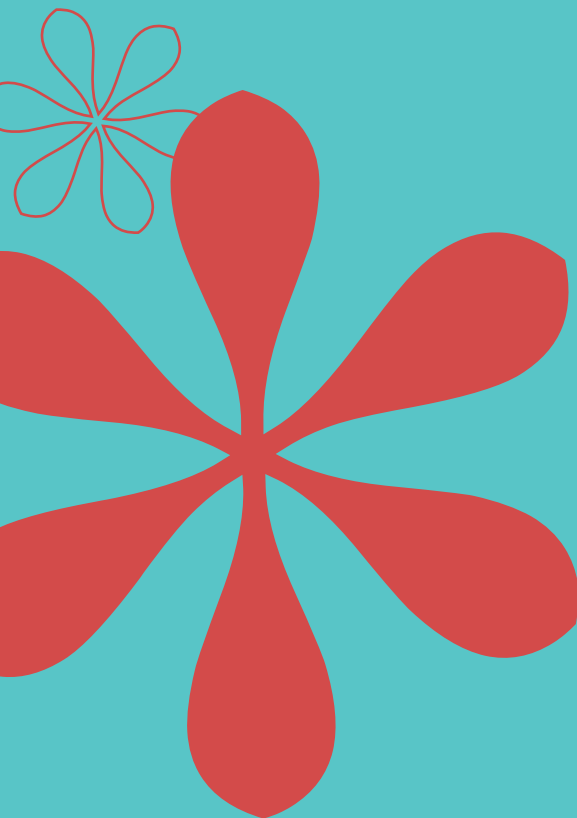




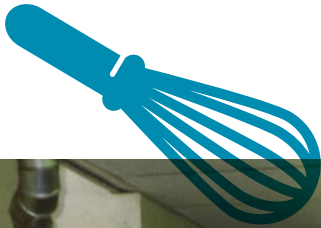
# A LEGACY OF HOPE

35 YEARS IN THE MAKING



ANNUAL REPORT  
FISCAL YEAR 2021







# Reflecting on Hope

## Dear Open Arms Family,

Open Arms of Minnesota delivers more than just delicious, nourishing meals to our neighbors with life-threatening illnesses. As we often like to say, we also deliver *hope*.

But at Open Arms, hope is not a stand-in for wishful thinking. The sobering reality is that hope makes its presence known in times of crisis. So, it's no surprise that the word carries considerable weight here: all of our clients are undergoing health emergencies, and you can't wish away a critical illness.

### Hope, at Open Arms, touches on something deeper than that.

This year, Open Arms celebrated its 35th birthday. Since 1986 – the year our founder Bill Rowe started delivering meals to those impacted by HIV/AIDS – we have continually expanded our services to include more illnesses and to cover more locations throughout Minnesota. Fiscal year 2021 was no exception. From nourishing those affected by COVID-19, to shipping meals to select individuals in greater Minnesota, Open Arms grew rapidly, breaking records in meal production and geographic reach.

While growth often forces organizations to focus on numbers over people, the hope that we deliver plays out on an individual level. This is why our meals are tailored to illnesses and client preferences. This is why we offer individualized nutrition education and counseling. This is why we add special touches, like delivering clients birthday cakes, offering optional nausea-relief care packs, and even providing meals to caregivers and dependents.

Like the individualized care of our services, the hope we deliver arrives as an opportunity for our clients to achieve personal goals and deal with their illness in ways that makes sense for them, not to fit a generic narrative. For some clients, it's the stress relief and convenience of our home-delivered meals that allow them to spend more time with their loved ones. For others, it's our emphasis on nutrition that inspires them to pursue healthy habits to cope with their illness. For clients like Lana, who is living with cancer, it's the simple yet critical reminder that they are not alone and that we are here for them:

*"I appreciate your deliveries so much. I have surgery coming soon, so I don't drive or go to the store. I feel all alone and it's so nice to have your meals. Thank you!"*

In this report for fiscal year 2021, learn how we *served* hope by phasing in our largest menu overhaul in nearly 15 years, *celebrated* hope by connecting with our community through unique events, and *shared* hope by remaining a reliable source of nutritious food, now two years into a pandemic. You'll also find a timeline called **35 Years of Hope**, which details some of our biggest milestones and achievements since 1986, as well as our thoughts on 10 incredible years of *growing* hope through the fresh, organic produce from the five urban gardens of our Open Farms program.

