

2023  
FRESH PRODUCE PROGRAM  
ANNUAL REPORT



thank you

from all of us at the Fresh Produce Program.

To the Fresh Produce Program (FPP) community,

It takes a village to effect change. In this year's annual report, we bring you a brief snapshot of the Fresh Produce Program's 2023 impact, all made possible by you—the "village" of our participants, community members, families, and neighbors of those whom we serve.

Your commitment and support, no matter the scale or form that it took, had a meaningful impact: over 7,000 direct-to-door deliveries made in 2023, accomplished with over 6000 volunteered hours from students, staff, faculty, and our community. We couldn't have done this without you.

The Fresh Produce Program is proud to be a student-led initiative, powered this year by over 450 passionate undergraduate and graduate students as near as Duke and UNC and as far as Boston Children's Hospital, in addition to our vital community volunteers.

Still, the most important members of our village are those that we serve. Our nearly 450 participants remain at the heart of what we do, and we hope you'll continue to partner with us to serve them again in 2024 and beyond.

The Fresh Produce  
Program Team

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# who we are

## we are our mission

The mission of the Fresh Produce Program, a program of Root Causes, is to improve community health by addressing food insecurity and improving our local food system through innovation, partnership, and research.

## we are our values

- Participants are at the heart of everything we do
- We prioritize kindness and connection
- We recognize that participants depend on the services we provide and make every effort to provide dependable, quality deliveries
- We acknowledge that members of our community may harbor mistrust of the health care system, and seek to earn trust from our participants

## we are our people

We are currently powered entirely by volunteers. As a Duke student founded organization, many of our leaders and volunteers are Duke students, but we are powered by students from near and far, as well as our vital community members and Duke staff.

Our participants, the heart of all that we do, are all located in Durham County, referred to the FPP by clinicians across Durham; primarily Duke clinics, at present.

Our partners are critical, including abundant support and friendship from the Duke Campus Farm. Farmer Foodshare has also been a critical and long-time partner whose warehouse we rely upon to store and distribute produce—much of which we proudly purchase from Farmer Foodshare’s network of local farmers. We’re fortunate to also partner with the Food Bank of Central and Eastern NC for produce and select wholesome dry goods. We partner with other community organizations on an ongoing basis as we strive to support local food distribution networks by sharing knowledge and goods whenever possible.

I love the program. You can’t really buy anything with \$20 worth of food stamps...not even food that’s bad for you. The Fresh Produce Program helps. It really, really does.”

–Annette, an FPP participant



## how we serve

### Direct-to-door deliveries of fresh produce

We deliver a hefty bag (13 lbs, on average) of fresh produce every other Saturday to participants enrolled in our delivery service. When available, we provide eggs and other staples like milk. Participants are referred from 12 local clinics.

Our team also creates a unique two-page informational handout every week with helpful resources such as: healthcare access information, voting registration information, tips for healthy living, and recipes. Our materials are always bi-lingual.



### Weekly walk-up table

Our walk up table is available every Saturday morning to any and all community members—no identification or referral is required. We serve an average of 50 walk-ups every Saturday.

We launched our walk-up table in 2022, but have increased variety and amount of goods available thanks to a partnership that began in July of 2023 with Bagging it 4 Kids. Bagging it 4 Kids enables the FPP to pick up additional food nearing expiration from the Whole Foods Market. FPP volunteers do the work of food recovery to ensure all goods distributed are still of high quality.

### Student-community connection

Through four types of volunteer roles, 35+ leadership opportunities, and community-engaged research, the Fresh Produce Program provides invaluable ways for students to connect with the Durham community. We strive to bridge gaps, impart empathy, share a tangible understanding of social drivers of health, and introduce volunteers to our local food security landscape.

Undergraduate students have been more integral this year than ever before. To accommodate the inspiring engagement from the Duke undergraduate community, our own Elaijah Lapay established the Root Causes Undergraduate Coalition in March of 2023, led by 9 passionate Duke undergraduate students. Their leadership team includes a liaison to the Fresh Produce Program.



