



2021 Impact Report

A YEAR IN REVIEW



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Introduction

We made it through another ground-breaking year at Food Equality Initiative. As each month goes by, we learn more and more, opening ourselves up for more opportunities to spread the news about Food is Medicine and serve people this food/medicine that they need to live healthy lives. Here are some highlights from 2021.



Winter



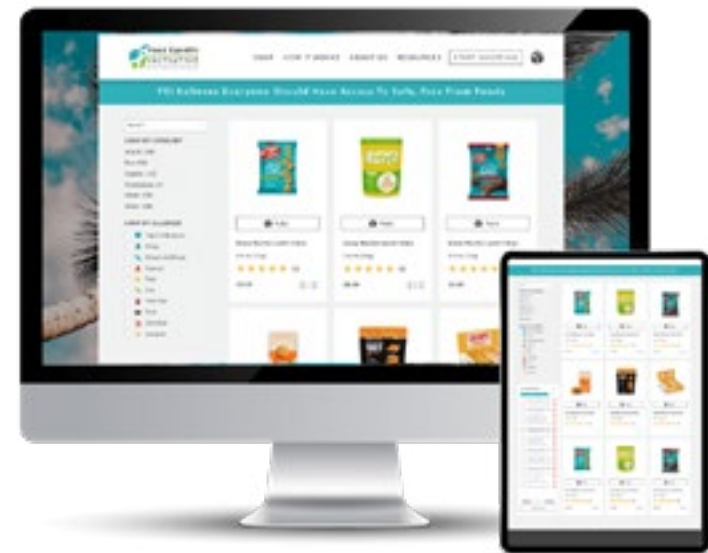
January

2021 started with a bang! We launched our new website for clients to self-select free-from food products to be delivered directly to their door. With \$155 to spend on an ever-growing selection of items on a self-managed online platform, we were finally positioned to start expanding our services nationwide. What an exciting time!

February

FEI Founder Emily Brown and Director of Operations Erin Martinez worked on an abstract that was accepted by the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology for the poster presentation at their annual conference, held Feb. 26-March 1. **“Addressing food insecurities in clients with food allergies in underserved communities with a prescription food program”** was prepared in collaboration with Kansas University Medical Center.

And, Emily Brown joined former NFL running back, best-selling author and TV personality Rashad Jennings for an episode of his Big IDEA. The episode has garnered 193K views since its debut on Feb. 4! The conversation covered how food allergic individuals in under-resourced communities often lack access to safe, nutritious foods due to the absence of grocery stores. And, how federal nutrition programs such as SNAP fail to meet needs of food insecure individuals with food allergies. Emily remarked, “the research shows that low-income families with food allergies are paying 2.5 times more for emergency care partially because they don’t have access to safe foods, and also don’t have access to epinephrine and specialty care.”



March

Food Equality Initiative attended the National Anti-Hunger Policy Conference, a 3-day event held online by the Food Research & Action Center and Feeding America, in cooperation with the National Child and Adult Care Food Program Forum. The conference draws anti-hunger and anti-poverty advocates; federal, state and local government officials; child advocates; representatives of food banks and food rescue organizations; sponsoring organizations and nutrition and anti-obesity groups.

Also in March, Emily Brown and Erin Martinez worked together on another paper with the Northwestern CFAAR team to write and publish research in the Social Work and Health Care Journal. The article is titled “**Addressing the social needs of individuals with food allergy and celiac disease during COVID-19: A new practice model for sustained social care**” and shares how FEI changed in 2020 to be able to meet the needs of those we serve.



