

# 2020 Impact Report



**wholesome  
wave**



# Dear Supporters and Friends,

The year 2020 was defined by devastating loss and political and social unrest. It gave us the opportunity to evaluate our practices and shift how we approach our work. With the guidance of new leadership, we paused to look deeper at the structures that drive the racial inequities that became more apparent. We began to talk about what was missing from the larger conversation around Nutrition Insecurity and our role as an innovator of solutions that promise long-term sustainable system change, maintaining our vision of a world where everyone can afford to eat healthily.

COVID-19 is the worst public health crisis in the United States in a century, with over 525,000 dead, 30 million people infected, staggering unemployment, and countless small business bankruptcies. Most distressing: the hospitalization and death rates in communities of color and poverty are two to three times the rate in our country. Four of the top five drivers creating these disparities are obesity, diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease - all diseases that are impacted by access to nutritious food and are most prevalent in communities of color and poverty.

Against the backdrop of all of these wildly disruptive events, Wholesome Wave, an organization that will turn 14 years old this year, was able to pivot through all the disruptions and stay on point with some very bold initiatives with support from our donors. Here are some of our accomplishments:

- First, we committed to addressing persistent structural inequities by undertaking a rigorous, evidence-based, data-driven series of workshops to inform our work internally and externally, with a goal being to embed an equity-first framework within our organizational culture. We are actively diversifying our staff, board, and community partners to provide much-needed perspectives on our culture, work, and impact.
- Before the end of the year, we reached nearly 100,000 low-income Los Angelenos and their family members with over \$21.75 million in healthy groceries, including fruits and vegetables, in partnership with the Public Health Institute.
- Through one program alone, we made over 4.5 million servings of fruits and vegetables available to low-income people and families in a dozen communities in partnership with the wellness brand WW (formerly Weight Watchers).
- We made significant progress through the National Produce Prescription Collaborative, working with members of Congress to forge a future where doctors and clinics can prescribe fruits and vegetables to those who can't afford the healthy diet they need to avoid diet-related diseases.
- Inspired by Newman's Own, an innovative idea connecting food and philanthropy created by Wholesome Wave's co-founder Michel Nischan's late partner, Paul Newman, he launched Wholesome Crave, a plant-based soup company that will support and convert proceeds into fruits and vegetables for people and families struggling with poverty and nutrition insecurity.

**A crisis often presents an opportunity, and COVID-19 gives us the chance to lead a bold and coordinated effort to reverse the tide of diet-related disease that is ravaging the most marginalized among us. It is simply not right that access to healthy food is determined by race, ethnicity, or income. We have a rare moment when we can begin to change that in a profoundly significant way. The time to act is now.**

**Wholesome Wave's 2021 impact vision is an ambitious one, and necessarily so because there is so much at stake—the health and wellbeing of our nation's most vulnerable citizens. Our journey to achieving this vision is informed by evidence-based programs and practices that measure our work's impact to determine diet improvements, decrease healthcare costs, increase consumption of fruits and vegetables, and affect positive behavior change. These outcomes are essential for us to advocate for policies that increase funding for nutrition incentive programs at the state and national levels.**

**The heart and soul and commitment to the communities we serve can be summed up in our FED Principle: fidelity, working with communities to co-create impactful programs informed by their wisdom; equity, increasing access to healthy produce for our most vulnerable citizens; and dignity, honoring all we serve through the belief that they are inherently worthy of healthy produce and wellbeing. Keeping these principles at the center of our work, we seek to generate replicable, equitable, community-wide transformation.**

**The late Robert Kennedy articulated the power of collective action beautifully with an apt metaphor that captures our organization's spirit when he said:**

**"Each time a person stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, they send for a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance."**

**Let us continue to harness food and equity's real power as we look toward 2021 with a sense of renewed hope and conviction and let us create those ripples of hope that make waves, the kind that topples nutrition insecurity and all its causes. That is a vision worth all our energy!**

**All my best,**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ben Perkins', written in a cursive style.

**Ben Perkins, CEO**



Wholesome Wave Programs

delivered over **\$2 Million** food incentives to **38,000** food and nutrition insecure individuals.

**8.2 Million**

servings of fruit & vegetables across the United States.



WW partnered with clinical and health care partners to design and deploy innovative FVRx programs in vulnerable communities, focusing on patients with type-2 diabetes and working with maternal and pediatric populations.

We reached participants in



**19 states**

spanning the United states in Urban, Suburban and Rural communities.

Wholesome Wave had

**7**

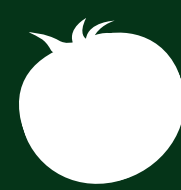
FVRx Programs

**64%**

of Wholesome Wave Programs are Produce Prescription (FVRx). These programs distributed

**WHY** are FVRx programs so important?

The data from our Ohio program showed there was an average overall drop of **.5** in A1C, an average systolic BP drop of **22.3**, an average diastolic BP drop of **14.2**, and an average drop in BMI of **4.9!**



**1.8 million**



servings of Fruits & Vegetables.

