

# Community Action Duluth's Mobile Market



Our first year:  
The trials, tribulations, and triumphs



**COMMUNITY  
ACTION** Duluth

*Engaging our community to end poverty*

2022



# Table of Contents

What is the Mobile Market? .....	Page 1
Why did we start the Mobile Market? .....	Page 2
How does the Mobile Market work? .....	Page 3
Where does the Mobile Market operate? .....	Page 4
Evolution of our Schedule .....	Page 5
Timeline 2021-2022 .....	Page 6
Lessons Learned During Our First Year .....	Page 7-8
Revenue & Expense .....	Page 9
Staff .....	Page 10
Media & Press .....	Page 11
Appendix .....	Page 12-14



# Thank You

In this report, we hope you can learn more about our first year of operations, and what we learned along the way. If you would like to know more, please visit our website at [www.communityactionduluth.org/mobile-market](http://www.communityactionduluth.org/mobile-market).

We want to thank our funders, partners, and people like you for making the Community Mobile Market happen!



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**DULUTH CHILDREN'S MUSEUM**



**FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**



# What is the Mobile Market?

Our Mobile Market is a "grocery store on wheels" that brings fresh produce, dairy products, pantry staples, canned and frozen goods, and more to communities with limited or no fresh food stores in Duluth, Minnesota. While the COVID-19 pandemic spurred the launch of this program, we hope to continue our mission to ensure affordable and accessible food reaches Duluth's vulnerable populations.



Image description:

Table with crates of food and carrots displayed next to Mobile Market van.



Image description:

Customer shopping at Mobile Market with a shopping cart.



Image description:

Mobile Market van parked next to Morgan Park Community Center.

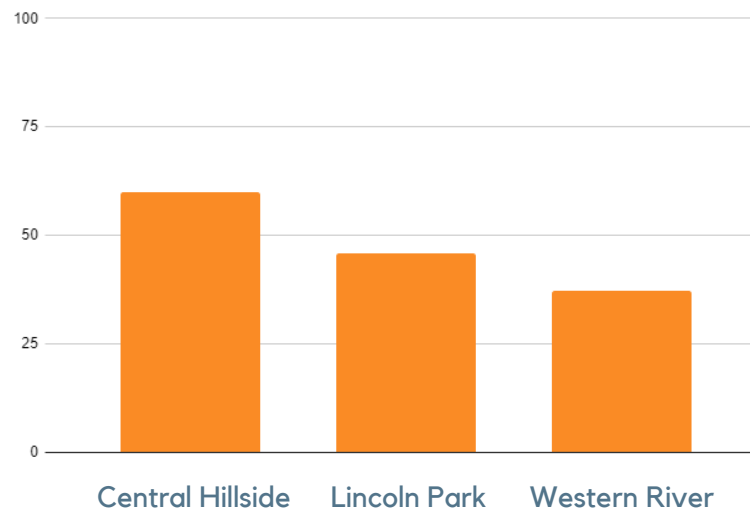
In February of 2021, Community Action Duluth's food justice program Seeds of Success launched Duluth's first Mobile Market. Our refrigerated van, displayed above, transports food to our market sites, specifically at community centers, senior living centers, elementary schools, and neighborhoods. We accept cash, card, and EBT at markets, and provide produce discounts for SNAP participants, children, and elders. With our matching program, customers shopping with an EBT card receive a 50% discount on all produce, and our Power of Produce (PoP) program gives anyone under the age of 18 and over the age of 60 four free dollars to spend on any fruits and vegetables. In our first year of operations, the Mobile Market provided over \$4,200 worth of food discounts and completed over 1,000 transactions, 46% of which were from SNAP participants.



# Why did we start the Mobile Market?

Areas with low-income and low access, particularly to fresh food and produce, exist all across the United States. Duluth is no exception. Socioeconomic, racial, geographic, and environmental factors limit community access to nutritious food in Duluth. The central and western neighborhoods such as Central Hillside, Lincoln Park, Morgan Park, and Gary-New Duluth are particularly vulnerable due to their high concentrations of low income residents and general lack of fresh food stores.