NATIONAL
**ANTI-HUNGER
POLICY**
CONFERENCE

MARCH 16-18, 2021
Washington, DC
Virtually

Co-sponsored by **Feeding America**
and the **Food Research & Action Center**
in cooperation with the **National CACFP Forum**

**FEEDING
AMERICA**

**50
YEARS** **FRAC**
Food Research & Action Center



Spring



April

On April 14th, the FASTER Act was signed into law! Sesame is now the 9th legally protected food allergy. FEI signed multiple petitions with the Food Allergy Collaborative to lobby for this Act to become law. Now that it is passed, food manufacturers have until January 1, 2023 to ensure that they treat sesame like other top allergens; they will need to list sesame as an ingredient on food labels, in plain language. (Under current labeling regulations, manufacturers do not have to label sesame, and it can hide behind vague terms such as “natural flavors” or “spices,” leaving the estimated 1.5 million Americans living with a sesame allergy at risk.) This is the first time since 2006 that a new allergen has been added to the Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act (FALCPA).

May

Throughout May, Food Allergy Awareness Month, FEI brought attention to the ongoing work of The Seven Percent Fund & Coalition. Founded in June of 2020, the Seven Percent Fund & Coalition seeks to reduce racial and economic disparities in healthcare and food allergy. The 14 Coalition founders released a collaborative video along with an open letter to industry colleagues which seek to highlight how existing racial and economic disparities contribute to an increase in health risks for those diagnosed with food allergies, celiac disease, and other diet-treated diseases.



June

We joined the craze and got a TikTok! A summer intern helped us run our account for the season. Unfortunately, she had to stop when school started, but we were cool for the summer. [Check out the videos here.](#)

On a more serious side, we held a one-year-later conversation of For the Health. Our panel discussion, FOR THE HEALTH, A YEAR LATER: A Conversation on Race and Food Allergy, premiered on Juneteenth. We reconvened the esteemed panelists who took part in our first Juneteenth For The Health webinar a year ago to reflect on progress made toward equity over the past 12 months, and also to offer insight into what is still needed to end racial and economic disparities in food allergy. If you missed it, you can catch the riveting hour-long conversation featuring notable Black voices in food allergy on FEI's YouTube channel. Also, you can find a more in-depth recap of this important [discussion on our blog.](#)





Summer



July

In July, Emily's new business, Free From Market (FFM) took over the online shopping service. In splitting these roles of service management and client service, both organizations have the capacity to flourish. The public entity (FEI) regains the bandwidth to focus on education of food is medicine for clients and the public and continue advocating for social change on a regional and national level. As a private entity, FFM can raise greater funds through investors and retail sales to ensure goods are available for public service. Together, they are able to collect data to support research to work toward policy changes regarding the intersection of food insecurity and diet-treated illnesses.

Also, FEI is proud to announce that our esteemed CEO and Founder Emily Brown and our Medical Advisory Board's Dr. Bridgette Jones presented at the National Medical Association's (NMA) Food Allergy Symposium a Discussion of Social Determinants/Racial Disparities in Food Allergy. The National Medical Association is the nation's oldest and largest organization representing African American physicians and health professionals in the United States. It was created in 1895 after a group of black doctors sought membership into the American Medical Association and were repeatedly denied admission due to the discriminatory policies of the nation. The 2021 Convention, themed Restoring Hope and Health Across the African Diaspora: Black Health and Wellness Matter, is acclaimed as the nation's foremost forum on medical science and African American health.



August

We started a new webinar series entitled, Food Laws: Transforming Lives through Policy. Our first conversation was Intro to Changemaking where we explored a few food laws, what they mean for individuals with restricted diets and food-related diseases, and how you can work to increase protections through policies and laws in your state. Watch the webinar in full on our [YouTube channel](#).

The Seven Percent Fund & Coalition is growing! We've been joined by 7 new members. Now we are 21 members strong. Together, we're making great strides in reducing racial and economic disparities in food allergy and healthcare. At our quarterly meeting, we discussed the Child Nutrition Reauthorization and how we could best support these two important pieces of legislation: The Summer Meals Act of 2021 and the Access to Healthy Food for Young Children Act.

In service news, our pilot client program with Stanford began in August. One major focus of the Stanford study is to measure the impact of FEI interventions on clients' finances, mental well-being, and overall physical health. Data like this will become more important as FEI continues to advocate for insurance coverage for medically-necessary foods to treat diet-treated illnesses.