Thank you for helping us spread so much hope to our neighbors in 2021. When all was said and done, you helped us prepare and deliver 793,873 medically tailored meals to clients with life-threatening illnesses out of our South Minneapolis building and nearly 545,479 meals to elderly and homebound Minnesotans through our Kitchen of Opportunities program – an incredible increase of 45.5% and 76.7%, respectively, compared to last fiscal year!

We've said it before, and we'll say it again: everything we do is only possible because of your commitment to and passion for our mission. Thank you so much for being part of the Open Arms family. Because of you, we can continue delivering hope to our critically ill neighbors, year after year.



With love and gratitude,

Leah Hébert Welles  
Chief Executive Officer

Chandra Torgerson  
Chair, Board of Directors

# Serving Hope



**Open Arms began brainstorming, planning, and implementing our largest menu change in nearly 15 years, all to provide the best-possible meals for our clients.**

Open Arms of Minnesota has been preparing and delivering nourishing meals to our Minnesota neighbors experiencing a serious illness since 1986. Over the course of 35 years, we have continually sought to improve our meals, whether it's by increasing the quality of our ingredients or ensuring that our meals are tailored to our clients' illnesses through the efforts of our team of registered dietitians and chefs.

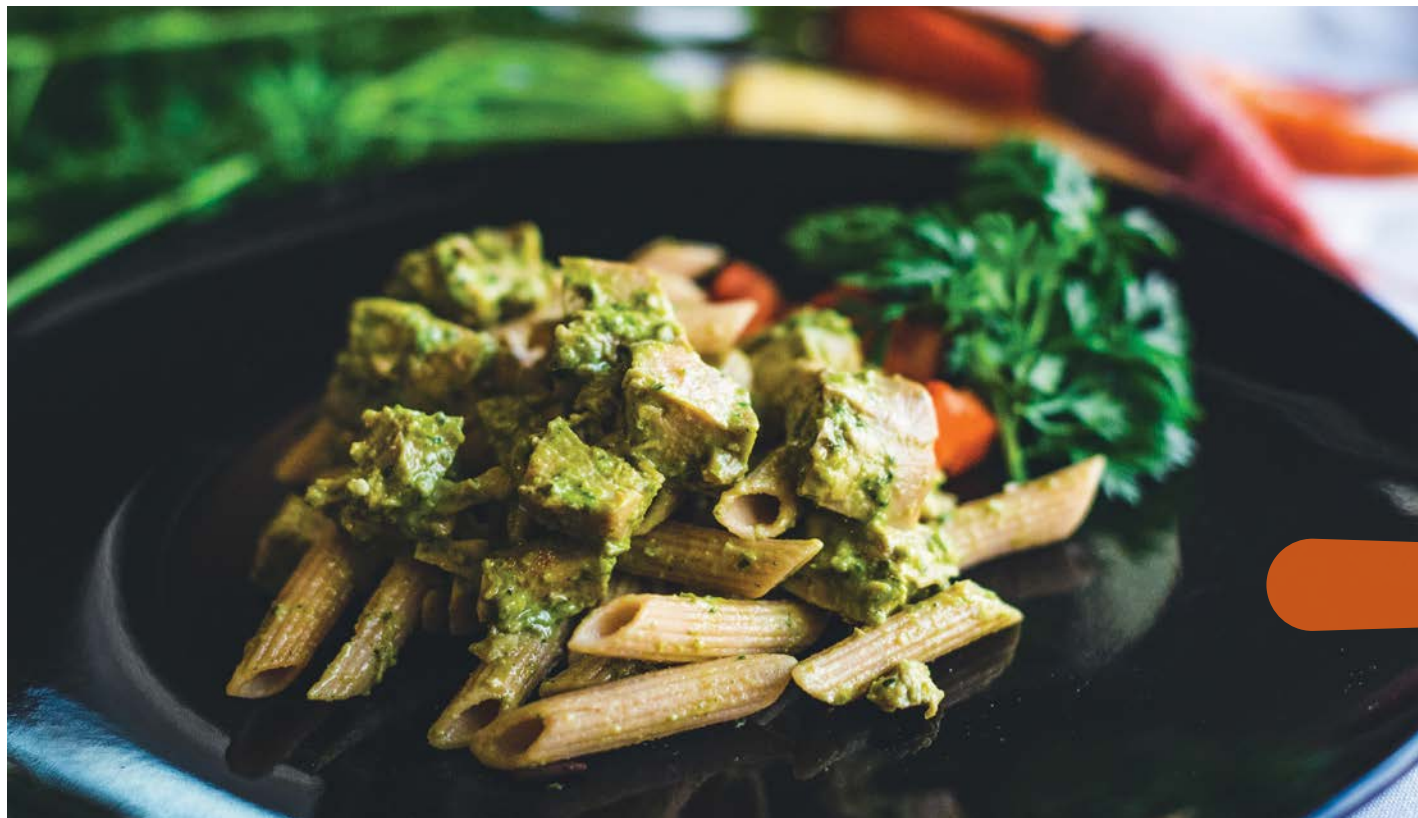
Our desire to continue improving our meals has not waned.

