



CTFS Gather Conference 2026

Peer Connect Session:

Increasing Food Supply



Agency partners have some amazing and creative strategies to increase their food supply. Let's look at a few examples!

Adopt a Shelf: Southbury Food Bank

Adopt a shelf is a way to encourage local businesses, clubs, organizations, teams, and families to make ongoing donations to your food pantry. The donor picks a particular item to sponsor and is responsible for making sure that 'shelf' is fully stocked for the predetermined length of time.



Southbury Food Bank

October 4 at 8:00 AM · 🌐

☀️ Adopt-a-Shelf Sponsor Shoutout! ☀️

We truly couldn't do what we do without the generosity of our amazing sponsors. Your support keeps our shelves full and our community nourished—thank you! 🧡🛒



Rotary Donations: Ledyard Food Pantry

This project was a collaboration between the Ledyard Rotary Club, Ledyard Food Pantry, and Ledyard High School's Agri-Science and Technology elective program. The rotary club donated the funds for two cattle to be raised and processed. Students in the Agri-Science program had the responsibility of raising the cattle, offering an incredible educational experience. All the meat was then donated to the Ledyard Food Pantry.



You've Been FORKed!: Friendly Hands

With a donation of \$25, a donor can pick an individual or business to FORK. During the night, Friendly Hands places the forks and signs on the individual or business's lawn, and they are encouraged to make a donation and FORK someone else in return.



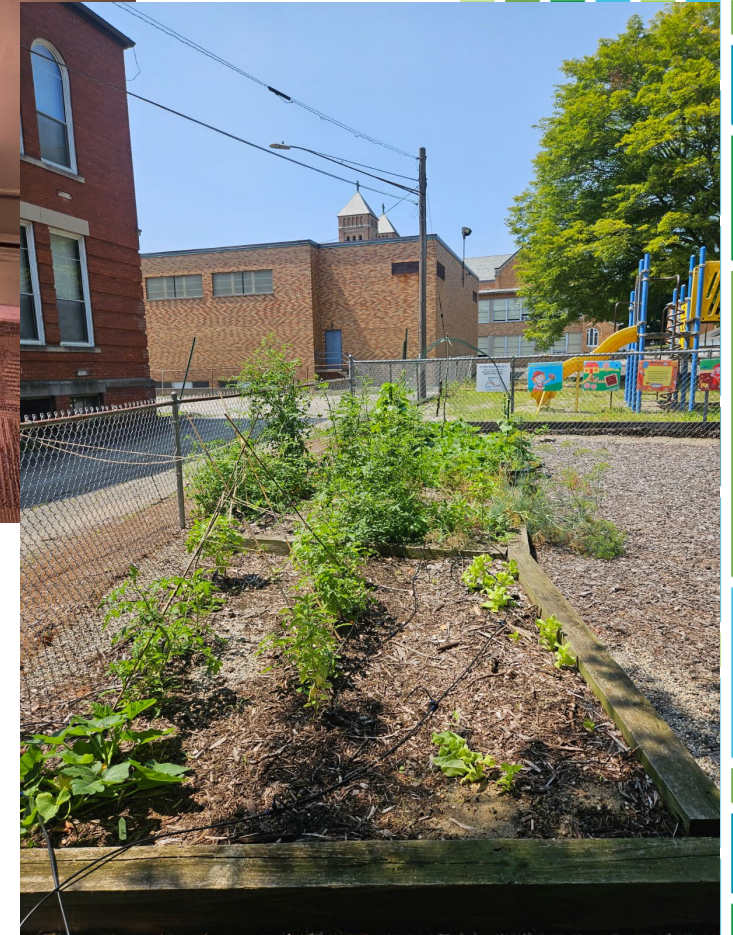
Pantry Gardening: Neighbor to Neighbor

Neighbor to Neighbor grows produce for their food pantry at two off-site gardens. These volunteer-run gardens have a variety of plants including tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, cucumbers, green beans, squash, and several kinds of herbs.



