

FEATURED

# A COMMUNITY *Garden* AT LAKE MANAHAWKIN

Hunger and food insecurity continue to be significant problems globally, nationally, and right here in our own community. In New Jersey, one in five children are not sure where their next meal is coming from, and approximately 165,500 elderly and disabled residents rely on food assistance.





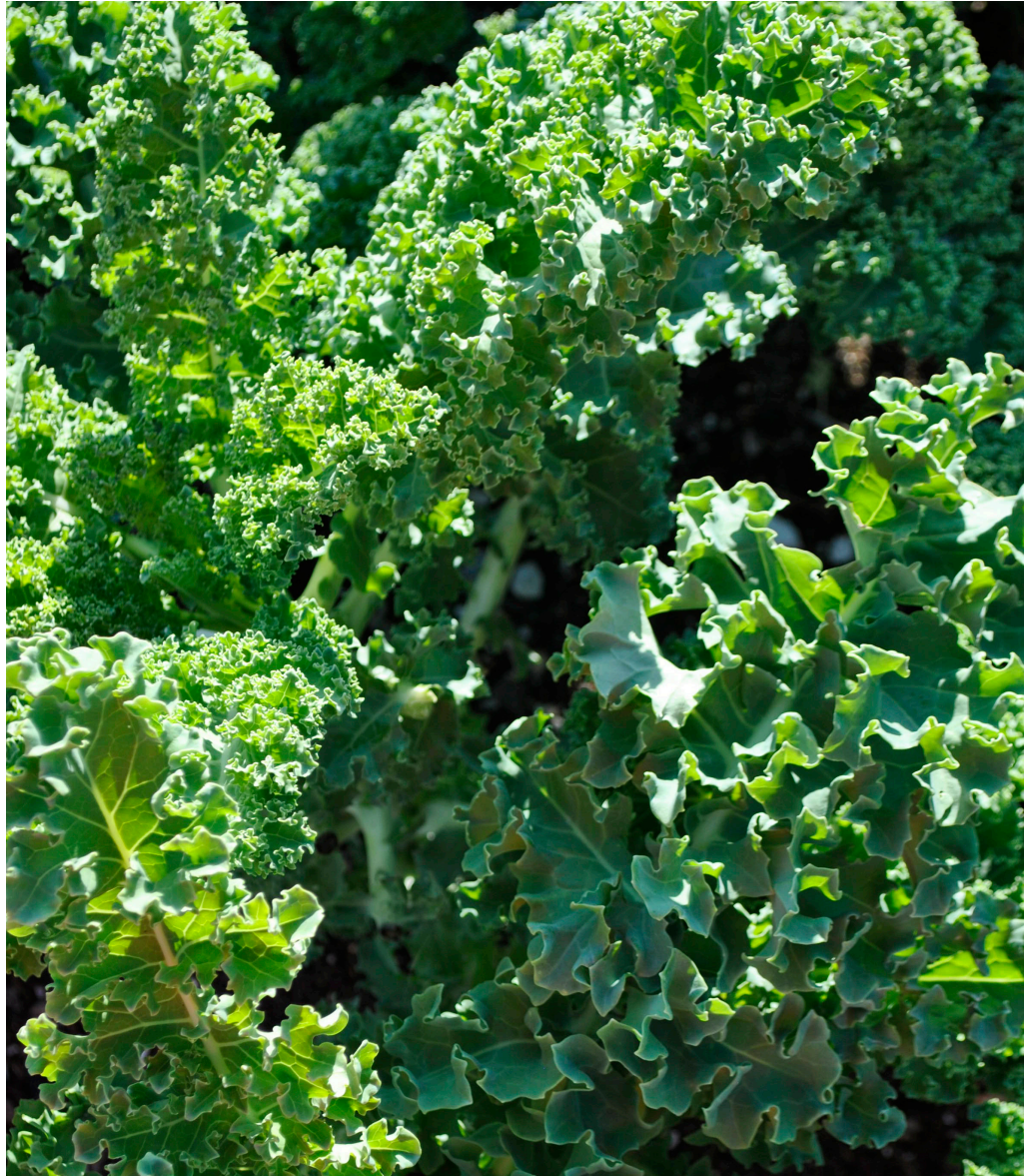


The Hunger Foundation of Southern Ocean (HFOSO.org) has a 20-year history of working in the community to provide much needed financial support to local food banks through fundraising events and donations. Their mission statement reads: "We are a local, all volunteer non-profit organization with a mission to support local food pantries as they assist our residents with their basic food needs, and to help educate the public of the basic food needs of individuals and families in our area."

Food pantries always have trouble keeping up, and often their shelves are almost empty. Food drives and donations help to supply food pantries, and typically focus on non-perishables for obvious reasons. Still, fresh foods such as fruits and vegetables are an important part of a healthy diet and should be provided alongside canned and boxed goods, whenever possible.







In addition to their fundraising events held throughout the year, the Hunger Foundation helps local food pantries through the Stafford Community Garden at Lake Manahawkin. It is the hope of the Hunger Foundation that the Community Garden will promote involvement and increase awareness about the ever-growing need for hunger relief right here in our backyards. This grassroots project also provides fresh, locally grown produce to those in need of food assistance in the community.

While donations are necessary to support the garden, volunteers are vitally important as well. After all, what good are seeds and fertilizer if there is no one to plant the seeds and tend their growth? Volunteers of all ages are always welcome, from children to retirees. Hands-on learning about composting, rain barrel water conservation, and more takes place while volunteers enjoy fresh air, sunshine, and community connections.

Without diminishing the ultimate goal of feeding those in need, the Community Garden offers many recreational and educational opportunities for the community as well. Volunteering in the garden is a wonderful group activity for local community groups like the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and other clubs and civic organizations. Recreation programs, such as Spring Work Days, Fall Mulch Workshops, Fall Clean Ups, and summer camp day trips bring old and young together, actively building community.

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While the Hunger Foundation supports the Community Garden through various fundraising efforts throughout the year, the financial cost of the garden is kept low through the use of repurposed materials and, of course, the work of volunteers. It cannot be stressed enough that volunteers are the lifeblood of the Community Garden. By volunteering, people are not only helping people in need and giving back to the community, but they also learn valuable skills and enjoy the satisfaction of working for a larger purpose. Imagine the valuable lessons learned on a Saturday spent with your children planting, weeding, or watering at the Community Garden!

The Hunger Foundation of Southern Ocean is a volunteer-only organization that helps support the following local food pantries: Barnegat Food Pantry, Fr. Ken's Kitchen at St Mary's Parish, Greater Tuckerton Food Pantry, King of Kings Church, Lacey Food Bank Program, Ocean Community Church, St. Francis Community Center, and St. Stephen's Episcopal Church. The Foundation's vision? "A community where all of our neighbors are free from hunger."

*For more information on the Community Garden at Lake Manahawkin and how you can volunteer to help this effort or make a general donation, visit the Hunger Foundation of Southern Ocean website at [www.HFOSO.org](http://www.HFOSO.org) or call 609-789-5570.*