Months into the COVID-19 pandemic and amid delivering the greatest number of meals in Open Arms' history, we made the bold decision to start phasing in the largest menu overhaul that our organization has experienced since 2006, when Open Arms switched from serving daily hot meals to weekly frozen meals.

The goal? To offer our critically ill neighbors more entrée-style meals, more variety, and more choices in menu options. We call these menu options "lunch" and "dinner," and they not only helped re-introduce our "gluten-free, dairy-free" option, but also led to a host of delicious recipes for our clients to enjoy. In addition to classic Open Arms recipes and favorites, clients found tasty new creations and entrée-sized green salads. Our lunch menu alone featured roughly 175 new recipes!



**793,873**  
meals prepared  
and delivered



“

I'm so grateful that I tell everyone I know about how wonderful Open Arms is. I really love the new dishes. They're tasty and they wake up my taste buds.”

#### A CLIENT OF OPEN ARMS

This menu change would not be successful or possible without client feedback, which once again poured in soon after we implemented the change. “Your food is so good,” said a client living with breast cancer. “With the new menu changes, you’ve really expanded the ingredients you use and upped the variety.” Another client living with CHF raved about the switch: “I want to thank you for the new menu! The food is very good and better than the previous menu.”

The menu overhaul reaches ALL of our clients, too, including those living outside of our regular Twin Cities delivery zone. Our shipping program, which began last year as a pilot project, has grown to reach and nourish folks in greater Minnesota living with critical illnesses. While we certainly anticipated demand outside of the Twin Cities, the growth of our shipping program has been astounding! From August to June, the number of our shipping clients more than tripled.

And our menu overhaul is not done yet either, as we will continue phasing in changes in the coming year. But despite this massive change for our clients, we remain committed to our ongoing tradition of preparing nourishing meals that utilize whole ingredients, scratch-made cooking techniques, and fresh, organic produce and herbs from one of our five urban farm locations whenever possible. We hope that our clients can feel the love in their tummies!





# Sharing Hope



During a pandemic that put our medically vulnerable clients at risk, the Open Arms community worked together to remain a reliable source of nutritious food and unwavering support in their lives.

For Open Arms clients, navigating through the COVID-19 pandemic is especially challenging. Many of our clients have compromised immune systems and underlying health conditions that put them at heightened risk for complications from the virus, making it unsafe to leave their homes to buy food or connect with their support systems. During uncertain and isolating times, Open Arms took action to protect our community and remain a safe, reliable source of food for our neighbors with critical illnesses.