Fall



September

September was a BIG month at Food Equality Initiative. We declared September 14th as National Food is Medicine Day! This is a day set aside to raise awareness of existing barriers to healthy, medically-necessary food access for under-resourced families and individuals. Learn more about these barriers and why it's important to address them at FoodIsMedicineDay.org.

We also updated our Price Comparison Chart with 2021 figures. Free-from foods cost significantly more than conventional foods. How much more? Take gluten-free bread as an example. When price per ounce is compared, the price of gluten-free bread is 983% higher than the price of gluten-containing store brand bread. [We compiled this chart from prices found during a recent trip to a Kansas City grocery store, illustrating the stark differences between the prices of free-from staple foods and conventional foods.](#)

Chapter 2 in our Food Laws webinar series was College Dining Plans, where we discussed what steps you should be taking and questions you should be asking when starting your college search with food allergies or celiac disease. For an in-depth run-down of the session equipped with the video itself, [check out our blog](#).

Emily, Erin, and 2 FEI Representatives attended the Externally-Led: Patient-Focused Drug Development Meeting on September 9th in Washington D.C. They shared their personal experiences managing and treating food allergy with other patient advocates so that the FDA and drug development companies can better understand what it's like to live with food allergies and how patients are treating their condition. The insights gained in the meeting resulted in the production of a Voice of the Patient report which is available to drug development stakeholders. Read about what the representatives [Dawn](#) and [Nehgar](#) had to say.



As part of giving back during a time of natural disaster from Hurricane Ida, Food Equality Initiative (FEI), donated \$70,000 worth of food free-from major allergens and gluten to food pantries in New Orleans. FEI partnered with Smart Warehousing and Code Ana to pack and ship 24 pallets of allergen and gluten-free food donations to the Gulf Coast. Second Harvest in Louisiana received the free-from food and helped distribute it to families in need of safe foods who are recovering from the aftermath of Hurricane Ida. Watch local KC news coverage about the shipment on FOX4kc [here](#), and on KSHB [here](#).



October

Emily Brown visited Arkansas Children's Hospital to give pediatric Grand Rounds. She talked about Food Equality Initiative and why our services are vital in serving children diagnosed with food allergies and celiac disease. She also spoke at a conversation hosted by the Grain Foods Foundation about optimizing cereal choices under the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program.



November

Emily Brown and Sofia Gillespie, Education Coordinator, hosted a booth at the American College of Asthma, Allergy and Immunology's annual scientific meeting in New Orleans. They were able to speak with allergists across the nation about FEI's work, helping patients like their own access safe, healthy, and reliable food. After making some excellent new connections and planting the seed in future partners, they got to enjoy some of the wonderful sights and food of New Orleans.

FEI's client-focused Free-From Magazine won a prestigious Philly Award from Nonprofit Connect. We are extremely excited to win the gold prize for best magazine/newsletter for small nonprofits in Kansas City in 2021. We are looking forward to making even more magazines in the new year!

We held our second annual Giving Tuesday Non-Event on November 30th.



December

Emily and Erin co-authored an abstract for a poster presentation with Dr. Julia Bracken submitted to a virtual conference this December. The conference is hosted by the North American Society for Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology, and Nutrition. The presentation is entitled: **“Addressing food insecurity in pediatric celiac patients through a prescription food pantry”**, with data supported by FEI services.

And, perhaps the biggest news of all, is Emily’s farewell from Food Equality Initiative. After founding and serving for 7 years, she is saying goodbye in order to say hello to new opportunities. We will certainly miss her leadership and vision.



Nutrition security is having consistent access, availability, and affordability of foods and beverages that promote well-being and prevent or treat disease if necessary

- Prioritizing Nutrition Security in the US, JAMA April 27, 2021 Volume 325, Number 16, Dariush Mozaffarian, MD, DrPH, Sheila Fleischhacker, PhD, JD,RDN, José R. Andrés

We have had some big changes over the New Year here at Food Equality Initiative. With CEO Emily Brown's departure, Director of Operations Erin Martinez has stepped in to fill the role as Interim CEO until we find someone to fill Emily's shoes. Along with new leadership, we have made some pretty neat New Year's Resolutions that we wanted to share with you.