In addition, the onset of COVID-19 has exacerbated food injustice. Our team started thinking of ways to reduce barriers to food access in Duluth and decided to launch a survey to gauge interest and need for a community food program that could cover multiple locations i.e. a mobile market. We sent this survey to community centers, residential areas, organizations, and individuals in the area. The responses were a resounding yes! After gathering data on the best locations, times, food needs, and more, we decided to move forward with starting a community mobile market in Duluth. While this first year was not without its challenges and changes, we are proud to serve a need in this community through our Mobile Market.



60% of Central Hillside residents, 45.8% of Lincoln Park residents and 37.3% of Western River Communities (including Morgan Park, Gary-New Duluth) are considered low-income.\*



22.5% of Duluthian households experience barriers to having adequate food. This number doubles to 47.2% for households with limited income.\*\*

\*Minnesota Compass (2015-2019).

\*\*Bridge to Health Survey (2020).

# How does the Mobile Market work?

## Suppliers

We source farm fresh eggs, local ground beef, and seasonal produce from farmers and growers in the Duluth-Superior area. In addition, we grow our own salad mixes through our Deep Winter Greenhouse. However, in order to consistently supply produce and staples to our participants year round, we also source from our local Aldi and Upper Lakes Food Distribution. We sell these goods at cost, with little to no variation in prices, to keep our food as affordable as possible. In the future, we hope to integrate more local suppliers into the Mobile Market.

## Summer vs Winter

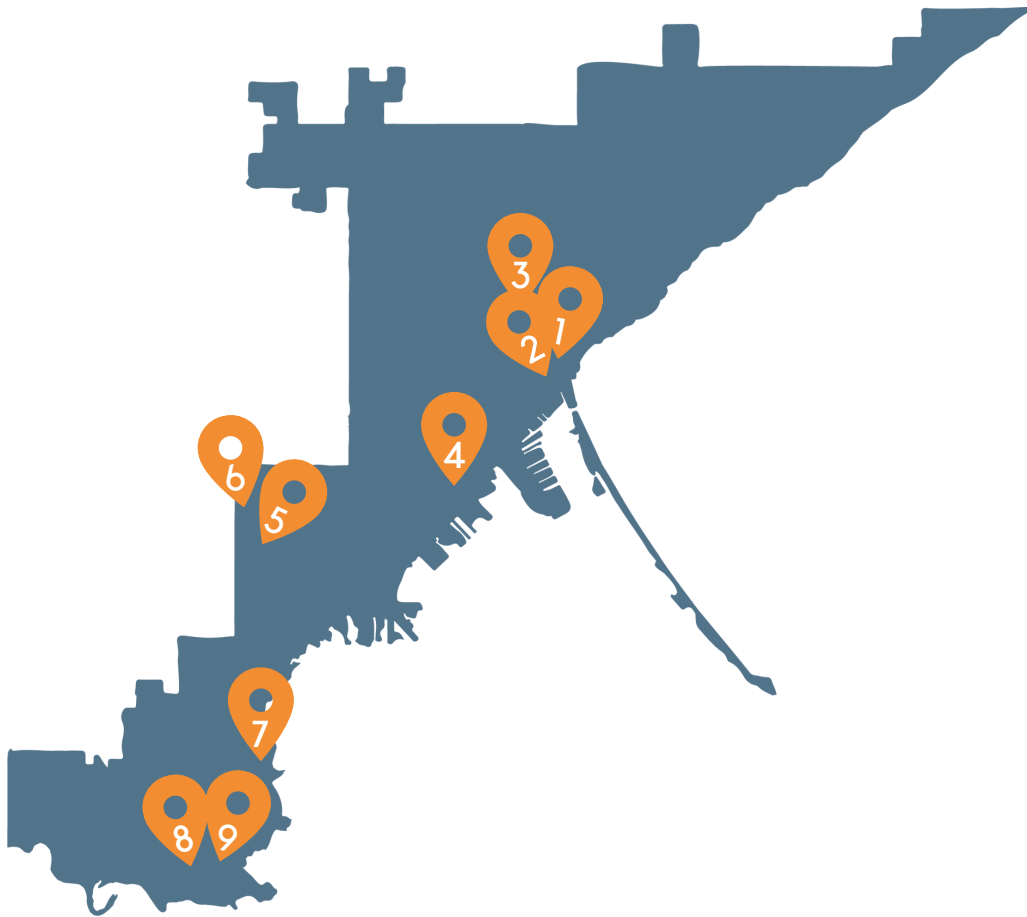


Our Mobile Market operates year round. Because we live in Duluth, our set-up changes with the seasons. In the summer months, we operate in a farmers market "pop-up" style which includes setting up tents and tables outside community centers. We keep temperature sensitive food in the refrigerated van while the rest are in crates on the tables. Anyone from the public is free to attend. We also offer delivery to anyone who is unable to attend the market in person.



