



## 2021 Year in Review – A Tremendous Harvest

Leviticus 23:22

As I reflect on 2021, I can't help but be amazed at all God has done over our 5 short years. What started as an idea to glean and rescue excess fresh food to feed a need in our community has grown into a robust gathering of a tremendous harvest. Thank you, Spartanburg, for your generous and unified heart for meeting the needs of others!

We are reminded every day of our mission statement: Ruth's Gleanings empowers people in nutritional poverty by increasing access to healthy, fresh food. We do this primarily through our Gleaning program and our FoodShare Spartanburg program.

Our Gleaning program bridges that gap between food waste and nutritional poverty by rescuing excess fresh, healthy food and distributing it to partner organizations who serve those in need. This food is donated to us, and we donate it to others in our network.

FoodShare Spartanburg connects families and communities to nutrition through a bi-weekly, affordable box of fresh fruits and vegetables. This food is purchased from local farmers and distributors, positively impacting our local food system and economy while also prospering families through nutritious, affordable food.

You will see from our 2021 year in review newsletter that we have many accomplishments to be thankful for! We were able to meet all of our 2021 goals that we mentioned to you last year. **WE GIVE GOD ALL THE GLORY!**

We are excited about the plans we have for 2022! In the new year, we will:

- be more deliberate in growing our gleaning program by connecting with more backyard gardeners & growers
- strengthen and expand our FoodShare partner sites throughout Spartanburg County
- partner with more churches in the faith community to build unity and reach more people through food
- grow our corporate partnerships to engage more volunteer groups and grow financial support
- launch the Spanish version of our Cooking up Confidence, Skills in the Everyday Kitchen classes
- launch a new bi-lingual website and build communications with our Hispanic community
- utilize the resources God has given us to strengthen the local food system through our food hub by connecting more growers with more consumers. Why? Because this is the biggest nutritional impact we can make during times of a volatile supply chain.

We thank you for your continued support that has truly made this all possible! As Spartanburg continues to grow and prosper, we are determined to see that nobody gets left behind. We can't do it alone. We need God's continued favor and **WE NEED YOU!!!**

*Tonja Smith, Founder & Executive Director*

## 2021 HIGHLIGHTS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

We had an exceptional year in 2021 thanks to our incredible volunteers, staff, funders/donors and community partners. Here are a few highlights we wanted to share with you:

- Our gleaning program continues to rescue excess food from farmers, gardeners, and banquet halls, up 16% from 2020 with over 16,000 pounds of rescued fresh food.
- We've added new partner sites to expand our reach throughout Spartanburg County, now totaling 14 regular and multiple pop-up sites.
- We've grown to 7 staff – 3 full and 4 part time!
- Through generous grants, we purchased a refrigerated truck that tripled our capacity to haul fresh food!
- Through partnerships, we launched Cooking up Confidence, Skills in the Everyday Kitchen. This turnkey program is centered around our FoodShare box to allow anyone to teach and learn basic kitchen skills.
- Our Seed Bank and Urban Garden was planted and grown to harvest seeds for the future to build a community of growers.
- We celebrated 5 years with a "Set the Table" event to acknowledge where we began, where we are, and where we are headed!



▲ **57%** — more FoodShare boxes distributed in 2021 over 2020

We provided **\$77,000** in nutrition incentives to our FoodShare families.



**400** volunteers have donated **4,500** hours of their precious time and talent!

Your support provided **\$156,600** in supplemental funds for FoodShare Boxes.

## 5 YEARS OF INCREDIBLE BLESSINGS

In 2021, we celebrated our 5th year in ministry which gave us a time to reflect on numerous accomplishments over this period. It truly is amazing to see God at work and experience His provisions through challenging times and with the opportunities He gives us.

**205,760** pounds of food rescued through our gleaning program

We have utilized over **1,100** volunteers since 2016.



**303,754** pounds of produce distributed through our FoodShare boxes since inception in Jan 2019.

### Box totals:

2,590 in 2019; 5,500 in 2020; 8,700 in 2021.

