



Eat well. Be well.  
A path to better health.

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

May 8, 2024

### **Maine Council on Aging awards nearly \$376,000 in grants through Hannaford Supermarkets' Connection, Health and Equity Through Food (CHEF) program to improve the well-being of older adults in New England and New York**

*More than 50 organizations in the five-state area will use the funds to increase access to food and social connections, creating a path to better health for older adults.*

Brunswick, Maine – In the first of two micro-grant cycles, the Maine Council on Aging (MCOA) has awarded nearly \$376,000 through Hannaford Supermarkets' Connection, Health and Equity Through Food (CHEF) program to 51 organizations in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, and New York. The grants are being used to improve the health and well-being of older adults in the five-state region. The final micro-grant cycle is now open, and applications are being accepted online until June 30 at [www.agefriendly.community](http://www.agefriendly.community).

“The response to the first CHEF grant cycle was impressive and demonstrates the significant challenges older people are facing accessing food and staying connected, particularly older people who have experienced economic disparities,” said MCOA Executive Director Jess Maurer. “We wish we could have funded every application we received, but stayed focused on funding programs and activities that will have a lasting impact on people and communities. We estimate nearly 236,000 people will benefit from the grants awarded in this cycle and encourage organizations to apply in this next cycle so we can expand that reach,” added Maurer.

“At Hannaford, we're focused on making thoughtful investments that ensure all members of our communities, including older adults, are healthy and thriving,” said Sherri Stevens, community relations manager for Hannaford Supermarkets. “Community connection is imperative for our health and well-being as we grow older and face the challenges that come with aging. The organizations receiving funding through this first round of grants play a major role in connecting older adults with fresh, nutritious food and socialization opportunities that support mental health. We encourage other

organizations to take advantage of this opportunity to support programs that put older adults at their center.”

Grant recipients are supporting the nutritional and social needs of older adults in a myriad of ways, and include these awardees:

**Alan Day Community Garden** (ADCG) in Norway, ME works in partnership with the MaineHealth Food Pantry, Oxford County Wellness Collaborative, The Progress Center, Senior Farmshare Program, and Somali Bantu Community Association to provide opportunities for community members to build relationships, learn, and grow food together. ADCG is using the grant funds to implement a Community Meals pilot program, specifically designed to create a social network for older adults living in rural communities around food, cooking, learning, and sharing meals together.

"We are so pleased to hear that our application has been accepted in our efforts to support and work with the aging people in our community," said Alan Day Community Garden Executive Director Ricky Crocket. "On behalf of our organization and our community, thank you!"

**NH Hunger Solutions** in Dover, NH co-facilitates and supports 12 coalitions around the state to end food insecurity, improve equitable access to nutritious food, and address the root causes of hunger. With the CHEF grant funding, NH Hunger Solutions is implementing five structural changes to ensure that more applications for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) are successfully submitted. These changes include simplifying the application recertification process, setting up screening and referrals to federal nutrition programs, identifying federal and private funding sources for screening services, training screening staff on the SNAP application process and implementing equity practices, and promoting SNAP to older adults and people with disabilities.

Social Impact & Development Director Jessica Gorhan was enthusiastic about receiving the grant. “We are thrilled to be working with the Maine Council on Aging to eliminate hunger for older adults,” she said.

**Heineberg Community Senior Center** in Burlington, VT provides free and donation-based programs, meals, and activities to adults aged 50+. With their CHEF grant, the Heineberg Community Senior Center launched a monthly Crock ‘n Talk Program that is being led by undergraduate and graduate nursing students from UVM. Participants learn how to prepare heart-healthy, affordable meals that are easy to prepare and freezer friendly.

According to Executive Director Andrea Viets, “the first class was filled in two weeks. We've had a terrific response, and people are really looking forward to it,” she added. “I've also been super-impressed with the nursing students who are currently leading the project - they are organized, demonstrate the

ability to be responsive to changing needs, and are personable, warm, and friendly. We could not be happier with this project!”