During the winter, we shift the Mobile Market to an indoor set up (basically the same as the summer, except inside and without tents). For some of our sites, we stay at the same community center as during the summer, but just move inside. However, for other sites, we need to switch locations for logistical reasons or schedule conflicts. Some of our winter sites, such as senior living centers, are only available to residents. We still offer delivery in the winter months, too.

# Where does the Mobile Market operate?



List of all the Duluth neighborhoods and areas where the Mobile Market operates.

1. Central Hillside
2. Downtown
3. Harbor Highlands
4. Lincoln Park
5. Bayview Heights
6. Proctor
7. Morgan Park
8. & 9. Gary-New Duluth

This map of Duluth demonstrates all the locations the Mobile Market has operated since we first started in late February, 2021. Some locations, such as Central Hillside, Harbor Highlands, and Bayview Heights are not currently active, but are important to include to show the reach of the Mobile Market over time. Despite starting as one of the original three locations, Harbor Highland's attendance remained extremely low, therefore we discontinued our in person service and opted for delivery only. Similarly, we discontinued the Central Hillside location for extremely low attendance. Since our Bayview Heights location was in a local school's parking lot, we had to discontinue that site once school started. To compensate, we opened our nearby Proctor location.

We mainly focus on areas with either high concentrations of low-income residents, or areas with little to no fresh food stores, or some combination of both. We also strive to serve locations with higher concentrations of elders, children, and families since we offer discounts to those demographics.



# Evolution of Our Schedule

February - June

## Community Mobile Market



**Locations**

- Harbor Highlands Community Center**  
1225 Harbor Highlands Dr  
4th Sat of the month  
12-2pm
- Morgan Park Good Fellowship Community Center**  
1242 88th Ave W  
1st Wed of the month  
4-6pm
- Lincoln Park Community Center**  
2014 W 3rd St  
2nd Wed of the month  
4-6pm

**Power of Produce Club**  
Free fruits and veggies for children under 18

**EBT Match**  
Match up to \$15 for anyone using their EBT card



Order online at [communityactionduluth.org](http://communityactionduluth.org) or call 218- 726- 1665

July

JULY MOBILE MARKET SCHEDULE				
				
<b>Morgan Park</b>	<b>Bayview Elementary</b>	<b>Lincoln Park</b>	<b>Rainbow Center</b>	<b>Harbor Highlands</b>
July 7th	July 14th	July 14th	July 21st	July 24th
4-6pm	1-3pm	4-6pm	1-3pm	12-2pm
1242 88th Ave W	8708 Winland St	2014 W 3rd St	211 N 3rd Ave E	1225 Harbor Highlands Dr

Learn more at [communityactionduluth.org](http://communityactionduluth.org) or call 218 - 726 - 1665

August - October

AUGUST MOBILE MARKET SCHEDULE		
		
<b>August 4th</b>	<b>August 11th</b>	<b>August 18th</b>
<b>Gary - New Duluth</b>	<b>Bayview Heights</b>	<b>Downtown</b>
1-3pm	1-3pm	1-3pm
Heritage Apartments 700 Commonwealth Ave	Bay View Elementary 8708 Vinland St	Rainbow Center 211 N 3rd Ave E
<b>Morgan Park</b>	<b>Lincoln Park</b>	<b>Central Hillside</b>
4-6pm	4-6pm	4-6pm
Good Fellowship Community Center 1242 88th Ave W	Lincoln Park Community Center 2014 W 3rd St	Damiano Center 206 W 4th St

Learn more at [communityactionduluth.org](http://communityactionduluth.org) or call (218) 726 - 1665