At Open Arms, we know that access to nutritious food is crucial for overall health, and COVID-19 added a new barrier to accessing that food. We experienced more requests for our services than ever before, not only from people with our qualifying diagnoses, but also from other immunocompromised folks and COVID-19-positive individuals in the community. And Open Arms was there to support them all. As a temporary exception, we provided meals to these additional community members who needed quarantining throughout FY 2021. In total, we served over 3,700 clients, caregivers, and dependents.

“

I can't image the potential impact COVID may have on individuals dealing with a life-threatening illness. As a past breast cancer patient, I know how critical and supportive receiving meals can be. Thank you for the work of Open Arms.”

## A DONOR OF OPEN ARMS

With more clients than ever depending on us for food, we knew how important it was to protect our community and avoid any interruptions in services, which could put some of our clients at risk of food insecurity. To keep our volunteers, clients, and staff safe, we continually adapted every aspect of our work to follow recommendations from the CDC and Minnesota Department of Health. This meant continuing our no-contact deliveries, capping volunteer groups to allow for safe distancing, mandating masks in our building, and becoming even more vigilant about sanitation throughout our facility, among many more adjustments.



**3,757**  
clients, caregivers  
& dependents served



**2,891** primary clients



**284** dependents



**582** caregivers

Volunteers and staff took every new change in stride, knowing we were protecting a medically vulnerable community of clients. Even with major adaptations in place, our incredible community remained positive throughout. Volunteers still laughed and danced in the kitchen, even six feet apart. Delivery drivers waved and engaged with clients from a safe distance. When we hosted a COVID-19 vaccine clinic in March 2021, healthcare professionals donated their time to provide over 380 eligible clients, volunteers, and essential workers with a vaccination. We are so grateful to everyone who helped us maintain our warm and welcoming spirit.

All of us at Open Arms are so proud of this community we build together, and this year we saw how resilient and supportive our community can be even in the most difficult times. With your help, we continued the work we've done for 35 years: supporting and nourishing our critically ill neighbors.



**6,600**  
total volunteers



**62,412**  
volunteer hours –  
the equivalent of 30  
full-time staff members



**786**  
volunteers attended  
new volunteer orientation



# 35 Years of Hope

## 1980s



**1986** Bill Rowe delivers meals to five people living with HIV/AIDS in the Twin Cities. He saw a need in the community and, together with the help of friends, he responded to it. Our work begins.

**Bill Rowe's food philosophy** was that clients should receive a variety of dishes. Even if they didn't love them all, they would see that we cared enough to send them something special.

## 1990s



**1992** We find our first official home at First Congregational Church in SE Minneapolis. Around this time, 100,000 total meals have been delivered.

**1994** In a year when AIDS has become the leading cause of death in the US for 25 to 44 year olds, we prepare and deliver meals for 45 people living with HIV/AIDS every day.

**1995** Kevin Winge joins our organization as Executive Director. Our daily clientele list expands to 97.



**1997** We purchase, renovate and move into a new facility at 1414 East Franklin Avenue.

**1997** Our organization hires the first paid staff members. Until 1997, all work was done on a volunteer basis.

**1998** We serve 429 clients with the help of 310 volunteers.

## 2000s

**2000** After attending the 13th International AIDS conference in Durban, South Africa, we launch the International Program, which ran for 15 years (it lives on today with our friends at Acacia Global).



**2005** Our board approves the decision to serve people living with other life-threatening illnesses, including breast cancer, MS and ALS.

**2006** We develop a flavor-neutral menu and Nausea Care Packs, targeted to better meet the needs of people with breast cancer.



**2006** Volunteers prepare and deliver our one-millionth meal in June 2006.

**2006** We start delivering one week's worth of meals at a time rather than daily.

**2007** We announce an \$8.1 million capital campaign to build a new facility to better serve the expanding client population.





# 2010s



**2010** We celebrate the opening of our new building at 2500 Bloomington Ave in Minneapolis. The 21,000-square-foot building features a state-of-the-art kitchen and community center.

