

2021 annual report



at a glance

20,045

pounds of local
food used in
kitchen

40,648

SNACKS

30

POP Club
sessions

271,610

nourishing meals

1,564

cooking class
students

1,604

pounds of
produce
harvested

10

years of
operations

110

volunteers



Dear Friends,

Esteemed author Alan Wolfelt once said “Food is symbolic of love when words are inadequate.” At FoodChain, food is our love language. It is truly the most beautiful part of what we do here. It is magical to see our team come to work day in and day out to feed and empower others in our community.

Stepping into the role of Executive Director, I have found it so humbling to be a part of such an innovative organization with a powerful mission and dedicated team. I am excited to be at the helm and eager to continue the legacy of impacting our community by creating access to healthy, fresh foods. This organization was built with love and will continue with that same sentiment. We are strengthening families one meal at a time; teaching our community one lesson at a time; and enriching our community one Nourish Box at a time.

I hope that as you are looking through this annual report, you find joy in the work that we have done this past year. I hope you can connect with our mission, our work, and the stories of our participants. Together with the support of our partners, volunteers, donors, and participants, we will continue building a more resilient and equitable food system for the city of Lexington.

Peace, Love, Fish & Food,

Chaquenta Neal
Executive Director of FoodChain



contents

programming



Overall

Stats, Finances, 10 Year Anniversary, Conferences



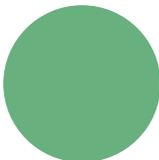
Food Literacy

Food Literacy by Example, Power of Produce Club, Virtual Learning



Processing Kitchen

SNACKS, Bear's Picnic, Nourish Lexington (see below), LFPP Grant Spotlight



Nourish Lexington

Delivery, Nourish Boxes, Hot Meals, Summer Food Service Program



Farm

Production, Engagement, Classroom Aquaponics

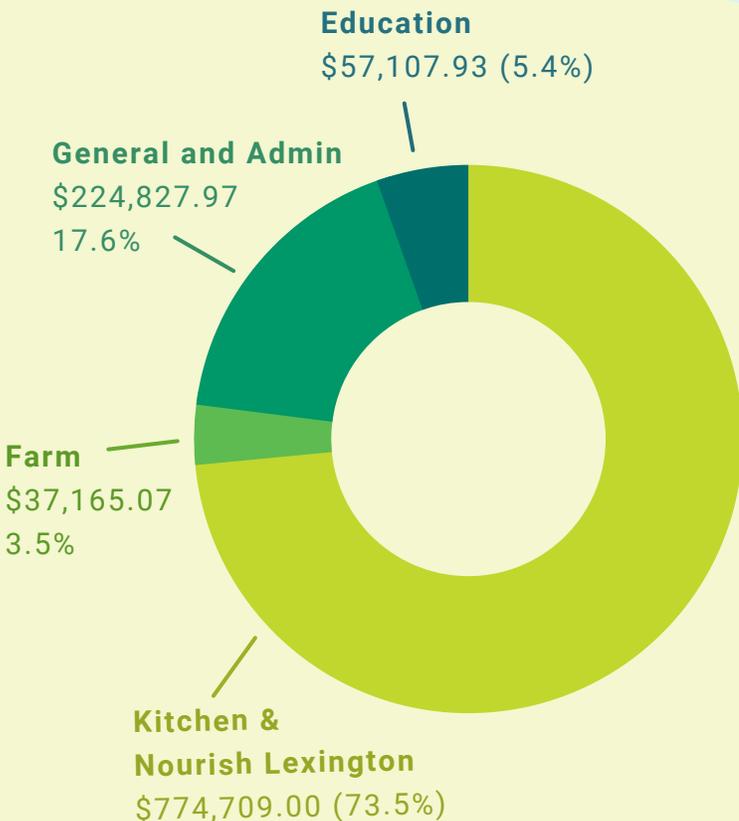
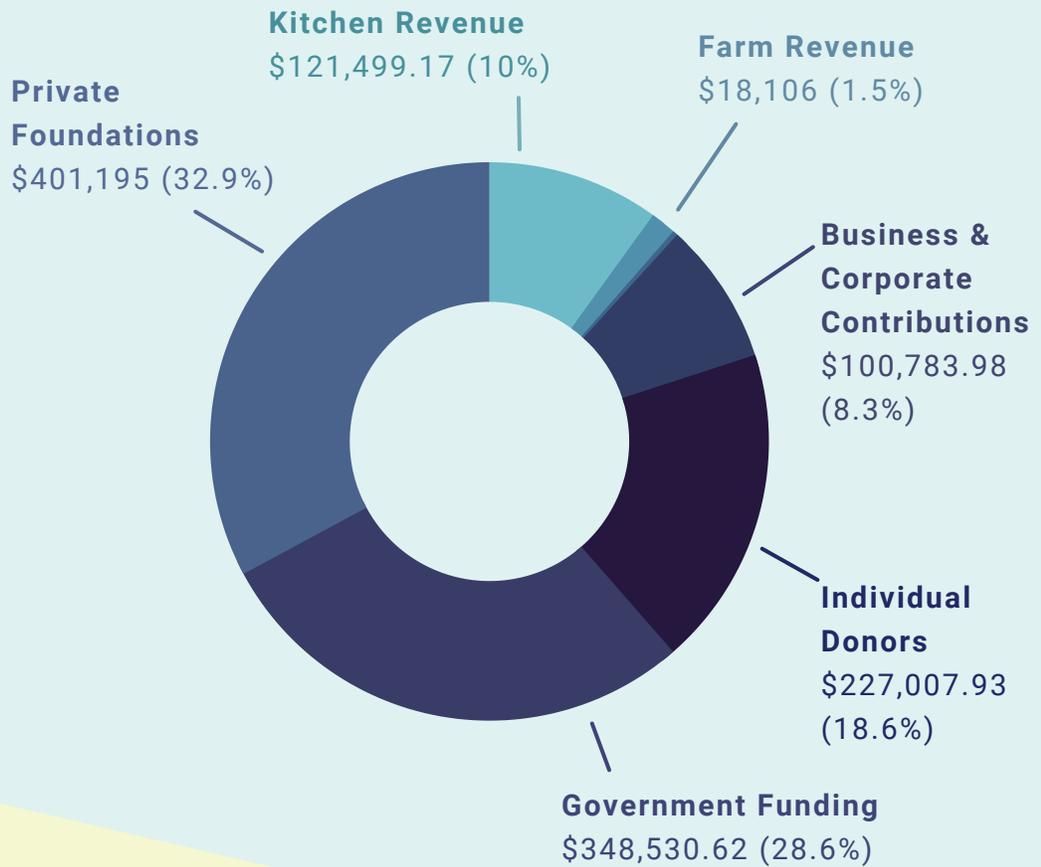
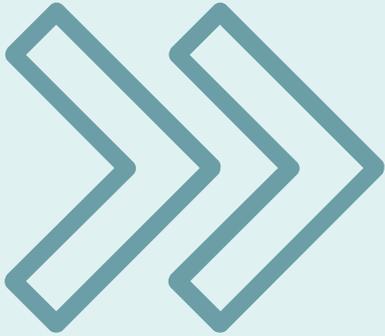


Links in FoodChain

Participants, Staff, Partners, Volunteers, Interns, Become a Link in FoodChain, Recipe of the Year

finances

Money In



Money Out



After ten robust years of connecting the community to fresh food, Becca Self retired as Executive Director and transitioned to being the Chair of our Board for the next chapter of FoodChain with Executive Director Chaquenta Neal.