1. We are putting a fresh spin on our mission, really taking the "Food is Medicine" movement by the reins. We are expanding our service to include all diet-related illnesses and conditions and promoting the ideals of nutrition security. National Food is Medicine Day is just the beginning of the work we plan to do in the field.

2. Also coming in 2022 is the launch of FEI's own Free-From Podcast! This will be a bi-weekly podcast dedicated to the Food is Medicine movement. It will be published on all major podcast streaming sites and free to access for all. More information will be released in our next issue!

Free-From Magazine is opening a new chapter in 2022. We are condensing our publication into bi-monthly issues. Also, to offer even higher level

content, we are offering a digital subscription service to the magazine. Stay tuned for more information on how to place your order.

4. Continuing into this year are FEI's many research projects and advocacy works to learn how to better serve the under-represented populations in healthcare. We are already working with Stanford, Northwestern, and Texas Children's Hospital and will be opening up new projects with other children's hospitals soon. We are excited to provide and collect data that can be used to create legislative and institutional change for individuals like our FEI Family Members.

Thank you for sticking with us and supporting our mission. We are greatly looking forward to what this next year will bring and cannot wait to share it with you.

Food Equality Initiative fights for **nutrition security** and **health equity** for all.



***FEI Family
Member***

Meet The Brodys

Spontaneity goes out the window, says Paula Brody when you have a diagnosis of celiac disease. You can't ever "just go" out to eat or book a "last minute" vacation – you always have to have a Plan B for food.

For more than four years Paula has been creating "Plan B's" for her 14-year-old son, Max.

"Max got sick in January 2016, when he was in third grade," she recalls. "At first it was a strep diagnosis with severe stomach pain. The doctor thought he also might have acid reflux. He was miserable. Antibiotics and reflux medicine did not help."

Finally, the doctor said he wanted to do blood work because they did not know what was wrong with Max.

"It wasn't until the first day of spring break when he called to tell me that Max had celiac disease," said Paula, who is an administrative assistant in the Fine Arts Department at Liberty Public Schools. "And I remember thinking – I don't know what that is."

That was then. Now the single-mom of two answers questions like a pro.

"Celiac flattens the villi, the tiny, fingerlike protrusions lining the small intestine. That means the body cannot absorb nutrients," she says. "It's reversible, but only if you follow a gluten-free diet."

And that, she learned, is difficult.

"Gluten is in everything," she says. "And cross-contamination is hard to avoid."



In addition to changing Max's diet, Paula had to revamp her kitchen.

"I learned that gluten can get into cracks or scratches on plastic or wooden kitchen utensils and non-stick cookware. I had to replace it all," She says. "Thankfully, I had a set of stainless-steel pots and pans, but Max's grandmother bought new cookware and utensils so she could cook for him."

It took her a year to overhaul her kitchen. Now she has a separate counter area where gluten is not allowed, she keeps Max's snacks in a separate cabinet, she bought a toaster oven so he can make pizza and chicken nuggets, and he has his own shelf in the refrigerator. His

side of the table is gluten-free too. If Paula prepares something with flour for Max's older brother, 17-year-old Parker, she mixes it in the laundry room to avoid getting flour dust in the air.

"Parker has been so helpful to watch out for Max. When he has friends over he explains to them the kitchen layout and avoiding gluten," Paula says.

Besides the cost of replacing kitchen utensils and appliances, Paula says her grocery bill almost doubled.

"Packaged items that Max enjoys and can eat are almost triple the cost of the same items with gluten," she says.

Then she saw a TV news story and read a KC Star article about Emily Brown and FEI. She reached out immediately. Because she already had a doctor's diagnosis, she was approved quickly.

"I learned that gluten can get into cracks or scratches on plastic or wooden kitchen utensils and non-stick cookware. I had to replace it all,"

At that time FEI's only method of food distribution was through food pantries. Paula says her first trip to the pantry was "surreal."