**2010** With the help of roughly 2,000 volunteers a year, we serve just over 300 clients.

**2011** We begin the Open Farms program to grow our own organic produce and herbs. We also launch the Summer Meals program for youth in Minneapolis.



**2013** Leah Hébert Welles joins us as Executive Director. We deliver 2,000 meals each day.

**Did you know that clients have been getting birthday cakes and Thanksgiving dinners since our very beginning? Traditions that have lasted 35 years!**



**2016** Bill Rowe, our founder, passes away in February at 89.

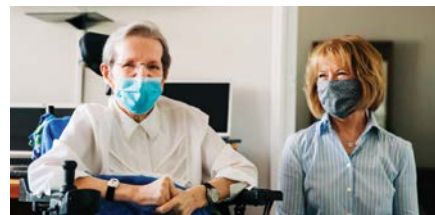


**2016** We celebrate our 30th anniversary and reach a milestone of 5 million total meals delivered.

**2017** Partnering with Meals On Wheels, we open and manage meal production at a new kitchen called Kitchen of Opportunities.

**2018** We expand qualifying illnesses to include COPD, CHF and ERSD.

# 2020s



**2020** We deliver our 7-millionth meal. The most recent million took less than two years to reach.

**2020** In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we partner with Ramsey County, Hennepin Health, and others to serve meals to those impacted by the disease.

**2020** Through grants and partnerships, we start shipping medically tailored meals to select individuals living in greater Minnesota.



**2021** We continue to serve those impacted by COVID-19 and host a vaccine clinic in our building, helping to vaccinate over 380 clients, caregivers, eligible volunteers, and essential workers.





# Growing Hope

**Ten years after planting our first seedling, the Open Farms program continues to provide hope and nourishment for our clients, environment, and community.**

In 2011, Open Arms staff and 200 volunteers planted our very first seedlings in an innovative effort to grow our own healthy and nutritious food for our critically ill neighbors. Ten years later, our five Open Farms locations grow an abundance of fresh, organic produce to help us nourish our clients, our environment, and our community.

## **GROWING HOPE FOR OUR NEIGHBORS**

At Open Arms, we connect with our clients through food. Planting, nurturing, and harvesting our own organic produce adds another personal touch to our meals, and our clients say they can feel the love we put into growing and preparing food. Kelly Wilson, our Open Farms Manager since 2014, emphasizes the importance of local produce. "Freshly harvested vegetables allowed to ripen in the garden have more nutrients than produce that was picked early for it to travel across the country. Not only are they healthier for you, but they also taste better."

Our chefs are always looking for new ways to incorporate these tasty herbs and produce into our medically tailored meals. We believe our food should not only nourish our clients but also taste delicious, and nothing beats the flavor of a fresh, locally grown tomato!

## **GROWING HOPE FOR OUR ENVIRONMENT**

Part of Open Arms' commitment to the community is protecting the environment around us. By using organic and sustainable agriculture practices, we are actively protecting our soil, reducing storm water runoff, and adding air-filtering plants into our ecosystem. We also compost from our farms to reduce overall waste.

Using local produce also reduces our carbon footprint. "We can harvest and deliver food to the Open Arms kitchen within a matter of minutes," says Kelly. This model not only saves on transportation and energy compared to transcontinental food deliveries, but also allows us to pour love back into our environment as we grow the food we need for our clients.



## GROWING HOPE FOR OUR COMMUNITIES

Volunteers have always been integral to Open Farms. Some of Kelly's proudest moments come from sharing our knowledge about food and sustainable agriculture with them. "I've had many novice gardeners come to volunteer with a willingness to learn and help as much as possible. It's so satisfying to hear their stories of how they then went on to build their first gardens and how their harvest is going. I feel honored to be able to play a role in passing on knowledge, especially when it comes to food and the land."

By connecting with volunteers and people in the communities surrounding our urban gardens, we hope to inspire further efforts to grow food locally, whether it's in a backyard or on a community farm. At Open Arms, we believe everyone deserves access to fresh and nutritious food, and local gardens can help improve that access.