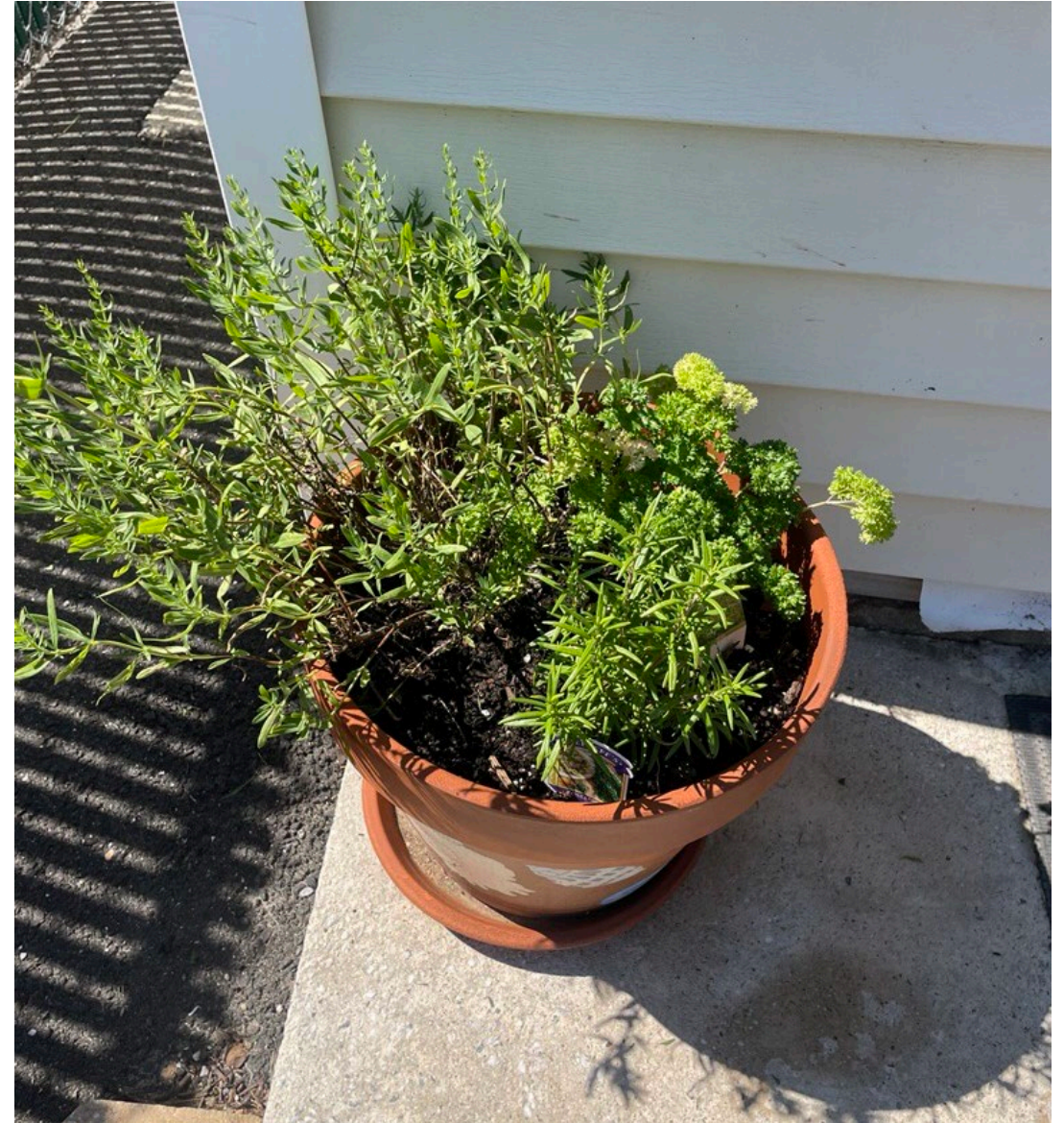
Gardening: Holy Family Home and Shelter

Children staying at Holy Family Home and Shelter have the opportunity to help with planting and watering seeds in an indoor greenhouse, transplanting the plants to an outdoor garden, and harvesting the produce, which is used in community meals. Plants grown include pumpkins, tomatoes, squash, herbs, and flowers.



Potted Herbs: Open Doors

Open Doors utilizes gardening on a smaller scale by growing potted herbs. Neighbors and staff work together to care for the herbs, which are used to add flavor to the food prepared in cooking classes.



Hydroponics: Food4Health

Hartford Hospital has a hydroponic rooftop garden to grow produce for the Food4Health program. The hydroponics system was built by Levo International and yielded 1000 pounds of food in its first season. The Food4Health program has continued to grow and now also has four farms supplying its four clinic locations.

Source: <https://hartfordhospital.org/services/food4health/rooftop-garden>



On-Site Partner Support Program

Need help getting more food for your program?

Our AmeriCorps VISTAs provide customized, in-person support to help agency partners strengthen operations and better serve their communities.

Support may include (but is not limited to):

- Using social media to raise awareness, increase donations, and recruit volunteers
- Guidance on starting a small herb or vegetable garden and/or improving fresh food production
- Brainstorming and planning action steps to put your ideas into practice

 **Scan the QR code to schedule a consultation.**



What about you?

How does your
organization get
food?

What ideas do
you
have to increase
your food supply?





CTFS Gather Conference 2026

Peer Connect Session:

Volunteer Practices



From recruitment to retention, agency partners across the network show creative and effective ways to keep volunteers engaged and connected to their missions. These efforts help grow their volunteer base while fostering long-term commitment and involvement. Let's take a look at some of their success stories!

Communication and Appreciation: Love and Serve Food Pantry

Keeping volunteers connected starts with consistent communication.

Love& Serve Food Pantry does that by:

- Maintaining an up-to-date list of active volunteers.
- Sharing volunteer opportunities and schedules through a dedicated WhatsApp channel.
- Creating a welcoming environment with beverages and snacks during food distribution days.
- Providing volunteer shirts and hoodies to foster a sense of belonging.
- Celebrating volunteer birthdays twice each month.
- Hosting an annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner to recognize contributions.



Getting Feedback from Volunteers: Seymour Oxford Food Bank

The best way to understand what volunteers need is to ask them. Seymour Oxford Food Bank gathered valuable feedback through a volunteer survey. As a result, they established a Volunteer Committee with representatives from each area of the food bank. This committee:

- Holds monthly committee meetings to discuss challenges and opportunities.
- Collects volunteer suggestions to improve processes and workflows.
- Develops ideas to enhance the overall volunteer experience.



Training Volunteers: Caring for Bethlehem

Every February, Caring for Bethlehem Food Bank celebrates Volunteer Appreciation Month by hosting a potluck dinner for its volunteers to foster connection and community. During this event they:

- Share organizational updates and important news with volunteers.
- Provide trainings on topics such as civil rights and food safety.
- Recognize volunteer contributions and impact throughout the year.
- Conclude the event with awards, prizes, and volunteer recognition.



On-Site Partner Support Program

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What about you?

What volunteer practices-related challenges is your organization facing?

What volunteer best practices can your organization adopt to recruit, engage, and retain volunteers?