# who we served in 2023

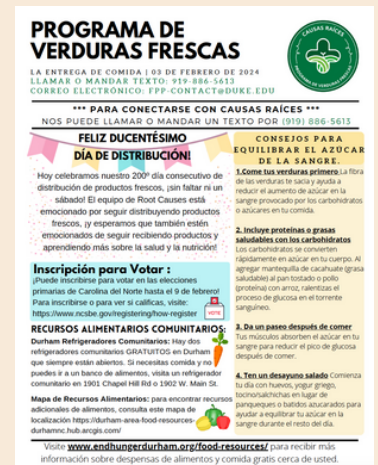
## FPP completed 7,078 deliveries in 2023

- 447 households were active with FPP at the end of 2023, which equates to about 1481 individuals, with an average of about 3 persons per household
- FPP has enrolled more than 650 participants since our delivery service began in 2020
- 39% of our active participants are children, and the average age across our participant population is 37

## We strive to serve a bilingual population with care

About 30% of our participants' preferred language is Spanish, and we serve them with:

- Bi-lingual informational flyers
- Spanish speakers at our walk-up table every week
  - Duke undergraduate students from Spanish service learning courses are critical volunteers at our walk-up table staff as a part of their coursework
- Spanish speakers "on call" every week to assist delivery drivers who are not Spanish-speaking
- Spanish-speaking delivery confirmation callers



## Student leadership

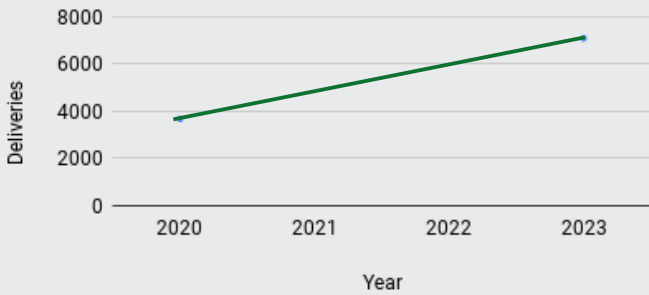
It is one of FPP's central values to provide meaningful experiences for students that connect them with the local Durham community while building transferable skills for their future.

More than 80% of our leaders in 2023 were students, and almost 70% of volunteer hours in 2023 were powered by students, primarily from the Duke undergraduate community and from the Duke School of Medicine, where the Root Causes student organization sits. This being the case, community volunteers also remain integral to FPP and we hope to grow our both our student volunteer and our community volunteer bases in 2024.



# another year of growth

Deliveries increased by 26% in 2023, and by nearly 100% since 2020

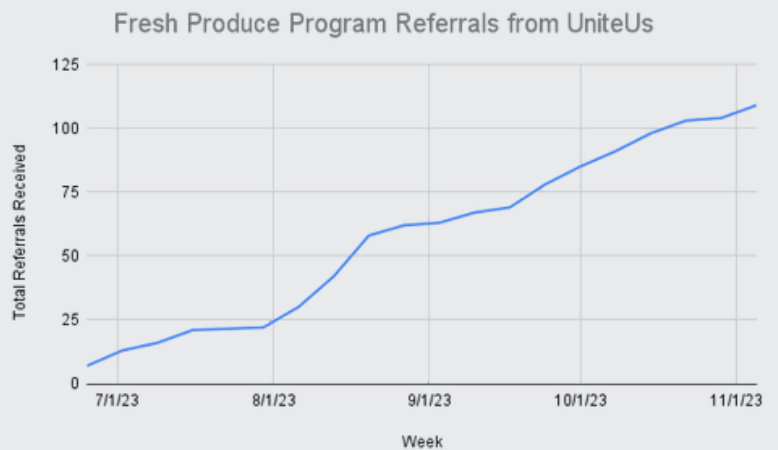


Our new pick-what-you want walk-up table, offered every Saturday, served 2,400+ bags of food and essentials in 2023



We adopted the Unite Us / NCCARE 360 platform, allowing clinicians and social workers to refer 109 patients directly from the electronic health record in real time during appointments

Our volunteers gave 20% more of their time in 2023 than in 2022 to serve our growing population, with weekly participation averaging 60+ unique volunteers