To extend that access even further, we launched our Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program in 2015 to provide organic produce to volunteers, donors, and other people in our community. Purchasing a CSA share directly supports nutritious meals for our clients, while also nourishing our community with fresh food. Kelly even includes recipes for new ways to utilize the veggies and herbs in the CSA boxes!



**14,000**  
pounds of vegetables  
& herbs harvested



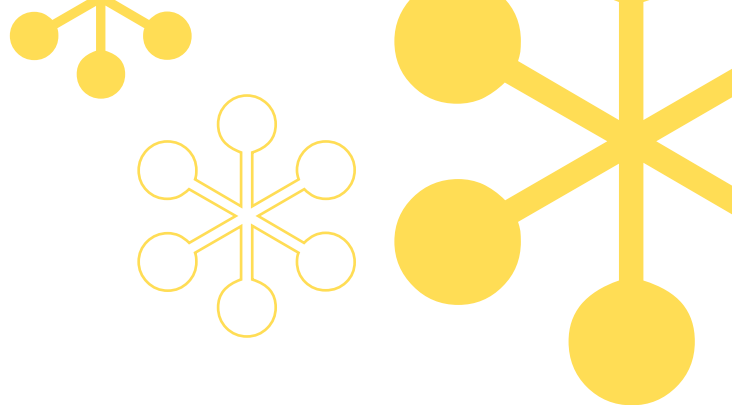
**5**  
Open Farms locations



Over the past 10 years, the Open Farms program has helped us not only nourish our clients, but also nurture the communities around us. We are so grateful to the volunteers, interns, and staff who put so much love into our gardens. **We could not have done this without you!**



# Celebrating Hope



*Lunch & Learn*

COVID-19 couldn't keep our community from celebrating Open Arms' amazing achievements over the last 35 years. Our staff worked hard to create new ways to connect and reimagine classic events that brought hope to our community.

Months into the COVID-19 pandemic, Open Arms, like many organizations, craved connection with our community. However, because we serve Minnesotans who may be at high risk for COVID-related complications, safety was and continues to be our priority. Our team quickly pivoted to implement new and creative events that were safe for all members of our community to participate in.

**LUNCH & LEARN** was a livestream series created to connect and update our community on Open Arms. The six-part series provided a behind-the-scenes snapshot of nearly every aspect of our operations, from veggie-growing tips at our Open Farms to an exclusive peek inside our state-of-the-art kitchen.

**TALKIN' TURKEY**, hosted by *Mpls.St.Paul Magazine's* Stephanie March, was a new virtual event that fell on Give to the Max Day 2020. The evening featured appearances from six award-winning Twin Cities chefs, including Ann Kim (Young Joni) and Gavin Kaysen (Spoon and Stable), and helped bring in over \$40,000.



*Lunch & Learn*







Turkey Drive



Moveable Feast

As we approached and entered our 35th year of nourishing our neighbors, there were many Open Arms events that our community wanted to see return. Our staff once again put on their thinking caps and reimagined these classic Open Arms events in order to keep our community safe.

**POP-UP DINNERS**, historically extravagant, multi-course feasts curated and cooked by our talented team of chefs, returned as **Pop-Up Dinners To Go**. Instead of hosting dinners in our building, our community picked up to-go meal kits for two, with easy-to-follow reheating and plating instructions.

**TURKEY DRIVE** was essential for our organization, as we prepared to deliver more Thanksgiving meals to our clients than ever before in our history. Our community stepped up and helped us break records by raising more than \$111,000 for turkey dinners throughout the month of November. The number of people who set up peer-to-peer **Turkey Drive** fundraising pages tripled from the previous year!

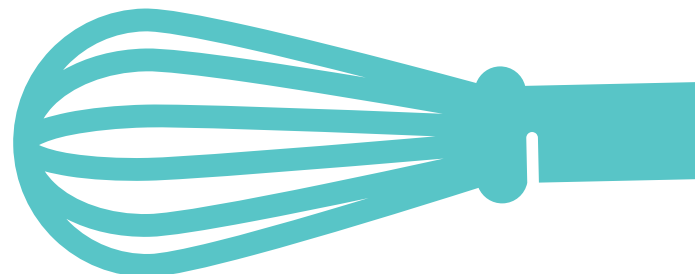
“

It is Thanksgiving Day, and a very nice lady just brought me a wonderful dinner to celebrate. I am very grateful that you ALL are so kind to make our meals so good and then deliver them to us!”