November - Present

## NOVEMBER MOBILE MARKET SCHEDULE

<b>Gary - New Duluth</b>	<b>Downtown</b>
<b>Tue Nov 2nd</b> 12-2pm	<b>Wed Nov 3rd &amp; Wed Nov 17th</b> 12-2pm
Vintage Acres 501 W Stowe St	Rainbow Center 211 N 3rd Ave E
<b>Tue Nov 2nd &amp; Tue Nov 16th</b> 3-5pm	<b>Proctor</b>
Heritage Apartments 700 Commonwealth Ave	<b>Wed Nov 10th</b> 12-2pm
<b>Morgan Park</b>	Rails Indoor Sports Complex 800 N Boundary Ave
<b>Wed Nov 10th</b> 3-5pm	<b>Lincoln Park</b>
Good Fellowship Community Center 1242 88th Ave W	<b>Thur Nov 11th</b> 3-5pm
	Harrison Park 3002 W 3rd St

Delivery Available!

Learn more at [communityactionduluth.org](http://communityactionduluth.org) or call (218) 726 - 1665



Our monthly schedules evolved over time. At first, we created a general flyer announcing the monthly rotation of the markets, along with their locations. However, as we added more sites, we started including specific dates and times for our markets. The layout of the flyers changed overtime to adjust for the new sites, but our style stays relatively the same. The red, yellow, green, and occasional blue are evident in all of our designs. We derive our color palette from the Mobile Market and Community Action Duluth logos.

# Timeline 2020-2021

We shared surveys to gauge community interest & need in a mobile market.



October

December

We launched a soft open of the Mobile Market.



February

April

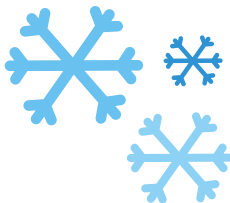
We partnered with UMD's Land Lab.



June

August

Our sites moved indoors for the winter.



October

December

November



We bought a refrigerated van!

January

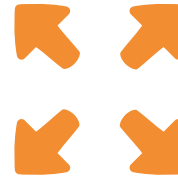
March



Our application to authorize EBT at markets got accepted!

May

July



We expanded from 3 sites to 6!

September

November

Mardag Foundation provided its first grant to Mobile Market.



**Mardag Foundation**

*A family legacy. A partner for Minnesota.*

# Lessons Learned During Our First Year

## Harbor Highlands

Before starting the Mobile Market, we sent out a survey to community centers and organizations to distribute to residents across Duluth. Knowing that Lincoln Park, Central Hillside, and Morgan Park locations were particularly vulnerable to food injustice, we focused on those neighborhoods. Residents of the Harbor Highlands neighborhood, which is located in Central Hillside, expressed interest in a Mobile Market. However, once we started operating in the neighborhood, we struggled with attendance. According to the survey, Saturdays worked well for the community and for the YMCA Community Center where we would set up. However, no more than a few people (mostly our friends and coworkers) attended each month. We experimented with door to door flyers, but despite the hundreds we posted, only one or two people attended as a result. We learned through this experience that despite our best efforts, the energy and cost of setting up a Mobile Market in Harbor Highlands outweighed the benefit of a market in that community. We started focusing our efforts in locations with residents, such as senior living facilities, rather than entire neighborhoods. Since that transition, we experienced a 34% growth in our customer reach and tripled our sales. Although we discontinued in person markets in Harbor Highlands, we still offer delivery services because we recognize there is still a need for low cost groceries in that area.

## Regulating Produce

Operating a Mobile Market in Duluth presents some unique challenges, namely the inconsistent Midwest weather. Since some temperatures can reach -40°F in the winter, we decided to convert our summer pop-up style into an indoor model. We learned that keeping our produce in plastic bags helps them regulate temperature while transporting in the cold temperatures and while resting inside (in some very warm senior centers).

In addition to temperature, we learned that regulating the amount of produce we purchased before markets can be difficult. Sometimes raspberries sell out in the first 20 min, and other times, they sit untouched all market. This experience was expensive for us and disappointing for customers. So, we learned certain patterns of shopping behavior at sites and started catering our food orders to those trends. While it is still not a perfect science, this observation helped us save time and money during our first year.



