



2025 Impact Report

Titan Equity Nourish Network

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www.udmercy.edu/tenn



FROM THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Dear Friends and Partners,

As we reflect on 2025, we are deeply grateful for the community that makes TENN’s work possible. This year was marked by growth, resilience and stronger connections—expanding access to nourishing food while strengthening the systems and relationships that support equity and justice.

From relocating our community garden into the neighborhood, to launching a composting pilot that diverted over 15,000 pounds of food waste, to hosting immersive learning and community gatherings, every initiative was powered by collaboration. Food justice is more than meals—it is dignity, sustainability, and belonging.

Together, we look ahead to 2026 with momentum and hope, committed to deepening partnerships and growing impact.

With gratitude,

CHELSEA MANNING

Program Manager
Titan Equity Nourish Network

ABOUT

The Titan Equity Nourish Network (TENN) is a student-led food justice initiative at the University of Detroit Mercy. Through education, community partnerships, sustainability initiatives and direct service, TENN addresses both the immediate and systemic challenges of food insecurity. Grounded in dignity, community and justice, TENN empowers students to lead with compassion while building a more equitable and sustainable Detroit.

OUR INTERNS, STAFF, AND STUDENT LEADERS

TENN’s impact is made possible by a dedicated team of interns, student leaders and staff whose leadership strengthens programs, expands partnerships and advances food justice across campus and Detroit.

STUDENT STAFF AND LEADERS

Autumn Degner
Dalia Khoshe
Erika Dafterdarian
Fatima Herrera
Isabelle Francis
Ivan Mariano
Kenyon Lofton
Marigold Bray

Natasha Davis-Mickles
Oliver Gamez
Prashant Lambodari
Qamar Elia
Serena Yousif

TENN INTERNS

Carson Winbigler (Social Work)
Nia Dorsey (Social Work)
Mari Goin (Communications)
Courtney Christian (Health SvcAdmin)
Omimah Yahya (Health SvcAdmin)
Taquan Johns (Health SvcAdmin)

2025 IN NUMBERS



36,346
Pounds of food delivered



300
Families fed through our produce deliveries



562
Students engaged



19
Student leaders



220
Volunteers for TENN service events



844
Hours volunteering for TENN service projects



15,000+
Pounds of food waste diverted from landfills



AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

In 2025, TENN received several honors recognizing the collective impact of our students, partners, and community collaborators and our shared commitment to food justice, sustainability, and neighborhood engagement.

- **Spirit of Detroit Award** – Presented by Council Member Coleman A. Young II and Council Member Angela Whitfield-Calloway
- **State of Michigan Special Tribute** – Awarded by State Rep. Helena Scott for TENN’s leadership in addressing food insecurity, strengthening community partnerships and fostering student engagement.
- **Appreciation Certificates** – Presented by the Princeton Street Block Club for TENN’s ongoing collaboration and support.
- **District Two Leadership Award** – Angela Whitfield-Calloway in recognition of Chelsea Manning’s outstanding leadership in District Two.

EXPANDING FOOD ACCESS IN OUR COMMUNITY

TENN’s food access work is grounded in partnership, dignity and consistent support for our surrounding neighborhoods. Through student leadership and community collaboration, we help connect residents with fresh food and essential resources while strengthening relations to bridge the campus with neighboring communities.. In 2025, TENN delivered 36,346 pounds of food— a 50% increase over the previous year.

KEY PROGRAMS

- **Princeton Street Block Club Produce Delivery:** Weekly door-to-door deliveries providing fresh produce to 55+ households throughout the Martin Park neighborhood.
- **Theresa Maxis Senior Apartments:** Bi-monthly Forgotten Harvest distributions serving up to 80 residents with a dignified, choice-based model.
- **Community Fridges & Monthly Distributions:** Ongoing support for the New Martin Park District Association and Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, reaching 70+ families each month.
- **Expanded Access through Gleaners Partnership:** In 2025, Advisory Board member Joe Zalke leveraged his connections to donate over 23,000 pounds of frozen rice, chicken, and potatoes to **Gleaners Food Bank**, benefiting its network of partner agencies. Through this partnership, TENN was able to pick up and distribute these high-quality foods at no cost— significantly expanding our capacity to meet community needs.
- **SNAP Response Food Drive:** Coordinated a campus-wide food drive with the **William Beaumont Society** and the **Rho Nu Chapter of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity**, collecting 400+ shelf-stable items during a temporary SNAP benefits pause.



CULTIVATING SUSTAINABILITY: GROWING FOOD, REDUCING WASTE, & STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY

TENN's student-led sustainability initiatives reduce waste, support local resources, and create shared spaces where community thrives—demonstrating that sustainability is integral to food justice.