ten years of transformation

480,000

locally sourced meals served

\$1.2m

invested in the local food economy

12,384

people who toured FoodChain

63,527

pounds of local produce processed

\$55,000

of purchased crops from local farms

2,782

pounds of fish and shrimp harvested

286

households enrolled in home delivery

41,172

educational contact hours

10,308

pounds of produce harvested

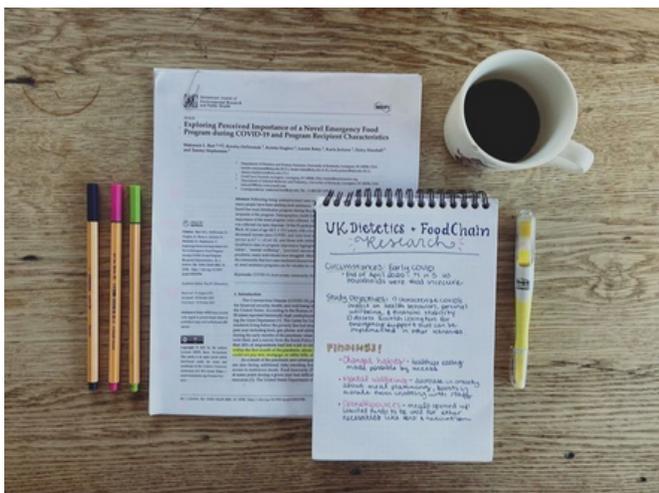
share

As we celebrate ten years of change, we're excited to share our expertise. We want other communities to be able to access our work and find some of our methods for increasing food access that can assist them in collaborative work within their own unique community needs. In order to inspire replication, FoodChain continues to spread the word by participating in conferences, locally, regionally and nationally.

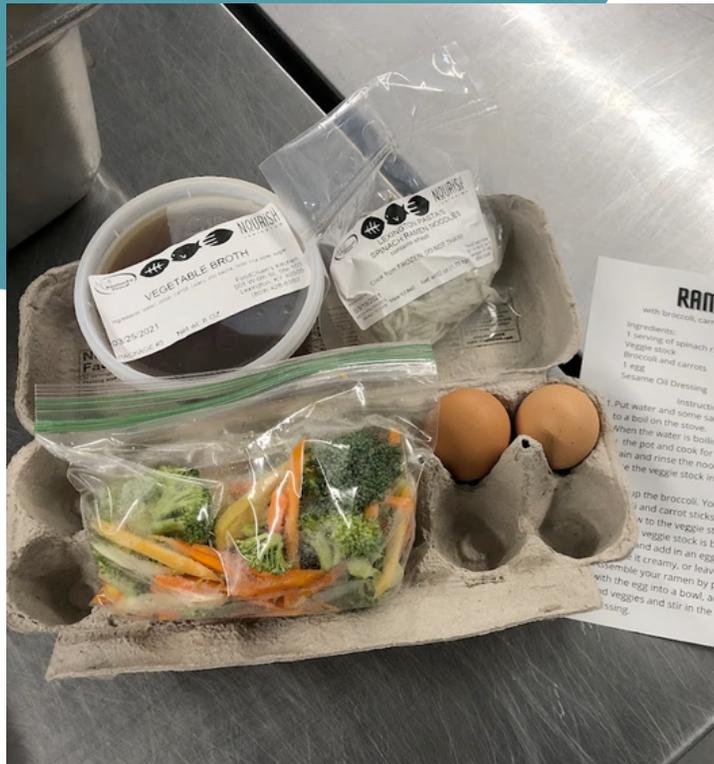
In the fall of 2021, Kristin Hughes, our Community Education and Outreach Director, co-authored an article with researchers from the University of Kentucky Department of Dietetics entitled "Exploring Perceived Importance of a Novel Emergency Food Program during COVID-19 and Program Recipient Characteristics," that was published in the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health to help disseminate our work and outcomes further.