A CLIENT OF OPEN ARMS

**HOLIDAY EVENTS:** We couldn't let COVID-19 interrupt the joys of Thanksgiving and the holidays at Open Arms! Our **Pie Shoppe** and **Holiday Treats** events were reconfigured under a drive-thru format to safely provide our delicious pies and holiday treats to our community. We also put a twist on our **Cookie-Decorating Class** with a livestream event led by our lead baker Kari and a cookie-decorating kit that included cookie dough (made by our bakers), icing, sprinkles, and even a commemorative cookie “stamp.

**MOVEABLE FEAST**, our flagship event, made its triumphant return in 2021! While COVID-19 caused us to cancel 2020's gala for the first time in its 16-year history, **Moveable Feast** returned in 2021 as a livestream and online auction – '80s-themed to honor our founding in 1986. We partnered with over 20 local restaurants to allow supporters to purchase either take-home meal kits from their restaurant of choice or a food truck experience, in which a restaurant parked their food truck in the ticket holder's driveway! Participants enjoyed their delicious feasts while livestreaming our Moveable Feast program. Together, we raised \$280,000 to support our critically ill neighbors!



# Multiplying Hope



In 2021, many corporate and community partners stepped up in a variety of ways to multiply the hope felt across our community.

## Some Examples:

**CARGILL** A longtime partner in our efforts to nourish our neighbors, Cargill provided a match gift on **Give to the Max Day 2020** to encourage donors to support our annual **YESvember** campaign. Through their dollar-for-dollar match, Cargill doubled the donations of new and returning donors, and helped set an organizational record for funds raised through the annual Minnesotan giving holiday. Funds directly supported the preparation and delivery of nearly 3,800 abundant Thanksgiving dinners to clients and their loved ones impacted by life-threatening illnesses in November 2020.



## **RICHARD M. SCHULZE FAMILY FOUNDATION**

Open Arms is a proud, longstanding partner of the Richard M. Schulze Family Foundation. As Open Arms expanded to serve more vulnerable neighbors than ever before during the pandemic, the Schulze Family Foundation maintained its steadfast commitment to transformational change within our community by investing in education, health, and human service agencies meeting urgent and changing community needs. With a deepened investment of \$125,000 to support our operations, the Schulze Family Foundation enabled the delivery of thousands of medically tailored meals to more than 3,700 clients, caregivers, and dependent children across the Twin Cities and in greater Minnesota.

**3M** At Open Arms, we benefit from the talents, energy, and compassion of thousands of community and corporate volunteers each year. For years, 3M has been a dedicated and reliable volunteerism partner in our kitchen and at our urban farms, building team camaraderie within their departments and across teams while chopping sweet potatoes and weeding vegetable gardens. In 2021, through the 3M Foundation's Volunteer Match Program, 3M multiplied the hope and impact of over 330 employee service hours within our organization by matching volunteer time with generous monetary contributions to support both our operations and the delivery of more than 580 medically tailored meals.



