



## **Gleaners Community Food Bank Reveals *Fresh! by Gleaners*: A Retail-Like Approach to Emergency Food Services to Increase Access to Fresh, Nutritious Foods**

**DETROIT, May 7, 2024**—Gleaners Community Food Bank today introduced *Fresh! by Gleaners*, an evolution in the approach to enhancing access to fresh, perishable foods, inspired and informed by collaborative research. *Fresh! by Gleaners* brings a retail-inspired experience to emergency food services, offering an innovative approach for households facing hunger to get free, nutritious food at times and in quantities they want and need to help manage household budgets.

“*Fresh! by Gleaners* is an example of the power of collaboration to solve complex problems like food insecurity,” said Gerry Brisson, president and CEO of Gleaners. “By seeking input from our guests, community partners and donors, and using data to inform and guide our decisions, we can improve how we walk alongside families and break down barriers in their journey to thrive.”

A launch and learn pilot, *Fresh! by Gleaners*, to be located on 8 Mile in Warren, Michigan, is designed to ensure retail-like accessibility and experience through three service models, in a welcoming and inclusive setting, offering greater convenience for guests facing hunger. This dynamic food market will provide an array of items guests have communicated they want and need most: fresh produce, dairy, and eggs. In addition to an in-person “shopping” option, the *Fresh! by Gleaners* location will offer pre-order curbside pickup and refrigerated lockers. The attached awning for curbside pick-up will also allow the opportunity for weather-protected, drive-thru mobile distributions during non-retail hours.

Culminating from more than five years of planning and concept testing, *Fresh! by Gleaners* was developed by a cross-functional program team and an engagement process that gathered input directly from community members—such as guests, community leaders, agency partners, local and county government, Gleaners team members and donors—to refine the process. The outcome reflects greater flexibility for frequency, timing of service and choice in companion to traditional service models.

“Over the past several years, Gleaners has engaged in listening sessions with nearly a dozen local partner agencies to discuss where there are gaps in service and how we can incorporate their feedback into the model to help close those gaps,” said Judith McNeeley, vice president of community engagement for Gleaners. “The feedback has been incredibly positive as a complement to the important work our partners are doing every day to nourish the community.”

“We’ve piloted the fundamentals of the *Fresh!* concept at three locations over the past five years, confirming its appeal,” said Julie Beamer, chief operating officer of Gleaners. “With our first-ever, new-build location, we will fully implement the retail-inspired innovations that *Fresh! by Gleaners* embodies. Construction for the *Fresh! by Gleaners* site is set to begin in early summer 2024 and targeted to open in early 2025. This location, chosen based on an assessment of residential population density and food insecurity rates, will primarily serve the needs of the surrounding Warren and Detroit community.”

According to a 2021 American Community Survey of the U.S. Census, 86,965 people lived within a



three-mile radius of the site selected, with nearly 30% of those residents experiencing poverty. The report also indicates that of the 21,399 children living in the area, approximately 44% lived in poverty.

“The need for food in our communities has continued to rise, first with the soaring immediate need coming out of the pandemic and then again when pandemic-era programs discontinued as inflation took over in exhausting household budgets,” said Brisson. “We’ve seen a 30% increase in requests for food support over the previous year. But the emergency food network has always innovated to do more and better in the face of challenge, and we’re taking the next step to improve how we meet people where they are to better serve our communities.”

The project is made possible by the generous support of community donors with anchor funding provided by the Wayne and Joan Webber Foundation; the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation; the Kresge Foundation; the Peresman-Jaffe Family Fund; Lineage Foundation for Good; Ford Philanthropy; and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan. Their dedicated funds contributed toward the community engagement, property acquisition, building and/or outfitting phase of the project.

*Fresh! by Gleaners* was revealed to an engaged audience at Ford Field on Tuesday, May 7, during Gleaners’ Women’s Power Breakfast, presented by PNC Bank and supported by Hunger Champion Sponsors Delta Air Lines, Kroger, and TNG Worldwide. In its 31st year, the Women’s Power Breakfast unites influential women to support Gleaners and address childhood hunger to create brighter futures for families across Southeast Michigan.

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### **About Gleaners Community Food Bank**

Headquartered in Detroit, Gleaners serves five Southeast Michigan counties: Wayne, Oakland, Macomb, Livingston and Monroe. Gleaners provides food to nearly 400 partner agencies, including schools, soup kitchens, food pantries, shelters, and others across the region, and supplements the efforts of those partners by offering direct-service, drive-up grocery distributions. Gleaners further empowers households with food programs and education to help overcome food insecurity. In its fiscal year 2023, Gleaners distributed more than 50 million pounds of food. Every dollar donated provides three meals, and 92% of our expenses directly support our neighbors facing hunger. Visit [gcfb.org](https://gcfb.org).

### **About *Fresh! by Gleaners***

*Fresh! By Gleaners* is a collaboratively researched initiative by Gleaners Community Food Bank that provides free access to fresh produce, dairy and eggs to neighbors in need through retail-inspired shopping experiences. The site plans include an in-store “shopping” option, curbside pickup and refrigerated lockers, as well as the opportunity for weather-protected drive-thru distributions. The pilot location will primarily serve the neighboring Detroit and Warren, Michigan communities, with plans for groundbreaking to begin in early summer 2024 and plans to open in early 2025.