In order to keep our funders, volunteers, collaborators, and participants abreast of our work, we compiled a report of the first 18 months of our Nourish Lexington program, which we published in September of 2021. A digital copy of this book can be found here: <https://online.fliphtml5.com/nvnhm/uxsg/#p=1>

We have many more conferences and presentations coming up in 2022 because we love to share our story! Please reach out to us about opportunities to speak with groups, consultation needs, and relevant conferences that would benefit from our work by emailing us at info@foodchainlex.org.



food literacy



At the core of all of our programming and services at FoodChain is education. Through education, we build lasting change to create a food system that is more equitable, just, and sustainable. This has led us to focus on food literacy in our community.

Food literacy brings together food skills, food culture, global food systems, health-related behaviors, and environmental sustainability. Teaching food literacy means that we ask our students to seek a deeper understanding of the nature of food and explore how it is important in their lives by processing, analyzing, and acting upon understandings of the larger food system.

food literacy in action



cooking classes

Classes work together to prepare recipes while students are taught about the growing season, how to buy local food in Kentucky, and how the food system functions. Through hands-on learning, students are encouraged to experiment with the recipes we prepare, exploring their personal food preferences, building their vocabulary, and talking about food with positivity and curiosity.

FoodChain returned to in-person cooking classes this summer, working with Summer Ignite programs and afterschool programs to bring food literacy classes and cooking instruction to an additional **1,322 students!**

Our meals are educational. Through repeated access to and consumption of foods, people are exposed to new flavors, textures, and ingredients, increasing their proficiency in food literacy. We also identify local ingredients, which farms they are sourced from, and provide information about what is in season.

meals



nourish boxes

Recipes and education packets have become a staple in our Nourish boxes. The education packets include information about the history of different ingredients, hands-on activities involving food, and even coloring pages to promote food literacy! Surveyed recipients tell us they love “learning where their produce comes from” and that “word searches and the experiments” are some of the favorite activities included. The recipes allow us to share new ways to work with ingredients and families can even use the boxes as a cooking class from the comfort of their own home.



food literacy spotlight



POWER OF *Produce* CLUB

261
kids

10
weeks

3
Locations

\$1,005
invested in
farmers

After a year of virtual content, the Power of Produce Kids Club at the Lexington Farmers Market was back in person this year! 5 interns brought the club to the Saturday, Sunday, AND Wednesday markets!

We did 4 taste tests this summer. POP club kids were able to enjoy KY-grown strawberries, carrots, kohlrabi, and radishes!

New to the Wednesday Farmers Market we served as an SFSP dinner pickup point for kids in addition to doing POP Club.

Each week, the POP Club offered a different activity for kids to engage with their food and the food system. Activities ranged from farmer interviews to combining paint and veggies to create art! We even had the kids learn about pollination using cheetos! One of the kid favorites was making a Mr./Mrs. Potato Head using a REAL potato. Check out some of the creations!

A special thanks to the Food Connection and Nancy Barron & Associates for helping make the POP Club a reality this summer!



food literacy spotlight

Virtual Learning

With support from the Turner Foundation, FoodChain expanded our virtual education offerings this year. Although school returned to in person, afterschool programs remained virtual. Through Zoom, FoodChain connected with students and their families to provide cooking instruction that benefitted everyone! We led participants through preparation of the recipes and provided ingredient kits that were either picked up or delivered, ensuring equal food access for all participants.

• 242 kids • 7 partner programs • 29 classes •



In addition to cooking classes for students, we also connected with several parent groups, leading them through education about local food and recipe demonstration while providing the instruction in both English and Spanish! We even led a cooking and processing class for Good Food's Co-op Virtual CSA fair teaching families how to make purple sweet potato pancakes and leading kids in a food science experiment focusing on anthocyanin. But virtual education was not limited to only the kitchen! Our farm was showcased in several virtual tours, with our own Leandra Forman leading a virtual farm tour for preschool students participating in Community Action's head start programs statewide!

processing kitchen



The FoodChain kitchen connects our community to fresh food by processing local produce seconds, creating SNACKS for kids, preparing meals, and providing home food delivery.



kitchen spotlight



FoodChain has long recognized the importance of healthy snack foods for kids. In 2021, schools returned to in-person learning and there were many new factors involved in safely and effectively meeting the nutritional needs of youth in Fayette Co. FoodChain started getting requests from teachers and Family Resource Coordinators about mid-day hunger that was distracting and holding students back from an already tough learning environment. We decided to work with programs we had in place and pioneer a whole new take: **Super Nutritious And Creative Kentucky Snacks (SNACKS)**!