# Lessons Learned During Our First Year

## Mo Visits the Car Mechanic

Within a few months of purchasing our Mobile Market van, which we later nicknamed "Mo," it broke down. Ironically, the van broke down on our way to pick up a food supply order from Upper Lakes. Through this experience, we learned that not just any mechanic can work on a second use refrigerated van. After a few frantic calls, we discovered Mid-State Truck Service Inc. could tow and fix up Mo. The photo below (description: Evan on the phone in front of the tow-truck picking up the Mobile Market van) depicts the stressful situation. Months later, our team laughs at the memory. Despite the intense moment, we are grateful for this lesson we learned. Now we know which mechanics we can reference should any questions or complications with Mo arise in the future.

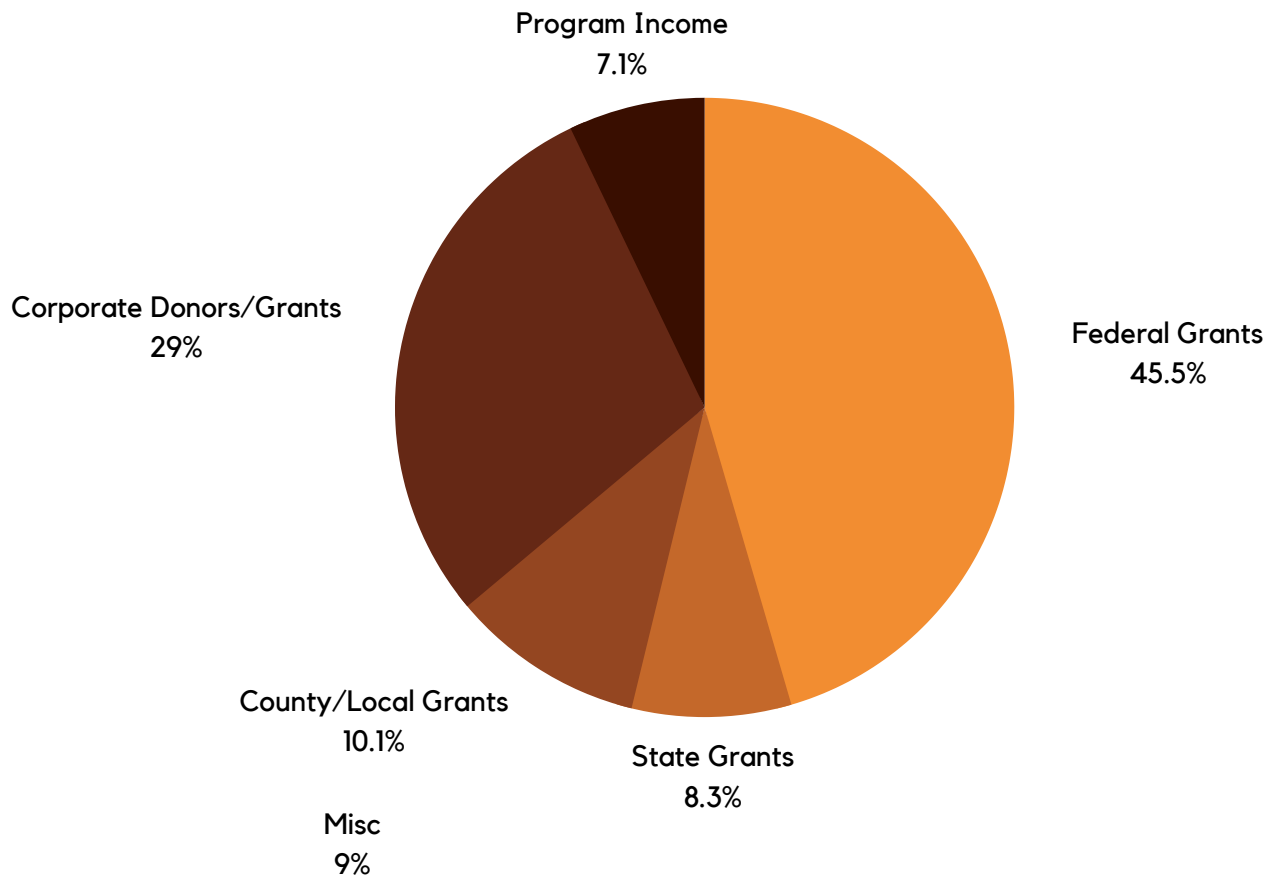


We would like to thank the mechanics at Mid-State Truck Service for their excellent service. Here is their contact information for reference.

