



# Youth Program 2024 Impact Report



# PROGRAM OVERVIEW:

## Healing Meals Community Project Youth Program strives to:

- ♥ Prepare youth to seek and find their own fulfilling, productive place in the world and support them in becoming active, engaged citizens of a community.
- ♥ Elevate an understanding about how food impacts overall health.
- ♥ Provide tools and strategies for health and wellness.
- ♥ Provide social connections that promote a sense of wellbeing.

## This is accomplished by:

Providing a safe space for self and group expression.

- ✓ Mentoring and experiential learning that helps build interpersonal skills and self-confidence.
- ✓ Providing culinary training to enable youth to prepare and eat healthy meals for themselves and for others.
- ✓ Giving youth the tools to understand and embrace compassionate service.
- ✓ Building empathy and understanding through interaction with diverse individuals and communities.
- ✓ Sharing wellness practices in group and self-guided settings, understanding how and why food choices influence health.
- ✓ Providing hands-on training and instruction about the importance of organic growing.

## Youth who volunteer for 50+ hours are then invited to be a member of the Youth Development Committee.

- ♥ Receive leadership training and practice through group learning, mentoring and peer-developed activities.
- ♥ Help to grow and sustain Healing Meals mission.
- ♥ Can apply to become a Board Member (non-voting).



The Healing Meals Kitchen Team oversees the day-to-day youth activities including:

- Culinary oversight
- Community Circle with wellness education
- Preparing meals
- Writing client greeting cards
- Fostering community
- Support Adult Mentors



**The Healing Meals Kitchen Garden, managed by Andy, supports youth education on topics such as:**

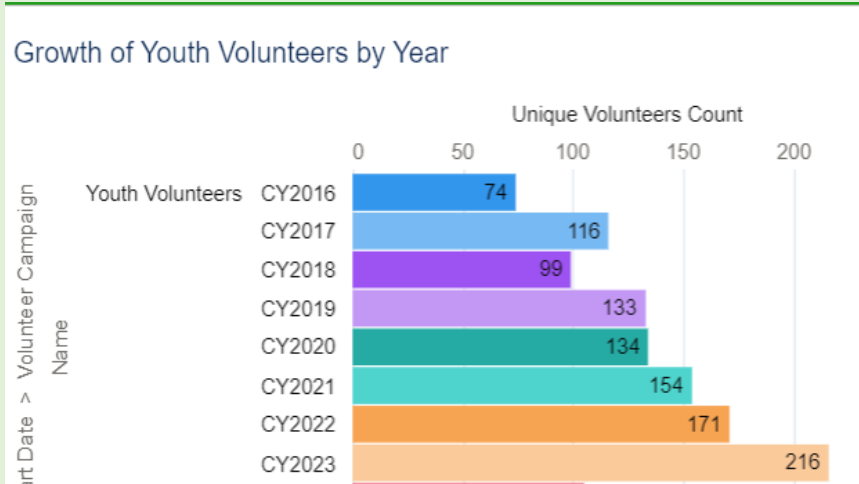
- **Organic gardening**
- **Farm to table food production**
- **Composting**
- **Importance of Pollinators**



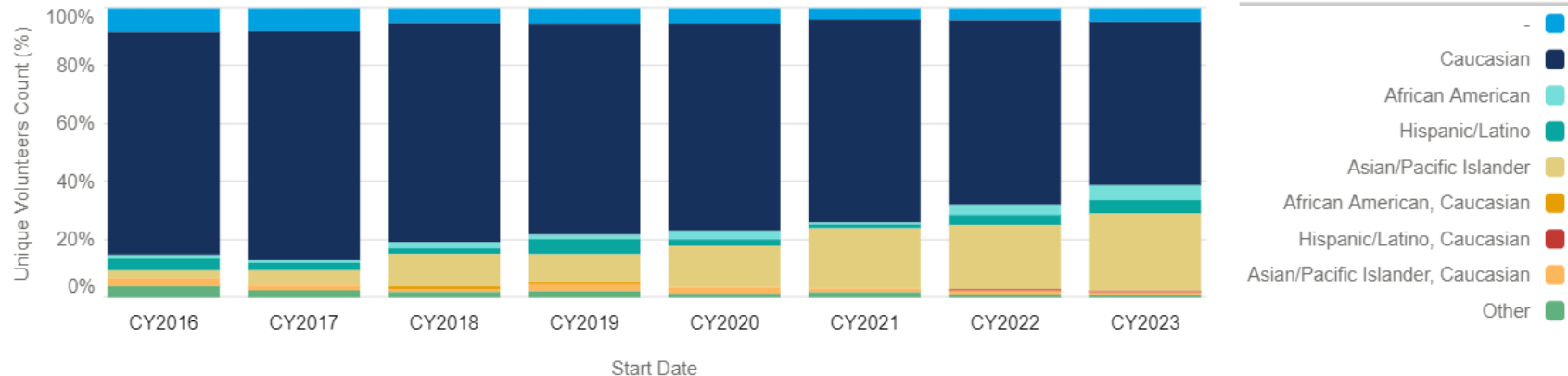
# HEALING MEALS YOUTH BY THE NUMBERS:

🌱 Total number of youth volunteers since inception: **652**

🌱 Total hours volunteered since inception: **26,000**



Youth Volunteers by Year by ethnicity



**107**

Blue Apron Recipients  
(volunteered 50+ hours)



**38**

Chef Coat Recipients  
(volunteered 100+ hours)





# SURVEY OVERVIEW

Between 3/2017 and 5/2024, 218 youth (ages 14-20) completed a survey prior to becoming a youth volunteer.

## **Purpose of the initial survey was to:**

- Gain an understanding of why youth want to volunteer
- Benchmark youths' current behaviors around food
- Gain an understanding if program is meeting youth's expectations

**April 2022 & April 2024, a follow-up survey was conducted and 110 responses were completed. Participants included:**

- Alumni youth who volunteered 15+ hours
- Active youth who have volunteered 15+

**Survey was developed using core questions from pre-survey as well as additional questions to:**

- Measure change in understanding and behaviors around food and wellness (direct impact)
- Gain an understanding of youth satisfaction with the program
- Gain quantitative feedback



# FOLLOW-UP SURVEY RESULTS

Prior to volunteering, learning about community service was the most important factor to our youth. In our follow-up survey, we saw a significant change. The most noted reasons for *continuing* to volunteer at Healings included:

- Being able to help people
- Liking to cook and continuing to learn how to cook
- Continuing to learn about food and nutrition
- Continuing to learn about how to grow food
- Very few indicated that their reasons for continuing to volunteer was because of their parents or because they needed to get additional school or community hours.

## Key findings that support our program goals:

### Social Impact:

- Over 85% of our youth gained confidence working with people and in groups and learned about leadership.
- 80% indicated that they learned social skills like communication, organization, and time management.
- Over 85% of our youth noted that they felt confident shaking hands with someone and maintaining eye contact while speaking to someone.
- Over 90% learned about the benefits of volunteering and community service.





# FOLLOW-UP SURVEY RESULTS, CONTINUED

## Wellness and Food Impact:

- 75% of our youth indicated that they learned a lot about how to cook and different cooking skills.
- Over 90% learned about eating healthy foods and why food makes a difference in our health.
- 39% of our youth indicated that they increased their consumption of fruits, 49% indicated an increased consumption in vegetables, and 30% saw an increased consumption of whole grains and beans.
- When asked about how they decide what to eat, most of our youth indicated the following factors:
  - Taste
  - Organic or sustainably raised
  - Available
  - Healthy
- Few indicated that it was important for their food choice to be fast and easy to prepare.
- When asked about consumption of processed foods, our youth indicated a reduction in consumption of sugary coffee drinks, candy, and fast food.
- There was an increase in the ability to make and help to prepare a meal from scratch.
- There was a decrease in frequency of reheating or preparing frozen meals or packaged meals.
- There was an increase in consumption of healthy snacks like green smoothies and veggies with dip.



# YOUTH FOCUS GROUP, MAY 2024

In addition to the qualitative results of the survey, we used a focus group of 8 youth to gather some qualitative data about the youth program.

**When asked what at Healing Meals has helped with their personal development, our youth said:**

- Working with strangers and learning how to work together.
- Working on the same level as adults.
- Developing relationships and closeness with other volunteers.