Our SNACKS program gets local fruits and veggies, proteins, grains, and dairy into schools for the times when kids need something to tide them over to the next school provided meal. SNACKS also go to afterschool programs serving our community by making sure kids have access to a safe learning environment and are well fed until dinner. Our staff gets to flex their creativity muscles and find fun ways to incorporate local produce into individually packed bites that kids love. We served **40,648 snacks** this year! Some very popular items include our sesame noodle recipe with cabbage, carrots, and peppers, crunchy veggie sticks and ranch, and pretty much any popcorn mix we send their way!



kitchen spotlight

Bear's Picnic



FoodChain partnered with the Kentucky Horticulture Council to develop an all local kids snack to distribute as part of a Farm to School Grant. This unique snack mix features all Kentucky-grown popcorn, honey, dried apple chips, and freeze dried blueberries. We distributed over **4,000 bags** of the mix in Fayette, Whitley, Laurel, and Knox counties. We gathered information through surveys. The results are in: turns out, kids love popcorn!! We also gave samples and surveys to school food service directors and they were all excited by the possibility of offering a snack full of nutritious fruits and grains, with a huge potential for getting more home state grown products to kids! Wanna try it? Check out our partners at The Local Food Hub and Pizza Pub in Frankfort, where they keep it stocked on their shelves. Our super cute label was designed by BreadBox neighbors Cricket Press, who also designed our own logo, as well as a few other businesses around town (like West Sixth Brewery!) In 2022, FoodChain is looking at how to make this snack available to more school food services to ramp up the benefits for KY farms and KY kids!

Home Delivery



Fresh food access was difficult for many families before 2020. It was further exacerbated by pandemic shutdowns and supply chain disruptions. FoodChain's mission to forge links between our community and fresh food means that we continue to find innovative ways to demonstrate the importance of making fresh food convenient for families, regardless of income. Public health concerns have led many to rely on groceries ordered online or even sent through the mail. But for many people in our community, these conveniences are unobtainable. They lack financial means, time, and access to transportation. They are seniors who can no longer drive. They are parents with young kids who can't find childcare to go shopping or juggle toddlers with heavy groceries on a bus. They are adults that lack stability as they care for sick loved ones. They are immigrants and refugees, new to this country and struggling to navigate the complex systems of food assistance while they seek employment. They are our neighbors.

By delivering fresh food directly to doorsteps weekly, we circumvent circumstances that separate people from fresh food. Families tell us that routine delivery reduces anxiety by knowing fresh food is arriving each week. It allows them to spend their limited funds on other essentials. And with all this fresh food, parents report that their kids are forming new routines and expanding palates over time.

Survey Results

68%

said the delivery service introduces them to foods they would not otherwise try.

85%

said meal delivery helps them to eat more balanced meals regularly.

57%

said the meal delivery has helped them to stay safe during the pandemic and has helped them have enough food to get through the month.

43%

said their kids use the activities that come in the boxes.

Nourish Boxes

FoodChain's Nourish Lexington program meets people where they are by delivering food to 150 homes each week. FoodChain works to model better solutions to complex problems by trusting that when folks are allowed to participate in a local food system, they thrive.



What's in a box?