"I saw a cake mix – and it was free! Gluten-free cake mixes are about \$5.00. A loaf of bread is also \$5.00 and you don't get as much as in a regular loaf of bread. They had fresh produce too. I remember taking home apples, potatoes, and peanut butter," she marvels. "It felt like such a blessing. I was so thankful that I could pick it out and not have the expense."



Now Paula loves ordering online and the convenience of the direct-to-door delivery. Max, who gets really excited when the box shows up on the front porch, enjoys Picky Bars (gluten-free granola-type bars), white

cheddar popcorn, and Aldi's LiveGfree chicken nuggets. And mac and cheese! Paula estimates that 25% of the food Max eats comes from FEI.

Although Paula is quick to count the many blessings Max has, including FEI, a supportive older brother, and family and friends who want to help, she says it's very hard to have celiac disease because of the social issues.

"You can't eat out where your friends want to go—you have to eat before, or take your own food if the restaurant doesn't have food that is safe for you to eat," she says. "Kids want to be like other kids."

"Paula says her grocery bill almost doubled."

That's why, in addition to social challenges, individuals with celiac disease can become depressed. According to Beyond Celiac, "the risk for developing depression is 1.8 times more likely for people with celiac disease in comparison to the general population . . . because of the significant impact on daily life and the challenges and stress that can come with managing a chronic condition and the gluten-free diet."

Paula knows this is a life-long journey that's easier when she connects with others. For her, the best way is through social media sites, like Facebook.

"I found support groups for celiac disease and gluten free both nationwide and local. People post when they have a good experience at a restaurant, so we have several that we still need to try," she says.

For anyone who is just beginning this journey, she recommends reaching out to Children's Mercy or your family doctor for other food allergy or celiac families because "they will know of shortcuts that can make your life easier." And try social media! You may find great connections.





Financials

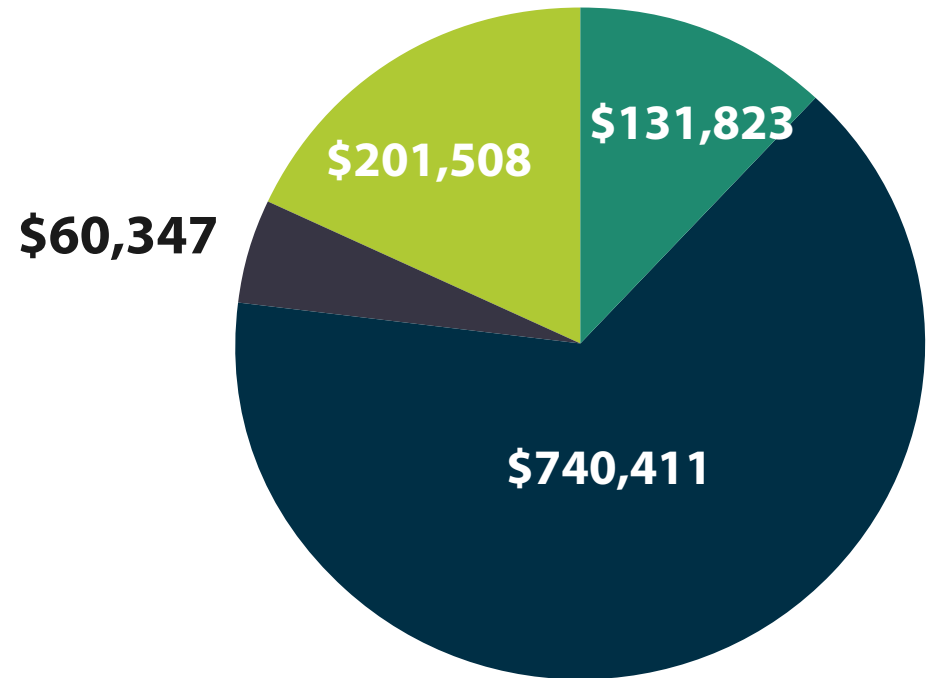


2021 Funding

- Corporate sponsors, partners, universities: 12%
- Philanthropic donors: 65%
- Individual donors: 5%
- *In-kind donations: 18% (Fair Market Value)

IN 2021 FEI RAISED
\$1,134,089

*In-kind donations of food no longer accepted after 2021.





