a Plant & Seed Sale. With 52 schools and more than 31,000 students in the district, SFP is able to engage students in the flow of food from seed to table, a learning experience that they can carry with them for the rest of their lives.

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14,000
meals per day

52
district schools

31,000
students



A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a large, vibrant green bell pepper. The person is wearing a teal-colored zip-up hoodie. The background is dark and out of focus.

Main Street Project: Sharing Our Roots Program

For seven years, Main Street Project (MSP) has been developing a regenerative agriculture model based on poultry and perennial crops that connects and supports communities and helps to rebuild a local food system by creating opportunities for new generations of aspiring young and immigrant farmers. In 2017, MSP acquired their 100-acre Central Farm, purchased with the goal to support expanded training programs for aspiring Latino immigrants and other limited-resource farmers. Individuals participate in a full production cycle learning experience– from preparing the soil, to transplanting and managing crops, to marketing products. At harvest time, trainees receive supplemental income by selling the food they have produced, and community members gain access to affordable, locally-grown, fresh vegetables. Accessing land poses a great challenge to beginning farmers. Within the Community Landshare Program, members are allotted plots within MSP's 100-acre farm for a small association fee. Because low-income and immigrant farmers have limited access to land and capital, graduates of the advanced agripreneur program are given access to satellite 'host' farms and benefit from Main Street Project-supported shared facilities that provide the guidance necessary to succeed. In 2017 MSP launched Sharing Our Roots, a community engagement program that seeks to improve local access to affordable, nutritious and culturally appropriate foods. Since then, more than 250 people have visited the MSP farm and have harvested approximately 7,500 lbs of fresh produce. In the coming years, MSP intends to expand its program and outreach to other demographics, while continuing to serve as a support system for immigrant and beginning farmers in southeastern Minnesota.

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Detroit Food Academy

In Detroit, local educators, chefs, and business owners work with Detroit Food Academy (DFA) to instill the entrepreneurial spirit in young Detroiters through food. For more than 300 young Detroiters, the Detroit Food Academy breaks the cycle of hunger and increases both food knowledge and access by engaging young people in the lifelong skills of culinary arts, entrepreneurship, financial literacy, and food business management. The after-school leadership program, summer leadership program, and advanced leadership cohort offer DFA students the unique opportunity to learn about the culinary arts, health and wellness, food systems, and business essentials. The programs help students design and launch their own triple-bottom-line food business, asking the question, "How does my business effect the planet, people, and profit?" All elements (planet, people, and profit) overlap to address the larger concept of sustainability. Students involved in DFA report better health outcomes, increased understanding of cooking and nutrition, and greater pride in being from the City of Detroit. More than 300 Detroit kids benefit from the year-round programming and it continues to grow. In 2019, a hands-on nutrition and food entrepreneurship initiative developed by DFA will serve every 6th grader in the Detroit Public Schools Community District, nearly 3500 students.

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Fighting hunger *differently*

DC Central Kitchen

DC Central Kitchen (DCCK) is a nonprofit developer of innovative social ventures that break the cycle of hunger and poverty. For nearly three decades, DCCK has developed its own unique food system that rescues and uses otherwise-wasted food from multiple sources. Food is aggregated at a centralized kitchen facility and misfit ingredients are used to prepare balanced meals that are delivered to homeless shelters and other front-line agencies. Through the innovative distribution of healthy food and the creation of meaningful jobs, DCCK is ensuring more equitable access to healthy, dignified food and economic opportunity for all. The impact and reach of DCCK is extensive; over the last two decades, they provided more than 36 million meals to food-insecure individuals including schoolchildren at DC Public Schools. All the meals prepared for DC Public Schools are locally-sourced from independent within 300 miles of Washington, D.C. The remainder of the meals leverage quality ingredients that would have otherwise gone to waste from wholesalers, grocery stores, and restaurants. For example, since 2009 DC Central Kitchen has purchased “imperfect produce” from a cooperative of Mennonite farmers in the Shenandoah Valley, offering a market for produce that would otherwise be turned away by traditional retailers while producing quality produce at a significant discount.

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Food Commons

In Fresno, one of the country's most impoverished and food-insecure regions, an entirely new infrastructure is challenging the current national food system. Co-founders, Larry Yee and James Cochran created a system that brings healthy and sustainably produced foods to communities surrounding the area, while creating a system of small businesses and an abundance of jobs and workforce opportunities for low-income communities. Food Commons created a model that challenges the current food system by taking a holistic approach to health and well-being. This approach recognizes the relationships between food, environment and health, economics, and justice. In enabling independent food and farming enterprises, they offer an alternative to the current system. Today, their staff consists of almost all people of color who live in the low-income communities they serve. Their current weekly food box program feeds roughly 3,000 people, and Fresno residents can invest just \$25 to be an owner of their food system. Their model is making healthy and sustainably produced food accessible for all. They have created an entirely new food system of small businesses, jobs, and a workforce with opportunities for low-income communities so that all may have the chance to become involved in the process of providing the healthy food their families need.

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400 bags of leafy greens delivered **per month** to local senior citizens who are both **food insecure** and **recovering from cancer**.