- A meal kit box regularly includes local fruits and vegetables, meat, eggs, and other ingredients necessary for a complete dinner and breakfast for four people. Individuals who identify that they are unable to cook at home receive frozen meals made on-site instead.
- An easy to assemble sandwich kit.
- Clear labeling to ensure families with dietary restrictions and allergies are able to safely make clear food choices.
- Complete recipes for the meal kit, including educational kid friendly activities, information about contributing farms, histories of foods and ingredients, and additional recipe ideas.
- More jobs in the food system through FoodChain's own hiring program and our partnership with Delivery Co-Op, a food delivery company owned by local employees and restaurants focused on fair, inclusive, hyper-localized service.

Hot Meals



FoodChain continues to distribute hot meals and donated grocery items from Trader Joe's three times a week. Our nightly meal handouts have grown, often providing **over 250 meals each night!** We provide frozen meals for later if needs exceed what we had available. We don't require any proof of identity or need, making this a truly accessible and equitable solution to hunger. Like all the food that comes through FoodChain, these meals are prepared with love, creativity, and local products. We use donated items to reduce food waste and expand options and creatively transform local produce into meals that folks are excited to eat! Recent favorites include local sweet potato souffle and venison sausage jambalaya! We add extra treats whenever we can and recipients keep asking for more chocolate hummus and apples.

The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), is a partnership between the USDA and KY Dept of Education, funding schools, nonprofits, and community centers to provide meals for anyone ages 0-18 during the summer. This bridges the summer food gap when school lunch is unavailable and many kids have less access to nutritious foods. SFSP extended services during COVID school closures. **In 2021, we served 47,562 meals with SFSP,** showing just how crucial this program is.

Our meals come with a side of education for kids to take home such as grow your own basil from cuttings and tasting kits with 4 varieties of FoodChain microgreens!



kitchen grant spotlight

USDA Local Food Promotion Program

58,000
people reached with
education and
processing



51
farms and food
businesses
reported a direct
increase in
revenue from this
program



1,587%
increase in sales
from \$17,496 to
\$295,171

2021 marks the final year of our 2018 Local Food Promotion Program grant. This grant was written to support the processing work of the kitchen and help us to develop many of the programs outlined in this Annual Report.

Accomplishments funded by this grant:

- Repurposed surplus and seconds produce into longer lasting, more convenient and consumable forms with innovative distribution systems, including wholesale, direct to consumer, aggregated kits, and on-site incorporation into meals.
- Increased access to local produce, especially for food insecure community members, through meal handouts and weekly home deliveries of fresh food.
- Increased revenue for local farmers by purchasing excess or hard-to-market produce.
- Increased appreciation for and confidence with local produce among the community through in person and virtual cooking instruction, food literacy training, and workforce development sessions.
- Added more local food system jobs and increased access to the existing food job sector by providing training.

Funding from this grant also allowed us to partner with the University of Kentucky for program evaluation. We worked with Dr. Nicole Brezeale, Dr. Rosalind Harris, and their graduate students to gather surveys, collect data through photo elicitation, host farmer and community partner focus groups, and perform structured interviews. The results from this evaluation process helped inform our future strategic planning, apply for grants, and develop presentations on best practices and lessons learned to inspire replication in other communities who are seeking to diversify their local food system.

farm



The farm is the longest running part of FoodChain. It has been flowing continuously since 2013, churning out fresh leafy vegetables, herbs and microgreens, and the freshest fish in downtown Lexington. Our farm also teaches about urban farming, sustainable agriculture, and closed-loop ecosystems through tours, internships, and the classroom aquaponics program.

farm

Production



The farm produces lettuce, herbs, microgreens, and even tilapia that are featured at Smithtown Seafood and 12 other restaurants, distributed by Blue Moon Farms. In 2021, our shrimp and tilapia were served at Smithtown Seafood, Honeywood, and Sage Rabbit, as well as in meal kits and Nourish meals.



Last winter, we debuted Fresh Fixins', a weekly SNAP eligible meal and salad kit subscription program featuring local produce paired with international recipes from local chefs. Empucate Farms founder, Gaston Ngandu Sankayi shared, his family recipe for Samaki Ya Ka Kalanga, Congolese fried tilapia served with tomato sauce, sweet potatoes and cooked greens.

