

“Harvesting love change people’s lives!”



Rachel (right) and her volunteers harvest and donate thousands of pounds of fresh produce

When Rachel Landis saw unpicked fruit on trees in her community falling to the ground and left to rot, she couldn’t help but think of all the people unable to afford nutritious food for their families. *Someone needs to do something*, Rachel thought. Taking up the challenge, she founded a nonprofit to get hungry people the food they need!

As Rachel Landis pedaled her bicycle to work one sunny day in 2017, she felt something squishing under her tires. Looking at the ground, she couldn’t believe how many apples had fallen from trees and were rotting away. She also noticed there were lots more apples, plus plums and pears, that would soon fall off branches to wither.

What a waste! she thought.

Rachel knew a lot of people would love to have that fruit. There were many families all around Durango, Colorado, who couldn’t afford nutritious food, and the local pantry typically offered packaged, processed goods instead of healthy treats like apples.

Suddenly, Rachel flashed on Durango’s annual Apple Days Festival, the one day a year when people in the community would gather and harvest extra fruit from orchards and press it into juice in the town park.

There’s power in community! Rachel thought. *Maybe we can come together to get the excess fruits and vegetables to people who need them.*

Fruits, veggies and love

Rachel hopped in her car and drove to thrift stores. She bought old orchard ladders, which she strapped to the top of her vehicle. Then she started knocking on doors.

“Do you have extra fruit I can harvest from your tree for people in need?” she’d ask.

The answer, invariably, was yes. Rachel discovered her neighbors hated to waste food, plus fruit attracts bears that will break down fences to feast.

With her neighbors on board, Rachel founded The Good Food Collective (GoodFoodCollective.org)



Produce harvested by the Good Food Collective is delivered to area food pantries and assistance programs

and kindness can truly



Even kids love to help collect the fruit



Rachel (center) and team also make apple chips for a healthy snack



Vegetables are also harvested and donated

nonprofit. She put out a plea to area tree owners to sign up online to have their excess fruit collected. While she encouraged them to harvest their own fruit, twice a week, Rachel began taking volunteers to pick fruit from registered trees. They then sorted and donated high-quality fruit to food pantries and other food-assistance providers across five counties. Local farmers and ranchers, many of whom were living just above the poverty line, could collect bins of lower-quality fruit to feed to their farm animals.

The Good Food Collective grew quickly, with Rachel recruiting volunteers from partner organizations, as well as the community at large.

Their efforts have paid off.

Feeding bellies and hearts

Volunteers collected loads of apples, as well as apricots, plums, cherries and pears. They'd also do emergency vegetable harvests to help farmers before storms could destroy crops. In gratitude, the farmers would donate their leftovers.

In 2022 alone, The Good Food Collective donated

over 18,000 pounds of food to food-assistance programs. They also started a produce prescription program for local doctors; if patients who don't have enough food to feed themselves suffer from diet-

related diseases such as type 2 diabetes or hypertension, their doctor can prescribe produce so they can get a voucher for fruit and vegetables.

Additionally, The Good Food Collective buys apples from farmers, dehydrates them and sells "Fruit for Good Apple Chips" at discounted rates to schools and hunger-relief entities to help provide healthy options year-round. The nonprofit also created a Food Pantry Assistance Grant

that has funded around \$13 million to food-assistance providers across Colorado to purchase food from local farmers.

Our families are so excited! Asparagus is quite the luxury item. We've never had it before, and they are thrilled to have something so fresh and delicious to feed to their children, shared the manager of one food pantry.

Rachel, 41, is happy to share resources with anyone who wants to start a fruit gleaning program in their own community.

"There's something in me that cannot function unless I am doing something right for the greater good and to make the world a better place. And from our success, it's clear I am not alone," she says. "We can all get behind food. We all love and need it. Food is a win for everyone."

—Jen Reeder

"I feel good doing something for the greater good, and it's clear I am not alone"

3 ways to reduce food waste!

1 Sign up for a 'surprise'

Download the Too Good To Go app to see all the places in your area that have a surplus of food. At one-third of the cost, you can pick up a "surprise bag" of unsold food that would otherwise go bad. Grab a bag and enjoy favorites from local restaurants, cafés and grocery stores.

2 Buy 'imperfect' produce

To save food with minor flaws, visit ImperfectFoods.com and sign up to receive a box each week of produce that's unwanted, too small, too big or too crooked for stores. Giving a home to "ugly" fruits and veggies that have the same nutritional value helps reduce waste.

3 Share with neighbors

The OLIO app connects neighbors all over the world to share more and waste less. Download the app and make a post when you have produce, canned goods or groceries to give away safely using the no-contact pick-up feature.



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