



New Jersey Nonprofit Corporation  
1330 Hwy. 70 Whiting NJ 08759

Congressman C. Smith  
4573 S. Broad St.  
Hamilton NJ 08620

Congressman Smith,

As you know, Inspire-NJ has operated food pantries in the Ocean County area for 10 years. We have recently opened a location in the Whiting / Manchester area of Ocean County, NJ. There are 25 senior communities in Manchester/ Whiting area alone. This makes the area first in senior population in the County and the State of New Jersey. Within a 6-mile radius of our newest location, there are over 22,000 seniors of which 89% are deemed low income, in need residents. Many of these seniors have no ability to come to the food pantry. Most no longer drive or they have significant limitations. With that in mind we have begun the process of bringing fresh, nutritious food directly to their communities. We will accomplish this by bringing in a free, mobile, farmers market. In our area there is one "Mobile Pantry" and it provides a very limited amount of food, very little which is fresh. The concept of a free, mobile farmers market is brand new for the east coast and we would be the first. The only other state that offers a similar program is California, but they charge the client for the products, we will not.

The baby boomer generation is still booming in their golden years. And that's great for the healthy older adults who can cover their healthcare and living costs.

Mobile farmers' markets offer a unique and effective approach to helping seniors who are facing food insecurity. They mitigate some of the physical, psychological, and financial burdens that a lot of seniors' face. The idea is simple really: to bring healthy food right to where seniors live.

Poor mobility and lack of transportation are some of the biggest reasons why many seniors fall into food insecurity.

Most of us have the luxury of being able to hop in our cars and head to the store whenever we want. But of course, when we get older it gets harder and harder to get around. And that can be a result of several reasons.

Owning a vehicle is out of reach for a lot of seniors, let alone paying for gas – and who can afford gas these days anyway? For those that do own a vehicle and can still drive, many know that at some point they won't be able to drive anymore.

For some, that loss of independence is devastating. What if they don't have a family member who can help them and as you know, public transportation is not an option in our area.

Imagine being in your 70s, living on your own, and having to use a walker to get around. You have COPD so you need to carry a cumbersome oxygen tank with you. Plus, you haven't owned a car for several years now.

Now imagine the easiest way for you to get groceries is by asking a neighbor for a ride knowing they are also in a similar situation. This must be a devastating, psychological position for our seniors.

Unfortunately, this is the reality for millions of Americans. But a mobile farmers market will offer seniors a much welcome break from the daunting task of having to make it to the grocery store and back safely.

A mobile farmers' market does the hard work for the seniors, so they don't have to. And that's how it should be.

Most seniors are on a fixed budget. And for some of them, there's hardly enough money to pay the bills and put food on the table. So, what happens when there's little money left for food?

Well, it means surviving on the cheapest food they can get. And that usually comes down to processed foods, which aren't necessarily the healthiest.

Most seniors who live below the poverty line rely on social assistance programs as their main source of income. Thankfully SNAP is one such program that helps seniors dealing with food insecurity to access affordable food. But the fact is that three out of five eligible seniors aren't even taking advantage of SNAP. For those that are forced to choose between healthy food and medication, using SNAP benefits could make a world of difference. While we are onsite at the communities, we will have a counselor with us who will help our seniors to apply for the benefits they qualify for.

Mobile farmers' markets are good tools for getting lower-income seniors to eat healthy again. They'll be less likely to have to choose between putting food on their table and taking much-needed medication.

Because mobile farmers' markets are community-driven, they are amazing at bringing the community together. For some seniors, simply attending a weekly farmers' market, and seeing friendly, familiar faces could be their only regular social interaction. This is especially true for those who live alone, and who want to do so for as long as possible.

Since this mobile market will be run by our community organization, it's a great way for us to "check-in" on local residents that we know are in-

need. We can make sure they're happy and healthy and provide additional help if needed.

This program will also grow to be a social outing for them. We have seen over the years that as our clients shopped in our pantry, friendships grew. As they used the facility, the clients were swapping recipes and sharing stories with each other.

Enabling seniors to stay happy and healthy for as long as possible is especially important these days. With an increasingly aging population in the US, we need to find practical ways to keep seniors healthy and in their own homes. Otherwise, our healthcare system won't be able to keep up.

Mobile farmers' markets help ease the burden of healthy food access for seniors. This in part allows them to stay independent and, in their homes, longer. And the inclusive environment of mobile markets helps to reduce senior isolation.

Of course, the biggest reason why mobile markets are so good at increasing food access is to make people healthier. And they can do this for both mind and body. Now, we've already mentioned the social benefits, but they can help in so many other ways too.

Cooking is like riding a bike. Once you've learned how to and you've nailed the basics, you're good for life.

And so, it's not that seniors can't cook. It's that some of them can't access or afford the foods that they've been cooking their whole lives. But, if you can make food affordable and accessible, then you give them their independence back.

There's no doubt that eating healthy and even the act of cooking can improve your mental health. Activities like cooking require a lot of brainpower, fine motor skills, and help to keep seniors' minds sharp.

Familiar smells and tastes bring back happy memories of family gatherings gone by. This can really help people living with dementia.

Caregivers of those with dementia can encourage and help seniors to cook and bake again. These activities are beneficial for keeping all five of our senses intact and for easing the grip that dementia can have.

Dementia can cause people to feel anxious, depressed, and irritable. Along with stimulating the senses, which can be dulled or lost as a result of dementia, cooking and baking can improve their moods and increase relaxation.

It's a practical form of therapy that you can encourage and remind people of when you visit seniors' residences. Not to mention that homemade meals are usually healthier than store-bought or restaurant meals.