1,604

pounds of
produce

336

pounds of
tilapia

41

pounds of
marine shrimp

farm

Visitors



Although public tours were on hiatus in 2021, our farm continued to engage interns and volunteers, offer private tours, and host informational videos made by our team and visitors. Our farm shares content through our social media outlets as well, so make sure to tune in to us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to learn more about how and why the aquaponics is important on #FarmFridays! In 2022, look for the return of public tours of our farm every Saturday from 1-2pm.

Farming for Nourish Lexington

Our home grown leafy greens are also used in the local food system with our Nourish Lexington program. Basil, herbs, greens, and lettuce grown on our farm have been featured in prepared meals and meal boxes that are delivered to families' doorsteps. The farm elevates our meals in flavor and nutritional value by putting something that is often hard to come by in donated meal services -- bright, fresh flavors from the herbs and lettuces harvested the very same day they are eaten! We love that the farm not only contributes to FoodChain's overall sustainability with revenue generation, but it also supports our food access work with an in-house source of year-round produce!



Farm

Classroom Aquaponics

Sixteen teachers came over the summer to build their own classroom systems and set them up for the Head Start children to engage with as their summer programming focused on agriculture. We also worked with middle schoolers at Carter G Woodson Academy and Crawford Middle School to set up and maintain their own classroom systems.

19
10 gallon
classroom
systems



Additionally, FoodChain introduced a totally new system to our home and school aquaponics repertoire: Mini-Aquaponics! These little betta fish systems are easily set up for one little fish and one little plant, and help kids connect with nutrient cycles and food systems in their home! Over the summer and fall FoodChain led workshops for kids from elementary age to high school to build their own mini aquaponics in Fayette and Madison Counties.



57
mini systems
distributed in
2021



links in foodchain



FoodChain is all about community and it is the contributions from members of this community that keep FoodChain thriving. We'd like to thank everyone for being a link in FoodChain as we build something transformative together.

Participants

- Meal Recipients
- Tour Attendees
- Cooking Class Students
- Kids at the Farmers' Market
- SNACKS consumers
- And more!

Funding Base

- Foundations
- Government Funding
- Individual Donors
- Retailers
- Corporate Support
- Local Businesses

Homebase

- Staff
- Board
- Volunteers
- Interns

links in foodchain

Partners



- Schools
 - Fayette Co. Public Schools
 - Family Care Center
 - Audrey Grevious Center
- Fellow Non-Profits
 - Journi's Hope
 - The Nest
 - Community Action Council
 - Seedleaf
 - Glean Kentucky
 - Nathaniel Mission
 - WECEP
 - LEAP Academy
 - Recovery Cafe
 - Community Response Coalition
 - ONE Lexington
 - Lexington Leadership Foundation
- Consortiums
 - Kentucky Food Action Network
 - Kentucky Farm to School Network
- Universities
 - Kentucky State University
 - University of Kentucky
 - Transylvania University
- Retailers
 - Delivery Co-op
 - Good Foods Co-op
 - Locals Food Hub & Pizza Pub
 - Wine + Market
 - Smithtown Seafood and Ouita Michel restaurants
 - Blue Moon Farms
 - County Club
 - West Sixth Brewing
 - Woodhill International Market



Volunteers

links in foodchain

We could not have achieved all that we have during 2021 without the over 110 volunteers who have come through our doors this year. In 2021, volunteers played a vital part in the rollout of our Mobile Meals home delivery service, our Rapid Response Squad, and the return of kitchen and farm volunteering.

Volunteers have powered our new meal delivery program which ensures food access for the most vulnerable. Many volunteers deliver to the same families weekly, becoming FoodChain Ambassadors in the community. The relationships built between recipients, volunteers, and FoodChain staff make the nourishing food all the more impactful!