**Urban Farming Institute** in Mattapan, MA transforms neglected land into community gardens that create green-collar jobs for residents, engages people in growing food, and is building a healthier, more locally-based food system in Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan – home to two-thirds of Boston’s Black population. Urban Farming Institute is using the grant funding for their Fit Around the Farm and Black Men’s Gathering programs which provide people of color with increased access to healthy food, nutrition education, exercise, and social connections.

President & CEO Pat Spence thanked MCOA and Hannaford for the grant adding, “We have dedicated ourselves to completely involving our seniors in urban farming, eating locally grown fresh food, and encouraging them to share their wisdom as we develop future programs for their health and well-being. The key is for our seniors to have total involvement in the design of all elder programs and to make sure they are included in all our activities, as if we could stop them!”

**Jewish Family Service of Orange County (JFS)** in Middletown, NY is a multi-program, social service agency serving the entire community regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation, or ethnicity. JFS offers a Grocery Shopping/Assistance Program, which matches older adults with volunteers who “shop for” or “shop with” them. With their grant funding JFS is expanding the program so more older adults in their community, especially from underserved and minority populations, can live at home independently, with dignity, for as long as possible.

“On behalf of the JFS staff, board of directors, volunteers, and most importantly the neighbors we serve, it is with deep appreciation that we are acknowledging the Maine Council on Aging’s CHEF grant funding,” said the late Co-Executive Director Deborah Markman. “I hear story after story of the people’s lives that are touched and changed as a result of the work that we do. Your support enables us to continue offering these vital services and supports. Please know that you are helping to make a difference!”

[Read](#) the complete list of CHEF grant recipients.

CHEF was launched with a \$1.3 million donation to MCOA from Hannaford on December 12, 2023, under the banner of Hannaford’s “Eat Well, Be Well – A Path to Better Health” initiative. The CHEF program funds organizations and projects in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, and New York, that are supporting the needs of diverse older adults – including improving access to food and increasing opportunities for socialization. In addition to the grants, CHEF publishes a monthly newsletter and offers a series of free webinars through MCOA’s Tri-State Learning Collaborative on Aging. For more information about CHEF programming or to sign up for the newsletter visit [www.agefriendly.community/chef/](http://www.agefriendly.community/chef/).

Hannaford introduced Eat Well, Be Well in September 2022 to help break down the barriers that challenge access to healthy, nutritious food and wellness resources. Hannaford has donated nearly \$3 million to organizations under the Eat Well, Be Well banner.

To learn more about the overall impact of the CHEF program, view the [video](#).

For more information about Hannaford’s community efforts and charitable giving initiatives, visit [Hannaford.com/HannafordHelps](https://Hannaford.com/HannafordHelps).

### **About Hannaford Supermarkets**

Hannaford Supermarkets operates 189 stores in the Northeast, most with full-service pharmacies. Stores are located in Maine, New York, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont. All are committed to offering great fresh food, convenient experiences, and everyday low prices. Hannaford also is an active and committed community partner—focusing on fighting hunger, supporting youth development, and helping people live healthier lives. Hannaford is an industry leader in sustainability with a strong commitment to reducing waste and protecting the environment. Hannaford diverts or donates all food at risk of going to waste—sending no food to landfills. In 2023, Hannaford donated 26 million pounds of food to hunger relief organizations. Hannaford employs nearly 30,000 associates and is based in Scarborough, Maine. Additional information can be found at [Hannaford.com](https://Hannaford.com).

### **About Maine Council on Aging**

The Maine Council on Aging is a broad, multi-disciplinary network of more than 135 organizations, businesses, municipalities, and older Mainers working to ensure we can all live healthy, engaged, and secure lives as we age in our homes and community settings. For more information, visit: [MaineCouncilOnAging.org](https://MaineCouncilOnAging.org).

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