**In terms of your outside jobs, have you been able to apply what you learned at Healing Meals?**

- Collaboration is easier for them now. That they have been able to use the HM lessons at their jobs.
- Know how to anticipate what needs to be done and do more than expected (above and beyond).
- Confidence and tools to advocate to people in her job, especially older employees.

**When did you feel that things “clicked” as a volunteer in feeling confidence and leadership skill?**

- Many agreed that it was when they received their blue apron at 50 hours. They began to have confidence and they started to anticipate what needed to be done without being told.
- Advocating to others of a different age came up again as a change at this point.
- Realizing that people can do things differently and get the same desired result.

**Mental Health is a big issue today—Do we make an impact at Healing Meals?**

- Lots of agreement that HM helps.
- Love coming in and the distraction from the rest of the day and worries.
- Consistency is great.
- Current process of picking your own time helps them fit HM into their schedule without feeling anxiety or pressure.
- They love feeling present and in the moment in the kitchen and focusing on what needs to be done.
- Lots of agreement that they appreciate that people at HM use their name and they love that.
- It is a safe place to learn and make mistakes.





**The Follow-up Survey asked our youth, "on a scale of 1 to 100 (with 100 being best) how likely are you to recommend volunteering at Healing Meals to a friend and why?"**

**Youth Comments included:**

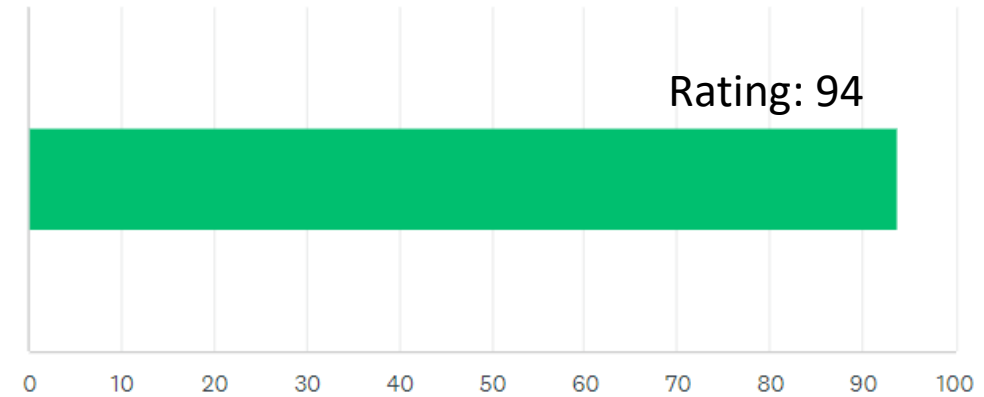
"Healing Meals taught me a lot about healthy eating and sustainable food growing... I also learned about collaboration, leadership and the importance of a volunteer community through healing meals."

"I absolutely love being a part of healing meals and the thought of helping people out where I can! I also have met so many new friends and it's a great environment!"

"It's a really supportive and educational environment and you always walk out feeling better than when you walked in. The whole atmosphere is so kind and welcoming and what you're a part of at HM is really meaningful."

"Ever since I began at Healing Meals I have loved every part of it. I have improved my cooking skills, met so many new people, and become more confident in my leadership skills. Every shift I feel so loved and welcome, and I have been recommending Healing Meals to my friends, and I will continue to do so."

**Post-Survey Results:**





## More Comments from our Youth

"I enjoy being in this space and love cooking. I am very happy to come here and spend time with others and know about their self. So I would happily recommend others to join."

"I have met some of my best friends at healing meals, I can't say anything bad about the team or the mission. I do actively encourage my non-hm friends to join."

"The Healing Meals community is a welcoming place to start volunteering, and there are so many different activities to help with that really anyone can find something they are interested in doing. Not only that, but once you've gotten started at Healing Meals, it's hard to stay away because of how much fun it is, and the fact that everything we do is to help people makes you want to come back and do more to help. After joining, I did recommend some of my friends to join, and they tried it out and felt the same way."

"I love everything about Healing Meals. It has taught me so much about myself, my community, my peers, and has really shown me that I love to help other people. Everyone there has such a positive outlook on life that really changed the way I view my life and my opportunities. I am forever grateful for the many hours I have spent in the presence of these amazing people and I know I will continue extremely important lessons from Healing Meals with me for the rest of my life."





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