



Inside this Issue:

**PAGE 1**

Healing Hunger through Innovation

**PAGE 2**

Healing Hunger (continued)  
Cultivating Change  
Gleaning  
MetroMarket

**PAGE 3**

Healing Hunger (continued)  
Illinois Eats  
Bridging the Gap  
A Hunger-Free Tomorrow

**PAGE 4**

What's Cooking in the Teaching Kitchen  
Save the Dates  
Donor-Advised Funds

## Healing Hunger through Innovation

### How Operation Food Search Is Strengthening Our Community Food System

In communities across Missouri and Illinois, too many families struggle to access fresh, healthy food. **Disinvestment and the closure of neighborhood grocery stores have created gaps in the food system that impact low-income families.** While terms like “food desert” have become common in describing the problem, the real issue is more complex: **a fragmented food system that fails to nourish those in need.**

At Operation Food Search, **we’re working to help make the food system itself healthier.** A structure that serves people in a community must involve the community. This emphasis on community food systems combines local production, equitable access, sustainability, and community involvement across the food chain (from “seed to feed”).

## Healing Hunger through Innovation *(Continued)*

By tapping into local networks and engaging residents, we can make healthy food accessible and support local economies. From collaborating with local farmers and other partners to grow and distribute food to leading innovative programs that increase food access, **OFS is working to heal hunger not just for today, but for the long-term health of our communities.**

# Strengthening Our Community Food System



### Cultivating Change: The OFS Garden and Garden Collective

OFS has **expanded its growing space to meet rising food insecurity.** The updated OFS Garden features an outdoor teaching garden and indoor hydroponics system, producing fresh food and offering hands-on education.

Through a partnership with **EarthDance Organic Farm School**, the Garden Collective offers **help to 170 food pantry partners in growing seasonal produce**, learning sustainable practices, and boosting healthy food distribution. Classes cover topics like seed saving and food preservation, and partners receive seeds, compost, and tools to support their gardens.



### Gleaning: Fighting Waste, Feeding People

OFS works with Missouri and Illinois farms to **recover surplus produce that would otherwise go to waste.** Each year, thousands of pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables are harvested, stored, and distributed to the community.

This reduces waste, strengthens the local economy, and improves food access. Volunteers are essential to ensuring no good food is left behind.



### MetroMarket: Fresh Food Made Mobile

MetroMarket brings **fresh, affordable produce, proteins, and pantry staples** directly to neighborhoods with limited access. Stocked by local farms and partners, it delivers healthy options where they're needed most.

Due to the unexpected loss of grant funding, **service to several senior apartment communities in North St. Louis City has been canceled.** OFS is actively working to restore these stops.

## Healing Hunger through Innovation *(Continued)*



### Illinois Eats: A Collaborative Impact

OFS partnered with leaders in farming, education, business, and government to fight hunger in Madison and St. Clair counties through Illinois EATS, a USDA-supported program. We purchased directly from Illinois farms, expanded gleaning, and elevated local food systems.

Though the 2026 season was canceled due to a federal spending freeze, the impact remains. Lessons learned and partnerships built will guide OFS's strategy and advocacy going forward.

### Bridging the Gap Amid Budget Cuts

While our community food system work has grown more effective and connected, **funding challenges are putting new pressures on hunger relief efforts.** Unexpected budget cuts have already impacted innovative programs like Illinois EATS and St. Louis MetroMarket, and without increased investment, more families will fall through the cracks.

At OFS, we are committed to filling these gaps with creativity and collaboration. From expanding our sources of fresh food to deepening our ties with community partners, we continue to advocate for long-term, systemic solutions.

## Reimagining What's Possible for Our Region

### A Hunger-Free Tomorrow, Rooted in Community

At OFS, **we heal hunger with innovative and collaborative solutions that provide food today and help create a hunger-free tomorrow.** This mission reflects our belief that hunger is not inevitable—it is solvable when we come together to strengthen the systems that nourish us all.

By **focusing on the local food system, centering community voices, and forging partnerships** across sectors, OFS is not just delivering food—we are cultivating resilience, restoring food access, and reimagining what's possible for our region.



# What's Cooking in the Teaching Kitchen

## Green Pea Pesto Pasta with Asparagus and Sun-dried Tomato

This early summer recipe is a bright, flavorful, and healthy summer dish, with pea pesto pasta, seasonal asparagus, and sun-dried tomatoes. When we make this dish in the OFS Teaching Kitchen, we pick **fresh ingredients from our on-site teaching garden and indoor hydroponics**. This recipe takes about 35 minutes to prepare and makes four servings.

To learn more about taking a class in our Teaching Kitchen, contact our Culinary Nutrition Education Manager, Jason Goldman, at [jason.goldman@operationfoodsearch.org](mailto:jason.goldman@operationfoodsearch.org).



FEATURED RECIPE  
**Green Pea Pesto**

Scan to View Recipe and a Video →



## Save the Dates Learn more: [OperationFoodSearch.org/2025-events](https://OperationFoodSearch.org/2025-events)



**Golf Tournament**  
*Presented by Seeger Toyota*  
**Monday, July 14, 2025**

Our 31st Annual Swing to Heal Hunger Tournament Event



**Feast for Change**  
*Presented by Post Holdings*  
**Saturday, Sept. 13, 2025**

Annual farm-to-fork dining experience to benefit OFS

## Support OFS Through Your Donor-Advised Fund

If you have supported OFS through a Donor-Advised Fund (DAF), thank you for your impact on food insecurity. **Your generosity is an investment in local children, families, seniors, and veterans.** To make giving easier, **we've added a DAF widget to our website. This simple tool guides you through the DAF grant process** and connects you directly to your fund manager. You can view the tool at [OperationFoodSearch.org/donations](https://OperationFoodSearch.org/donations).

### Here are a few tips when giving through your Donor-Advised Fund (DAF):

#### Contact Information

Include your contact information if you'd like to be recognized. If marked "anonymous," we can't send a thank-you or receipt.

#### Recognition Preferences

If you prefer to remain publicly anonymous but want us to know you gave, just let us know.

#### Detailed Records

Share more than just the fund name—include your full name or address to help us credit your gift properly to our donor records.



To learn more and make your DAF gift today, visit [OperationFoodSearch.org/donations](https://OperationFoodSearch.org/donations).