Leadership



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Alicia Poole, President
- Kristie Sigler, VP
- Erica Forrest, Secretary
- Alex Hoskovec
- Melinda Ewing, Client Representative
- Leigh Wagner
- Brantlee Broome
- Shannon Stevens
- Courtney Schnefke
- Linda Berry
- Bradford Warner
- Scott Akeson
- Allison Tsay
- Sandy Spidel Neumann Dec 2021 interim treasurer
- Thao Vo Nov 2021

FEI STAFF

- Emily Brown, *CEO and Founder*
- Erin Martinez, *Director of Operations*
- Amelia Richard, *Marketing and Creative Director*
- Sofia Gillespie, *Education Coordinator*
- Kathy Downing, *Development Coordinator*

MEDICAL ADVISORY BOARD

The Medical Advisory Board is a group of licensed physicians, nurses, and dietitians that meet twice a year to review educational material, advise FEI's Board of Directors and staff, and provide input on research projects.

- Molly Krager, *MD, Chair*
- Marissa Love, *MD*
- Selina A. Gierer, *DO*
- Julia M. Bracken, *MD*
- Bridgette L. Jones, *MD*
- Brandy Holderby
- Nakita Raje, *MD*
- Barbara Warady, *MS, RD, LD*
- Nahir Mallorquin Saer, *BSN, RN*

TEEN ADVISORY BOARD

The Teen Advisory Board (TAB) is a growing group of teens and college students who work together to bring awareness about FEI, food allergies, and celiac disease to those in their communities.

Anna Stover: *Chairperson*

FEI FRIENDS

These are the valued individuals and organizations who gave FEI their time, talents, and donations. We could not do the work we do without them.

- Typewriter Tarot
- Heather Barr
- Hilary Kass
- Alerje
- Enjoy Life Foods
- Partake Foods
- CareSource
- Grace Guthrie
- Terri Delimont
- EJF Foundation
- United Way of Greater Kansas City
- Colton Denning
- Richard and Rebecca L. Zahren of the Ayco Charitable Foundation
- Sarah Reyes
- Michael D and Mary Minton
- Catherine & C. David Moll
- REACH HC Foundation
- Hall Family Foundation
- Scheels
- Jonathan Schwartz
- Carrie & Mike Raaf
- Kelly Roerig
- Benevity
- Health Forward Foundation
- Geraldine Barrows Foundation
- The Jackie McElroy-Edwards Charitable Fund
- Harrison Street Real Estate
- Barbara and Bradley Warady
- Michael Blaiss, MD
- Selfridge Family Foundation
- Francis Family Foundation
- Jill and John Maher Donor Advised Fund
- FOODiversity
- Stanford University
- Amy Vandiver
- Leigh Wagner
- Kids Eat in Color
- O'My Foods
- Gwen Smith
- Lauren Stover
- The Teal Schoolhouse
- Natalie Giorgi Sunshine Foundation
- MARC
- Deffenbaugh
- Stephanie Page
- Healthy Blue MO/Anthem
- Linda Bird
- Elsa Malcolm
- Cristina Suffredini
- Jamie Merriman
- Courtney Schnefke
- Cassandra Jensen
- Helen Genet Philanthropic Fund
- Kansas City Junior Board Fund
- Parents of Allergic Kids
- Mile High United Way
- Richard Nixon
- Menorah Heritage Foundation
- Desiree Gordon
- Carolina FOODiversity Fund
- Just Give-Great Nonprofits
- Bank of America (William J. Brace)
- H&R Block Foundation
- Greater Kansas City Community Foundation
- Javier Evelyn
- Ceres Foundation

2021



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