



Aitkin County Public Health's SHIP Program

# PartnerSHIP News!



JANUARY 2024

[Aitkin County SHIP Website](#)

[Resources](#)

[Healthy Northland Website](#)



## Aitkin, Itasca, Koochiching, Carlton, Cook, Lake, and St. Louis counties make up Healthy Northland.

Supported by the Minnesota Department of Health's Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP), Healthy Northland strives to make the healthy choice the easy choice for everyone in Northeastern Minnesota through collaborative and community-based policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) change efforts.

[Visit Healthy Northlands Webpage](#)

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In January's newsletter read about: Digital Wellbeing in Koochiching Classrooms, Workforce Health Equity and the Minnesota Suicide Prevention Regional Coordination.

[Read the January Newsletter](#)

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## Featured Success Story

### Working Together to Address

# Food Insecurity for Seniors

*Editor: Aitkin County SHIP Coordinator*

Did you know that Aitkin County is the "oldest" county in Minnesota?

With food costs soaring roughly 10 percent in the last year, older Minnesotans on limited incomes who could afford groceries before the pandemic may now worry where their next meal will come from. Food shelves across the state have seen a jump in visits during 2022 and 2023. An estimated 94,000 Minnesotans age 50 and older don't have reliable access to enough healthy food.

Hunger continues to be a problem and it affects more seniors than you may think. Feeding America's research shows that more than 7 million seniors could be insecure by 2050. There are many reasons why seniors are at higher risk for hunger including: health conditions, transportation problems, fixed income and social isolation. A group of organizations and institutions came together to help address food insecurity with our seniors.

Riverwood Healthcare Center, with the help of the Aitkin Farmers Market Hub and Aitkin County Public Health, was awarded the Minnesota Local Food Purchase Assistance (LFPA) grant by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA). The LFPA program is a new grant from MDA to fund projects that buy local food, primarily from socially disadvantaged and emerging farmers, and to distribute food to underserved communities. Riverwood Healthcare Center is partnering with the Aitkin Farmers Market Hub to purchase locally grown food from Aitkin County's very own and nearby farmers. Additionally, the healthcare institution has partnered with **Aitkin County CARE** and **Angels of McGregor** to help distribute the food boxes to the senior population they serve.

On January 16th, Aitkin County CARE and Angels of McGregor each delivered their first set of 30 boxes to seniors who may be experiencing food insecurity. Aitkin County CARE delivered all 30 boxes to the McGrath area which is classified as a **food desert** in the county. Each box consisted of apples, honey, whole wheat flour, cornmeal, wild rice, dry beans, oatmeal, pork chops and ground pork sausage. By working together, boxes will be delivered each month from January to May in 2024 and 2025. This program is in addition to the **Food Rx Program** Riverwood also offers to clients they see in their care who may be experiencing food insecurity. Both programs connects individuals to community resources.

Some seniors may also struggle because they need help doing some of the things that others take for granted. Things like going to the grocery store, shoveling the sidewalk or cooking a meal. Both Aitkin County CARE and Angels of McGregor offer services for seniors to continue to be at home. To learn more about these organizations you can visit their websites at [www.aitkincountycare.org](http://www.aitkincountycare.org) and [www.angelsofmcgregor.com](http://www.angelsofmcgregor.com)



Picture shown above illustrates a food box with apples, honey, whole wheat flour, cornmeal, wild rice, dry beans, oatmeal, pork chops and pork sausage.

Picture Credit: Allison Rian, Aitkin Farmers Market Hub Manager



Did you know Aitkin County Public Health oversees a brochure which focuses on food resources in the communities of Aitkin County? Click on the link below to view and/or print to share.

If you would like to have these brochures printed and mailed, please contact [hannah.colby@co.aitkin.mn.us](mailto:hannah.colby@co.aitkin.mn.us)

View the Aitkin County Community Food Resource Brochure!



# MN Eats

SHIP collaborates with community partners to make changes that result in healthy foods being more available and affordable.

What does your community need?

✉ Connect with your local SHIP coordinator.  
Health.OSHIH@state.mn.us



## Vital partnership with communities

“ SHIP provides much-needed leadership, connections, time and funds for local food initiatives. Farm to School, SuperShelf, Food Rx and the Farmers’ Market would not be as successful in Aitkin County without the efforts of our SHIP coordinator. Growing these connections with farmers and buyers keeps local dollars local, and that benefits everyone.”

—Allison Rian, Aitkin Farmers’ Market Hub Manager

“ SHIP has done so much to help local farmers get connected with local eaters. Aitkin County is a leader in farm to school in rural Minnesota, and that’s because of the sustained effort in SHIP.”

—Jane Jewett, Owner of WillowSedge Farm



Photo by Allison Rian

## Connecting Local Food in our Communities

SHIP is partnering with local produce farmers to increase local fruits and vegetable consumption in our local schools and communities. Our goals are to increase farmer partnership through the Aitkin Farmers Market Hub to fill the gap of farm to school, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) shares and Food Rx boxes for Riverwood Healthcare Center.

Read more on MN EATS strategies

Interested in a MN EATS strategy? Contact your local [SHIP Coordinator Hannah Colby](#) to learn more on how to get started!



## SHIP STORY MAP

The Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP) creates wellness across Minnesota's communities through community-driven, evidence-based, and equity-focused programs that tackle the root causes of chronic diseases.

The image above and the link below will take you to the storymap to explore work across Minnesota.

[We are SHIP](#)

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# UPCOMING *Events*



Regional Community of  
Practice on School  
Mental Health  
Virtual 3:30 - 5:00 PM

FEB  
**1**  
2024



MN JUUL Settlement  
Funds - Input Session  
1:00 - 2:30 PM at the  
Duluth Public Library

FEB  
**16**  
2024



MN JUUL Settlement  
Funds - Input Session  
Virtual  
9 - 10:30 AM  
5:30 - 7:00 PM

FEB  
**15**  
2024



Vitalize Aitkin  
8:00 AM - Noon

FEB  
**27**  
2024



Northland Food  
Network Annual  
Food Forum  
Save the Date!

MAR  
**22**  
2024



Register to attend JUUL Settlement Community Input Meeting

Vitalize Aitkin Flyer

# RESOURCES



Escape the Vape Video Challenge

Submissions start February 1st!



MN JUUL Settlement Funds Survey

Consider taking the online survey by February 23rd.



MN JUUL Settlement  
Survey

**2024 COMMUNITY PARTNER AWARDS**  
**COMING SOON**  
**STAY TUNED**

[www.aitkincountyship.org](http://www.aitkincountyship.org)



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Prevent. Promote. Protect.  
**Aitkin County**

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