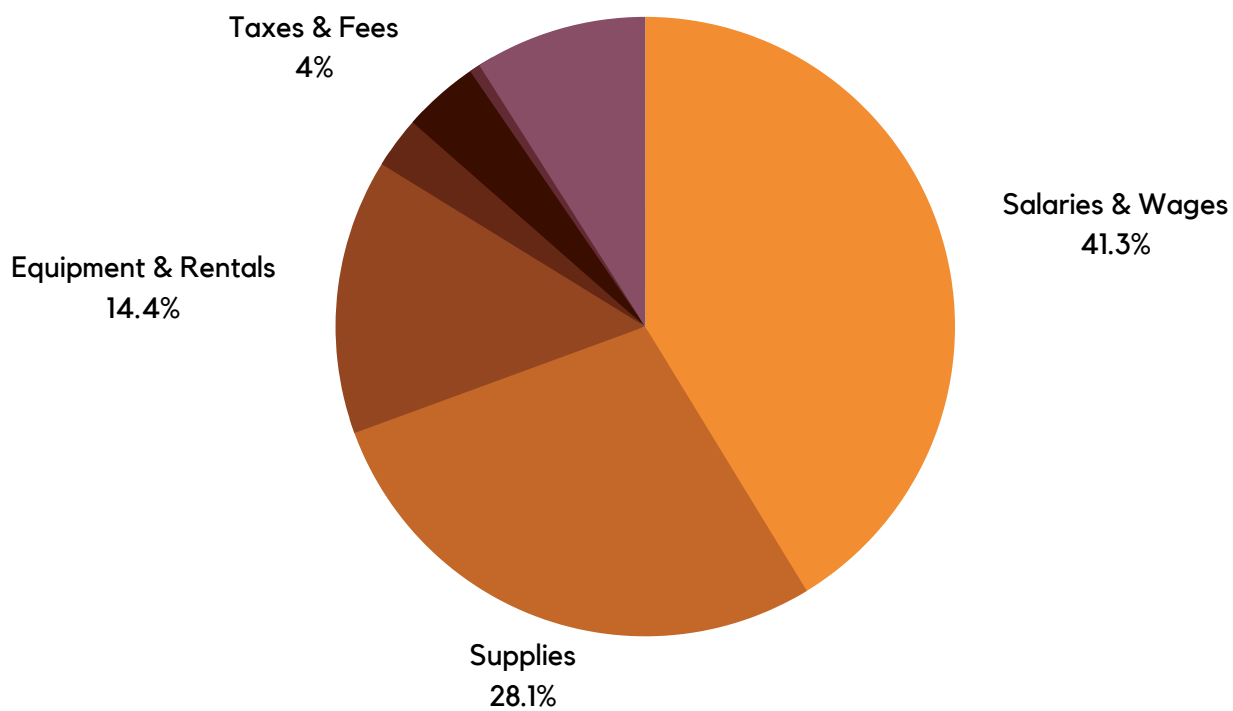
Mid-State Truck Service, Inc.  
3204 Carlton St, Duluth, MN 55806  
(218) 624-4855

# Revenue & Expense

## Revenue



## Expense



# Staff



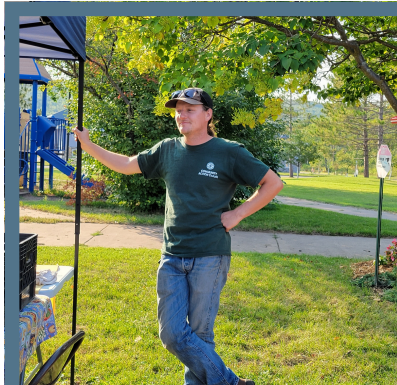
## Seeds of Success Program Manager

Evan Flom started in 2019 as the Seeds of Success Farmers Market Supervisor then later became the Program Manager. During his leadership, this Community Action Duluth food justice program came to life. Now operating two seasonal farmers markets and a year-round Mobile Market, Evan hopes to continue to expand the program's services throughout Duluth.