Mobile farmers' markets offer seniors a chance to access the freshest produce available. That's because they can offer them local produce that's been picked at its peak. For example, it's one of the ways that local farms can have a positive impact on the local senior population.

As four out of every five seniors already have at least one chronic disease, improving nutrition however you can is vital.

Proper nutrition is the first step in reducing the shocking rate of chronic disease in our country. And it's also a practical measure in preventing chronic conditions from getting worse – which is something that many seniors can't afford.

Seniors, especially those experiencing food insecurity, are some of our most vulnerable citizens. And because seniors will make up more and more of the population in the coming years we need to find solutions now.

Keeping seniors in their homes for as long as possible is not only better for the individual, but it's also a win for the healthcare system. Close to 90% of seniors want to stay in their own homes, and they'll be much healthier and happier if they can do just that.

A mobile farmers' market will make it far easier for seniors to get the nutritious foods that they need to maintain their health. By making it physically easier for seniors to enjoy healthy food, we will have removed one of their biggest barriers to food access.

The mental, physical, and financial benefits that a mobile market can offer make it a smart way to help the seniors in our community. We also will be implementing cooking demos and nutrition education offer even more ways for us to connect with community members and help meet their needs.

Inspire-NJ has had the absolute privilege to work with all the local farms and organizations like Farmers Against Hunger for the last decade. Our ability to procure fresh produce will never be an issue. We are actually very close to the center of all the Ocean County farms and they have all embraced our mission.

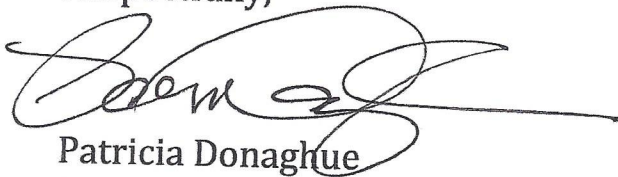
We have found a vehicle that will help us accomplish all we are hoping to do. It can showcase all our local produce. The truck is very reminiscent of the produce trucks that I myself grew up with. I can guarantee the people we will be serving will also have memories of similar trucks in their childhood neighborhoods. It also has enough refrigerated space to include fresh dairy, eggs etc. for distribution. There is an equal amount of freezer space for protein (meat, fish) and a heated space for hot meals for those in need. And all dry goods will be set up alongside the mobile truck.

The truck will be in service 4 days a week, ensuring that we can be onsite at every community once every 10 days. This project will be 100% volunteer staffed. It will also be one of the training opportunities for our employment skills training program for our post-secondary autistic students. The students will be on hand when we go to the farms for picking the produce and they will be trained on the merchandising of all the products. They will also be trained in the customer service aspects of the program.

Providing service this way is far more dignified and respectful. Our seniors are not used to asking for help, we have an obligation to make it as comfortable for them as possible.

As you can no doubt tell by the length of this proposal, we are incredibly passionate about the prospect of this project. Any help your office can afford us will be greatly appreciated!

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patricia Donaghue', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Patricia Donaghue

Pres/CEO

Inspire-NJ a New Jersey Nonprofit Corporation  
(908)278-6450

# COMPASS 82

04/22/2022

Congressman Christopher H. Smith  
4573 S Broad Street  
Hamilton Township, NJ 08620

Dear Congressman Smith:

On behalf of Compass 82, please accept this letter of support for Inspire-NJ in their application for funding a Mobile Farmer's Market for the aging population in Ocean County.

Over the past nine years, we have known and partnered with Inspire-NJ to assist and serve residents, especially seniors, in Ocean County navigate their way through many challenges including, their recovery from Hurricane Sandy, on-going food insecurity issues and most recently, the huge effects and rippling fallout from Covid-19 that has greatly impacted our senior community's overall well-being and quality of life.

Inspire-NJ's Mobile Farmer's Market will provide a unique and effective way to help seniors, especially those on a fixed income, who are facing food insecurity. Lack of transportation and financial resources are two of the largest contributing factors why many seniors fall into food insecurity and often causes them to look for low cost and unhealthy options.

Inspire-NJ's ability to bring affordable healthy foods right into the senior communities via the Mobile Farmer's Market, will help to mitigate the financial and mobility challenges that many are burdened with and support seniors overall nutrition and health.

We enthusiastically support Inspire-NJ in their application for funding a Mobile Farmer's Market and look forward to our continued collaboration that will ultimately provide Ocean County seniors with a pathway for a better and healthier quality of life.

Sincerely,

*Susan Marticek*

Susan Marticek  
Executive Director



Joseph H. Vicari  
Commissioner

Maria La Face  
Director



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P.O. Box 2191  
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April 22, 2022

The Honorable Christopher H. Smith  
4573 S Broad Street  
Hamilton Township, NJ 08620

Dear Congressman Smith,

The Ocean County Office of Senior Services is pleased to support Inspire - NJ in their request to fund a mobile farmers' market for the older adults in Ocean County.

The number of older adults, disabled and low income residents facing food insecurity has increased substantially over the years and more so post COVID-19. A growing number of Ocean County residents rely on food pantry support to meet their nutritional needs. This is particularly true for older adults and disabled residents with fixed incomes, such as Social Security Retirement and/or Disability Benefits, who find their own pantries bare before their next check arrives. The mobile farmers' market offered by Inspire - NJ will help to meet the growing needs of our most vulnerable residents and is essential to their overall health & well-being.

Ocean County Office of Senior Services and Inspire - NJ have impacted the lives of many of our most vulnerable residents. We look forward to a continued partnership aimed at improving the quality of life for older adults and their caregivers.

Given the unique needs of this population we are pleased to partner with Inspire - NJ and fully support their request for funding.

Warm regards,

  
Maria La Face, Director  
Ocean County Office of Senior Services

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