**3,827**  
total donors

Total Individual Donors  
**3,479**



Returning	1,810
New	1,669

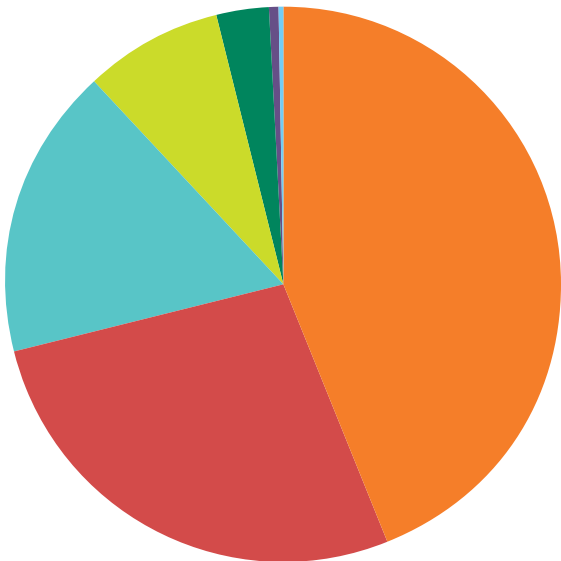
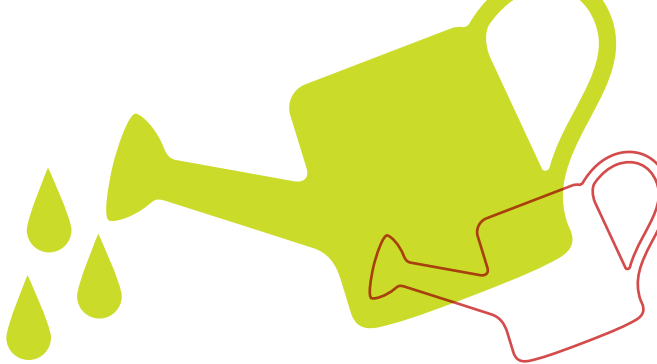
Total Institutional Donors  
**348**



Returning	173
New	175

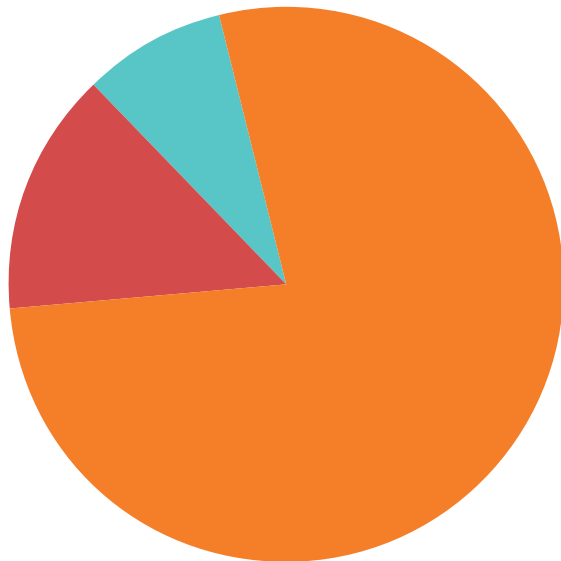


# Counting on Hope



Revenue & Support  
**\$7,988,981**

Government	44%
Service Contracts	27%
Contributions	17%
Capital Campaign Contributions	8%
Special Events	3%
Earned Income	<1%
In-Kind Donations	<1%

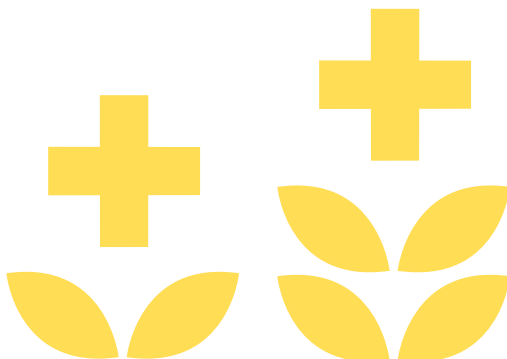


Expenses  
**\$7,549,123**

Program Services	85%
Fundraising	11%
Management and General	4%

For more information on our  
2021 financials, please contact:

Leah Hébert Welles, Chief Executive Officer  
612-767-7344, [leah@openarmsmn.org](mailto:leah@openarmsmn.org)





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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

For 35 years, Open Arms of Minnesota has been delivering hope to critically ill Minnesotans and their families in need.

1986 • • • • • 2003 • • • • • 2021

10,000  
meals delivered

88,327  
meals delivered

793,873  
meals delivered

9+ Million  
total meals delivered

Open Arms would like to thank the following friends for  
their time and effort to make this Annual Report possible:

Eight Moon™ | Sharp Impressions