- Through fresh food we have impacted these areas: Food rescue, nutrition, family stability, the local food system, farmer prosperity, healthcare, nutrition & cooking education, seed preservation and urban teaching farm.
- We've grown our capacity with two locations: one in urban Spartanburg and one in rural Spartanburg at our packing facility with walk-in refrigeration.
- Our team has grown. Since our beginning we have gone from 1 staff to a staff of 7.
- In total, we had 16,790 boxes of fresh produce distributed to families throughout Spartanburg utilizing 14 partner sites to reach further into the county.
- In 5 years, we have distributed a total of 629,514 pounds of fresh, healthy food through our programs, partnering with dozens of organizations, schools, mission homes, food pantries, soup kitchens, churches, and doctor's offices to get it to people most in need.
- Total value of the food over 5 years is \$587,258 providing over half a million healthy meals, and stimulating the local economy.

## FoodShare Blesses Family in Need

Meet Gary & Teresa Kidd with their grandson, Mica, whom they've adopted. This sweet family lives in Woodruff and because of our new partner site with Spartanburg Parks & Recreation at the Woodruff Community Center, they are able to easily access our affordable FoodShare boxes of fresh produce. Teresa shared her story with us and how FoodShare has impacted them. Teresa has been a nurse in Spartanburg for 39 years and Gary has worked 41 years, with 22 of those at Spartanburg Regional in the emergency department. Last year Teresa was assigned to the COVID unit and became sick with Covid-19 in January. She experienced blood clots in her lungs and because of that, she isn't able to return to work.



This is what Teresa had to say about FoodShare Spartanburg: "This program is so wonderful, and I want you to know how important it was that I have nutritious food as I mended, food which we surely couldn't have afforded. I'm positive these great boxes helped get me to the point I am today. We have relied on this food to sustain us after going from two incomes to one this year. We've never had to utilize programs for help before, but FoodShare has been such a blessing." We would say that it's Teresa and Gary who are the blessing, to us at Ruth's Gleanings and to our entire community.

"Gary and I gave our lives to Christ many, many years ago. The way we serve God is to serve mankind. God has commanded that we look out for others. I miss it terribly. I was so sad for many months, but I trust His path for me. I'm now home more for our grandson who is becoming a fine young man. This is God's calling for me now. I'm so happy I could share what He has done for us.

Gary said, "Opening the FoodShare box is like Christmas. We especially love getting strawberries, but everything is so fresh, delicious and affordable." They cook everything in the box and sometimes make soups with the items. Teresa went so far as to say, "This FoodShare box has been a salvation for us."

This is just one of the many stories we hear from our FoodShare customers who care for their families with dignity. Gary and Teresa have been serving our community through healthcare for decades, and we are beyond humbled and grateful to serve them in return. To those who support Ruth's Gleanings through funding and volunteering, YOU make this possible!

## HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED & MAKE AN IMPACT!

### **Pray.**

We covet your prayers and are always grateful for our faithful prayer warriors!

### **Give.**

One-time gifts and those who give as monthly donors are blessings to us and vital for our future. You can give securely on our website at [ruthsgleanings.com/donate](https://ruthsgleanings.com/donate) or complete the enclosed reply card and return it in the provided envelope with your financial gift.

### **Volunteer.**

Our volunteers make it all happen. You can register on our website at [ruthsgleanings.com/volunteer](https://ruthsgleanings.com/volunteer)

### **Newsletter.**

Join our mailing list to receive the latest news and developments by going to our website at [ruthsgleanings.com](https://ruthsgleanings.com)

### **Connect.**

We enjoy hearing from you and others through this email [connect@ruthsgleanings.com](mailto:connect@ruthsgleanings.com)

We thank you again for making 2021 and the past 5 years possible for our ministry. Join us as we push forward to accomplish even more in 2022 as we empower more people in nutritional poverty by increasing access to healthy, fresh food. Thank you!