In the midst of COVID-19, Wholesome Wave made significant progress advancing our overarching policy goal to embed Produce Rx in health policy. We believe all people, regardless of income, should be able to feed their families well to prevent or mitigate diet-related diseases. Wholesome Wave founded the National Produce Prescription Collaborative to affect systems change so our neighbors have the resources they need to be and stay healthy.



**Case Study: Covid Relief**

In response to the pandemic, Wholesome Wave led an emergency program to deliver **\$21.75 million** in healthy food to low-income Angelenos at a time when they needed it most!

**29,500** households and

**100,000** participants reached



**\$21.75 Million**

total distributed through the program



# 2020 Program Summaries

## **Hartford, CT FVRx Program:**

In 2020, Wholesome Wave completed a Produce Prescription Program in Hartford, CT, working with Hartford Hospital and CTown Grocery Store. Hartford Hospital funded the program to reach 330 patients with uncontrolled diabetes, who were patients of 2 Hartford Hospital clinics - the Adult Primary Care Clinic and the Diabetes LifeCare clinic. The program was successfully modified in March 2020 to ensure that all incentives would reach the participants during the pandemic. The results were great - 97% of all incentives were delivered, 91% of incentives were redeemed (over \$114,000 in all!). By the end of the program, 92% of participants were less worried about having enough food, and 70% of participants understood the benefits of good nutrition - compared to 28% before the start of the program.

## **Corpus Christi, TX FVRx Program:**

Wholesome Wave worked with Methodist Healthcare Ministries and Vitamix Foundation to develop a Produce Prescription Program in Corpus Christi to reach 2 groups - low-income pediatric patients at risk for obesity and patients of a maternal health clinic in their 1st or 2nd trimester of pregnancy. Targeting and program design phases were completed in 2019 and the program was launched in early 2020 and \$60 per month for fruits & vegetables was delivered to participants using a reloadable Walmart Gift card. Using this technology for incentive delivery allowed the program to continue as planned through the pandemic without issue. The pediatric group, 500 patients, and their families completed the program in February 2021. The maternal health group, 100 pregnant women, and their families will complete the program in May 2021. We've seen strong redemptions across the two groups and have had positive feedback from the clinics as well as patients. We are looking forward to the final evaluation of this program to complete in summer 2021.

## **WW Good**

In December 2019, WW Good and Wholesome Wave launched Impact 2020 which included a Depth and a Scale program in each of the nine local communities. Leveraging Wholesome Wave's network of partners, together they identified 15 organizations within the nine cities, to help implement a program which served WW Good's intended target groups. Wholesome Wave worked with partners to utilize multiple incentive solutions that would best suit their customers including retail cards, vouchers, and an app with at home delivery. WW Good, WW International's 501(c)3 foundation, set out to support local communities across the nation in conjunction with a nine-city arena wellness tour. The goal was to infuse each of the nine local communities with two types of programs to provide nutrition insecure individuals with access to affordable fruits and vegetables. The first program provided participants with pre-existing health concerns with a 6 month program and the second program provided participants with a month's worth of fresh fruits and vegetables.

### **Navajo Nation FVRx Consulting:**

Wholesome Wave has been consulting with COPE (Community Outreach & Patient Empowerment), an organization that works directly with the Navajo Nation, which spreads geographically across parts of Arizona and New Mexico. Wholesome Wave has worked with the COPE team for 5 years helping to bring best practices and innovation to the delivery of a Produce Prescription Program through tribal healthcare clinics. There is much need in the Navajo Nation, and also many challenges with the delivery of this program. Distances between clinics /trading posts/grocery stores and the participants are in some cases vast and produce supply chains are limited. Wholesome Wave has been working with COPE to determine a new technology solution to ease the variables of the program and make it easier for participants as well as COPE staff and clinical staff to manage the program. The new technology is expected to be tested in Spring 2021 with hopes for a full rollout in the summer. We are excited to be helping to refine this work to ensure ease of participation for this population.

### **Lake Los Angeles**

In 2019/2020 we launched and completed a 9-month program funded by Once Upon a Farm. The program participants in Lake Los Angeles benefited from \$540 of fruits and vegetable incentives loaded on a retail card so they could shop for produce for their family. These families also received a 6-session series of nutrition education curriculum providing them with simple ideas on how to change purchasing and consumption of fruits and vegetables. The results are incredibly encouraging. Families spent on average \$52.58 per month of their \$60 incentive with 85% consistently redeeming their incentives, qualifying them for the next monthly incentive reload. There was a marked increase in vegetable consumption from 45% at baseline to 90% at program end (3-4 cups per day) and notable decreases in the drinking of soda from 66% at baseline to 21% at program end and decrease in consumption of unhealthy foods from 76% at baseline to 24% at program end.

**Many thanks to these significant donors as well as all of the individuals who supported Wholesome Wave in 2020!**

**WW (formerly Weight Watchers), Naked, Fink Family Foundation, Rachael Ray/Yum-O Foundation, Share Our Strength, Newman's Own Foundation, Doe Family Foundation, Fresh Sound Foundation, Seattle Foundation, Chicago Community Foundation, Katherine John Murphy Foundation, Wholesome Crave, The Wilkinson Family**