## Americorps VISTA

Aly Brewer started at Community Action Duluth in August of 2020 to address food injustice and environmental sustainability. Since then, she's played an instrumental role in the research, outreach, design, data collection, and daily operations of the Mobile Market. Most notably, Aly created and wrote this report of the Mobile Market's first year of operations.



## Field Crew Member

Reilly Partridge started working as a part-time crew member for the Seeds of Success program in the summer of 2020. His goal was to build six new garden beds. Since then, he has moved to fulltime and currently operates the Deep Winter Greenhouse and manages inventory for the Mobile Market. He keeps the market running behind the scenes.



## Production Field Crew Lead

Karl Becker joined the Seeds of Success team in 2019 as an intern from University of Minnesota-Duluth, but later became the Field Crew Lead to manage the garden and greenhouse. Although he no longer serves on the team, Karl played a significant role in the development and ergonomics of the Mobile Market you know today.



# Media & Press

We were lucky to receive a great amount of media attention during our first year of operations. You can see a list of links to all the news clips, videos, articles, and more below.

Image description:

Aly (right) plugging in a customer's order into the Point of Sale machine. Evan (left) bagging produce and conversing with the customer. Image derived from the Duluth New Tribune article.



## WDIO

- [Community Action Duluth launching mobile market to help with food insecurity](#)
- [Community Action Duluth rolls out their Mobile Market](#)
- [Community Action Duluth's Mobile Market making a difference](#)

**PBS:** [The Slice: Duluth Mobile Food Market](#)

**UMNDuluth:** [Mobile Market - Community Action Duluth](#)

**Perfect Duluth Day:** [Community Action Duluth's Mobile Market](#)

## Fox21

- [Community Action's Mobile Market Makes Stop in Lincoln Park](#)
- [Bayview Elementary Holds Community Mobile Market](#)

**Duluth News Tribune:** [A grocery store on wheels': Mobile Market rolls into Duluth this weekend](#)

## Community Action Duluth blogs

- [Launch of the Mobile Market](#)
- [Mobile Market Update](#)
- [New location added](#)

## Ecolibrium3 blog

- [Grocery Store on Wheels: Aly Brewer & the Launch of the Mobile Market](#)

# Appendix

## Fun Facts

Our downtown site at the Rainbow Center is by far our most popular location. On our busiest day to date, we handled a record number of 43 transactions in two hours- that's about one participant every 2.8 minutes! As shown in this image, all of our shopping baskets are in use. Due to the high demand in this location, we started hosting the Mobile Market twice a month, and we keep on growing!



Rain or shine, summer or winter, our refrigerated van allows us to safely transport food to our community regardless of the weather. During our first year of operations, we were fortunate enough to never need to close the Mobile Market due to weather related concerns.

## Most Popular Items

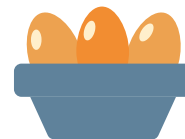
During our first year of operations, we sold...



Over 675 oranges



Over 600 apples



Over 525 dozen farm fresh eggs

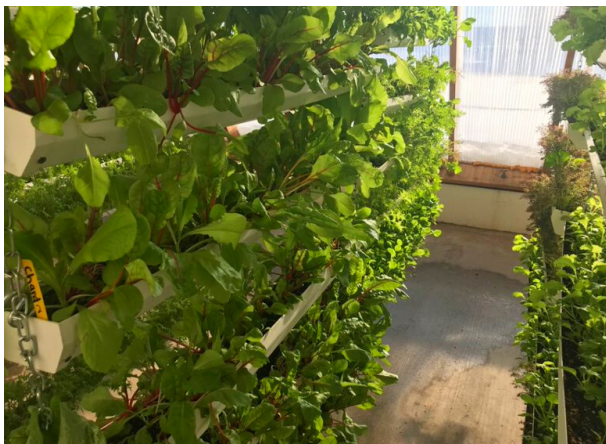


Over 400 cartons of raspberries



# Appendix

## Pictures





# Appendix

Thank you for reading this report!

To learn more about Community Action Duluth and all our wonderful programs, you can contact us here:

2424 W 5th St, Ste 102 Duluth, MN 55806

Phone: 218-726-1665

Email: [info@communityactionduluth.org](mailto:info@communityactionduluth.org)



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