

November 8, 2023
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



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New and long-time programs providing **meals and food to Austin's food-insecure neighbors**

ROCHESTER, Minn.—Channel One Regional Food Bank's [Kitchen Coalition](#) initiative and [Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio \(CLUES\) mobile pantry](#) program are providing prepared meals and food respectively to those in the Austin community facing food insecurity.

Kitchen Coalition

Channel One's Kitchen Coalition was originally developed as a pandemic response by the Feeding America Food Bank in the Twin Cities, [Second Harvest Heartland](#). The initiative aims to provide healthy prepared meals to those facing food insecurity and to pair donated and rescued food with restaurants' expertise in food preparation to fill a crucial need.

[The United Way of Mower County](#) served as Channel One's fiscal sponsor of a \$45,000 [Hornel Foundation](#) grant to support Kitchen Coalition meals for [Riverland Community College](#) food-insecure students. Tienda Y Taqueria Guerrero prepares 120 fresh, healthy meals each week and delivers them to Riverland Community College to distribute.

For some people—like students, seniors, and people experiencing homelessness—hunger is not addressed with a box of ingredients or a trip to their local food shelf. Where time, resources, kitchen equipment, and knowledge required to turn food ingredients into a meal are a barrier, a prepared meal is often the solution.

“Because Austin is a small city, I feel like we all know each other and help each other when we can,” said Evelyn Serrano of Tienda Y Taqueria Guerrero. “We love to give back to our community.”

To date, more than 1,370 meals have been distributed since the program's start in August 2023.

Tienda Y Taqueria Guerrero has operated a food truck in Austin since 2002, opened its store in 2004, and has since expanded to include a restaurant, butcher, and bakery.

CLUES mobile pantry

Mobile food pantries are drive-through food distributions in rural communities and areas with limited access to food and programs, limited transportation, and high food insecurity rates.

According to [Feeding America's Map the Meal Gap](#), the food insecurity rate in Mower County, which includes Austin, is 7.1%, compared to 6.8% in Minnesota.

Since July 2021, [CLUES](#) has provided 363,425 pounds of mobile pantry food for anyone earning 300% or less of federal poverty guidelines.

“Riverland is grateful to be working to reduce hunger on our campuses and in our communities. Our students face many challenges on their journey to gain skills and education for better jobs. It’s hard to study when you’re hungry,” said Miguel Garate, a Riverland Community College admission specialist. “Together with many generous people, business donors, and community partners, Riverland can provide students with meals, food items, and hygiene products.”

Recent data shows 41% of Riverland students faced food insecurity in the previous month.

A mobile pantry is set up at 12 p.m. every other Friday at Riverland Community College for people to choose food that is most appropriate for them.

For more information about [Channel One Regional Food Bank](#) and its Austin programs, including [Kitchen Coalition](#) and [CLUES mobile pantry distributions](#), visit [helpingfeedpeople.org](#).

About Kitchen Coalition

Kitchen Coalition serves up culturally connected, freshly prepared meals and a whole new way to fight hunger. Not everyone facing hunger has the home, health, or ability to use the groceries food banks offer. Kitchen Coalition has built a network of local restaurants and caterers who turn food bank ingredients into nutritious, freshly prepared meals. Then, trusted nonprofits get those meals to neighbors on a predictable schedule. To date, 107,350 prepared meals have been distributed to people facing food insecurity through Channel One’s Kitchen Coalition program, which includes Rochester, Faribault, and Owatonna. Visit [kitchencoalition.org](#) to learn more.

About Channel One Regional Food Bank

Channel One Regional Food Bank, a member of Feeding America, strengthens food access and builds healthy communities. Channel One operates food programs to serve local and area needs such as: a food bank, a food shelf, mobile pantries, Childhood Hunger Programs, Kitchen Coalition and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP). Channel One Regional Food Bank mobilizes organizations, volunteers, and donors to serve the network of over 160 nonprofit programs that provide food for children, adults, and families in need. Channel One serves 14 counties across southeastern Minnesota and western Wisconsin. For more information, call 507.287.2350 or visit [helpingfeedpeople.org](#).

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