Green Bronx Machine

GBM is a year-round, academic program focused on growing food indoors in communities with limited means and struggling schools. What began as an alternative after school program, grew into a K-12+ model integrated into the curriculum. GBM believes integrating plant-based curriculum, not only provides healthy food, but also contributes to the health and well-being of students, and increases overall academic performance. The science of growing vegetables aligned to school standards ultimately grows healthy communities. GBM converted a 60x20 empty library and 100+ year old school building into the National Health, Wellness and Learning Center - CS 55, a community school in the South Bronx. Students grow over 100 bags of groceries per week that are delivered to students and families. They also provide over 400 bags of leafy greens per month to local senior citizens who are both food insecure AND recovering from cancer. To date, they grow over 65,000 pounds of food in a 100+ year old school, in the poorest Congressional District in America. They provide health, wellness and nutritional programming and are a NYC Exemplar in School Garden to School Cafe Programming.

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New Haven Farms

New Haven Farms was founded in New Haven, Connecticut, in 2012 in response to concerns regarding health, environment, and economic stability within the New Haven community. New Haven Farms transforms unused urban lots into organic gardens and provides educational programs such as cooking and nutrition classes to the public. Their aim is to provide fresh produce to urban areas, to inform the public about the medicinal qualities of food and the importance of healthy eating, to strengthen urban communities, and to grow food in an environmentally sustainable way. New Haven Farms has 10 farms/community gardens, all located in New Haven or the surrounding area. Their Farm-Based Wellness Program includes New Haven Farm's principal initiative. Their program partners with three health-care providers in the New Haven community: Fair Haven Community Health Center, Cornell, Scott-Hill Health Center, and Yale Primary Care. These institutions refer low-income adult patients suffering from diet-related chronic health problems to the Farm-Based Wellness Program, where they (during the summer season) receive lessons on growing food, cooking, and nutrition at one of the New Haven Farms.

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**10**

partnerships with clinics
serving low-income families

**2,000**

volunteer hours

**4,000**

patients receiving produce

**5,600**

pounds of produce harvested

**2,611**

CSA bags distributed

The Farm at St. Joe's, Saint Joseph Mercy Health System

In an effort to improve health and wellness in new and innovative ways, St. Joseph Mercy Ann Arbor hospital created The Farm at St. Joe's, a unique hospital-based working farm that grows food for patients, employees, and the community. The mission of the farm is to grow a healthy community by empowering people through food, education, and relationships. This has resulted in a community supported agriculture (CSA) program, which serves as a way to connect consumers directly to local farmers. Through this collaborative program, The Farm at St. Joe's works with 10 local farmers to collect produce and distribute to the 220 members, including hospital staff, community members and 38 food-insecure families who receive free produce. This enables the Farm to provide a diverse array of produce while supporting the local economy and ecology of the county, changing the way people are buying produce by favoring local providers over conventional sources. The Farm hosts a weekly farmers market in the hospital lobby and provides produce to hospital providers to give to patients at 10 clinics serving low-income populations dealing with chronic diseases such as diabetes and heart disease. The Farm is a community-driven initiative. Volunteers have spent more than 2,000 hours working on the Farm; 4,000 patients have received free produce through the Produce to Patient program; 5,600 pounds of produce have been harvested; and 2,611 CSA bags have been distributed.

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Colorado Children's Hospital

In 1897, six medical staff and volunteer nurses began operating summer tent hospitals for babies in the Denver, Colorado area. The volunteers quickly realized the need for a permanent children's hospital, and on May 9, 1908, Children's Hospital Colorado (CHCO) was established to provide quality health care for Colorado children. Today, their mission is to promote children's health through integrated programs of patient care, education, research, and advocacy. In partnership with Healthy Hospital at CHCO, the Food Security Council (FSC) was formed in 2017, in response to the need for CHCO to have a coordinated and effective strategy to address food insecurity for families who seek care here as well as in the community, and CHCO's employee population. Its goal is to provide 90% of Colorado's food-insecure children with nutritious, reasonably-priced food that meets their health needs. In 2018, Healthy Hospital and the Food Security Council initiated the conversion of a terrace flower garden into an herb garden. Also in 2018, the Healthy Roots Garden at Children's Hospital successfully launched with over 3,000 square feet of dedicated growing space that helps source the cafeteria on-site, provide clinics and departments with garden-based programming, and fill the Healthy Roots Farm Carts with fresh produce. The Healthy Roots mobile-market carts are equipped to accept SNAP and our state-wide matching program, Double-Up Food Bucks. CHCO is also a leader in the food recovery sector, partnering with Copia and Denver Food Rescue to reduce food waste. Their (food) waste-stream diversion efforts have also resulted in over one million gallons of water saved and 12.4K lbs. of CO₂ removed from the atmosphere in the first six months.

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90%

The target percent of
Colorado's food insecure
children provided with
nutritious, reasonably-priced
food that meets their health
needs



DMARC

The Des Moines Area Religious Council (DMARC) Food Pantry Network is a health-based food pantry network that supplies food to 13 neighborhood pantries in the Des Moines metro area at no cost. The food pantry is core to the mission of DMARC, an interfaith network of more than 125 congregations from five faith traditions that focuses on uniting religious leaders in the greater Des Moines community as they respond to the fundamental human needs of Polk County. DMARC challenges the traditional model of food pantries with Food Pantry 2.0, an innovative food pantry program that focuses on providing low-income individuals with fresh produce and healthier choices. Food pantry users are incentivized to select healthier food options using the Food Pantry 2.0 custom point system, which assigns values to food items according to nutritional content. Individuals who select healthier foods are able to expand and extend their monthly food supply, which has led to increased fruit and vegetables consumption among DMARC Food Pantry users. They are funded by financial contributions from religious groups, individuals, organizations and businesses. Additional support is provided through donations of non-perishable food and personal items

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