This year, we also pioneered a Rapid Response Squad of volunteers that meets last minute delivery needs. The group has been incredibly successful in moments when illness or quarantine disrupted delivery plans. Thanks to this group, meal recipients have continued to get reliable deliveries.

On site, we welcomed volunteers back into the kitchen with our very popular Saturday Shifts and on the farm to keep the fish and plants healthy and happy. We have been so encouraged by the enthusiasm and energy our volunteers bring!

Rapid
Response
Squad
27 members;
94% response
rate

*Saturday
Shifts*
66 hours
volunteering
in the
kitchen

Mobile
Meals
1524 drop-offs
to doorsteps
with wholesome
food

Group
Volunteering
92 hours;
44 people from
5 groups

links in foodchain

Interns

This year we had 14 interns! Hosting interns and providing collaborative learning opportunities furthers our reach as an educational non-profit. Our internships allow students to share their talents with us and develop skills and projects based on their interests.

Students from the University of Kentucky, Transylvania University, and Berea College lent their talents to assist in Fundraising, Volunteer Recruitment, Education development, SNACKS, and more all while learning more about non-profit operations! High school seniors gained hands-on experience on our aquaponics farm, creating and assembling SNACKS, and even working on recipe development for vegan meals! Partnerships with the Experience-Based Career Education Program at Fayette County Public Schools, Locust Trace Agriscience Center, Family Care Center, Lafayette High School, and the STEAM Academy made this possible.



"FoodChain has caused me to grow professionally as well as personally. The values of FoodChain surrounding food justice and community action has led me to re-evaluate what is important to me in my life and career, and that is serving the community."

-Crystal Williams, Summer 2021 Intern

become a link in foodchain

Volunteer

We've got lots of volunteer options for groups or individuals. Come work in our kitchen, on the farm, or making deliveries! Details are available at www.foodchainlex.org.

Give

We'd be honored to put your dollars toward connecting the community to fresh food. You can set up a subscription donation or make a one-time contribution on our website.

Be Social

What's the best way to know what is happening at FoodChain? Follow @foodchainlex on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. You can also subscribe to our newsletter from our website.

Partner with us

We welcome sponsors for class and outreach events. We can also set up spotlight speakers for clubs and businesses. Could you be the link to our next sponsorship or spotlight? Email info@foodchainlex.org to get started.

Tour

Come join us for a behind-the-scenes look at FoodChain's farm. Public tours are at Saturdays at 1. Private tours are available during business hours. Visit our website to plan your visit.

Buy our Goods

An easy way to jump into supporting FoodChain is to buy our processed goods and merch at places like Good Foods Co-Op, Wine + Market, or West Sixth Brewery!



recipe of the year

Sweet Potato and Salmon Croquettes



- 1 pound sweet potatoes
- 1 1/2 pounds salmon fillets
- 1/3 cup fresh herbs chopped
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon onion finely minced
- 1-2 tablespoons jalapeno finely minced (optional)
- 3/4 teaspoons salt
- 1 egg
- 1 cup breadcrumbs

- Peel and dice sweet potatoes. Add to a baking tray along with salmon fillet.
- In a conventional oven, bake at 425°F for 30 minutes.
- Once the sweet potatoes and salmon are baked, add the sweet potatoes, herbs, lemon juice, onion, jalapeno (optional) and sea salt to a food processor, and process until the sweet potatoes are broken up.
- Add the baked salmon and pulse until the salmon is mixed in but still in chunks. Don't over-process. Can also mash with a fork or potato masher.
- Whisk an egg in a bowl, and add breadcrumbs to a second bowl.
- Form 1/4 cup sized patties. The mixture is soft and a bit sticky, but form them delicately. (Mixture is easier to form into patties if it's chilled.)
- Dip each patty into the egg, and then coat in breadcrumbs.
- Bake croquettes in the oven on 425°F for 15 minutes, and then flip and continue baking another 6 minutes.
- Serve with tartar sauce or make a lemony greek yogurt dill sauce to go with it!