# another year of research

In 2023, FPP “planted” one study and “harvested” another

## **CTSI Arraigados Juntos: Rooted Together Study**

In 2023, the FPP completed its Duke Population Health Improvement Award funded study, “Arraigados Juntos: Rooted Together,” led by Dr. Patrick Hemming (Duke GIM), Rubi Morales (El Centro Hispano), Dr. Lisa Best (NCCU Dietetic Internship Program), and Maralis Mercado Emerson (Duke School of Nursing). The primary focus of this research was to evaluate the feasibility of a student-led pilot randomized control trial exploring the impact of weekly fresh produce delivery paired with nutrition education on blood pressure and food security in members of historically excluded communities with hypertension and food insecurity.

Preliminary findings demonstrated that student-run organizations like FPP are capable of feasibly conducting inter-sectoral pilot trials, and lessons learned may translate into scaling the intervention into a fully powered randomized control trial. The team’s findings also suggested that weekly deliveries of fresh produce combined with nutrition education can reduce participant-reported food insecurity and increase produce consumption, and may be effective in reducing blood pressure.

Findings have been presented at multiple conferences, and drafting of a manuscript is currently underway.

## **Duke Bass Connections | “Tracing the Roots of Nutrition Access, Implementation and Policy”**

In 2023, the FPP launched a new Bass Connections course for the 2023–2024 academic year with faculty from the World Food Policy Center and Population Health Sciences Department, Drs. Norbert Wilson and Hannah Lane, respectively. The course is focused on developing mixed methods studies to study government food programs through the lens of community partners and charitable food program participants. The course’s two research studies are led by Sociology PhD students, Izzy Bouklas and Noah Gibson.

The course has been renewed for the 2024–2025 school year and will be led by clinician-scholar Dr. Ryan Kane.



# looking ahead to 2024

Our vision for 2024: growth and community connectedness

- **Increase connectedness with our participants**
  - By establishing the role of Community Advocate, and in partnership with the Bass Connections course, the FPP aims to increase community connectedness, leaning into Durhamites' needs and responding in kind
- **Development of technologies**
  - The FPP is developing a new database with a team of data scientists and researchers from NCSU to enable streamlined data storage and retrieval
  - The FPP is piloting a new volunteer phone app, created in-house, to streamline the volunteer experience and increase its service level
- **Increased partnership with the Duke Campus Farm (DCF)**
  - DCF has been a long-time friend of the Fresh Produce Program, and we look forward to strengthening our partnership in 2024

Thank you to our participants, our community, and our partners!



A group of Fresh Produce Program leaders and volunteers at its **200th produce distribution**, February 3, 2024



# how you can help

## Volunteer with us

- Visit our sign up sheet to read about our volunteer roles and sign up to serve with us! [tinyurl.com/VolunteerFPP](https://tinyurl.com/VolunteerFPP)
- Have experience advising for or consulting for nonprofits, and want to offer a bit of your time and wisdom? Email us at [FPP-contact@duke.edu](mailto:FPP-contact@duke.edu)

## Support us with a donation and get your FPP t-shirt, included with any donation \$20 and above

### To get your t-shirt:

- Scan the QR code or go to the URL: [bit.ly/FPP-TShirt](https://bit.ly/FPP-TShirt) (note that capitalization does matter for this link)
- Fill out the form
- Donate \$20 or more to the GoFundMe campaign linked in the order form
- Pick up your t-shirt at one of our Saturday distributions between 8:30-10:30AM at 902 N Mangum St
- Wear your FPP green with pride!



Already have your t-shirt? You can donate any time at [tinyurl.com/DonateFPP](https://tinyurl.com/DonateFPP)

## Join the Root Causes listserv

Scan the QR code to the right to join, or email us at [FPP-contact@duke.edu](mailto:FPP-contact@duke.edu) and request to be added



## Connect us to others in your network

Do you know of stakeholders who are passionate about Food Is Medicine in healthcare? Do you know of community partners who we should be connected with? Reach out! Email us at [FPP-contact@duke.edu](mailto:FPP-contact@duke.edu).