TENN THRIFT & LOCAL POP-UP

The 2025 Thrift and Local Pop-Up expanded student and community engagement through a campus-wide dorm clothing drive, a “Pie the Professor/Priest” fundraiser, and a showcase of local entrepreneurs. Attendees shopped by donation and connected with vendors including Better Detroit Brownies, **D&D Creations**, **Xclusive Hair**, **Pure Essence Resale Boutique**, **Rosa Hunter**, and UDM student businesses—supporting reuse and local enterprise.

MARTIN PARK COMMUNITY COMPOST PROGRAM

With support from the **Catholic Foundation of Southeast Michigan**, TENN launched a Community Composting Pilot Program that transformed campus and neighborhood food scraps into nutrient-rich compost. In 2025, the program diverted 15,000+ pounds of food waste from landfills—equivalent to removing 1,200 cars from the road for one day—supported campus and neighborhood green spaces, and hosted four waste-reduction workshops with **Make Food Not Waste** and **Chef Chi Walker**.



COMMUNITY GARDEN: GROWING TOGETHER BEYOND CAMPUS

Relocated to Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, TENN's community garden became a neighborhood-embedded space supporting food sovereignty and connection. Partnerships with Good Shepherd Lutheran Church and the New Martin Park District Association expanded access to fresh produce, while volunteers from Ss. Peter & Paul Church helped rebuild garden beds and plant. Additional support from **Co-Sustainability** and local garden centers—including **Lowe's**, **Bordine's**, **Ray Wiegand's**, **Telly's Greenhouse**, **The Plant House**, and **Graceland Gardens**—kept the garden thriving.

To celebrate and cultivate community, we hosted three garden parties throughout the year. These gatherings brought together on-campus and off-campus neighbors to enjoy good food, harvest fresh produce and connect in a space that nourishes both body and spirit.



BUILDING AWARENESS THROUGH EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE

TENN helps students understand food insecurity as a systemic issue shaped by history, policy, and community resilience.

IMMERSION DAYS:

LEARNING, SERVING AND BUILDING SOLIDARITY

Partnerships with **University Ministry, Zaman International, Eastern Market, and Keep Growing Detroit**, provided students with a hands-on educational experience which explored holistic approaches to food justice. Immersion Days allowed students to engage with community leaders and then contribute through hands-on volunteer work. Through immersion, reflection, and action, students gained the insight needed to approach food justice with humility, collaboration, and care.

FOOD JUSTICE WORKSHOPS:

CONNECTING SYSTEMS AND SOLUTIONS

In 2025, TENN facilitated two food justice workshops that helped students understand food insecurity as a systemic issue shaped by social, environmental, and economic factors.

In a Thesis Architecture class, students used systems mapping to integrate food access, equity, and environmental considerations into their design projects. In collaboration with a Nursing class, TENN invited six community members to share lived experiences, allowing students and residents to map interconnected factors contributing to food insecurity and connect academic learning with real-world insight. Together, these workshops equipped students with tools to analyze complex food systems and inspired solutions that are holistic, community-informed, and equity-driven.



COMMUNITY FIRST INITIATIVES:

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS AND BELONGING THROUGH ENGAGEMENT

Community First Initiatives remind us that food justice is about more than nourishment—it's about connection, creativity and care. Through these initiatives, TENN strengthens connections with neighbors, partners and campus members to create spaces where equity and community thrive.

PARTNERSHIPS THAT MAKE AN IMPACT

Our work is possible because of strong collaborations with organizations committed to justice and sustainability:

- **Brilliant Detroit and Pope Francis Center** – Helped us get food donations to families.
- **Ss. Peter & Paul Jesuit Church** – Helped relocate and rebuild our community garden.
- **GESU Catholic Church** – Partnered on our composting program and hosted a tour for the Bioneers Conference.
- **New Martin Park District Association** – Collaborated on the garden, community fridge and monthly food distributions.
- **Theresa Maxis & Forgotten Harvest** – Supported food distribution efforts.
- **Gleaners & Princeton Street Block Club** – Partnered for neighborhood food distributions.
- **Better Detroit Brownie Company** – Joined us for the thrift event and community meal, bringing delicious brownies and student bakers.

COMMUNITY MEAL: *SHARING FOOD, BUILDING FRIENDSHIP*

This year's Community Meal brought together 90 guests from across campus and partner organizations, including Gesu, Ss. Peter & Paul, the New Martin Park District Association, Princeton Street Block Club, Theresa Maxis and the Better Detroit Brownie Company.

Highlights included a home-cooked meal prepared by Volunteer Chef Bob, dental students sharing both dental kits and a dish, and the Princeton Street Block Club honoring TENN with recognition, desserts, and financial support. Guests also enjoyed signature brownies from the Better Detroit Brownie Company, baked by Detroit youth, and live music from the UDM Music Club, creating a joyful and welcoming atmosphere.

GAME NIGHTS AND CELEBRATE: *JOY, CONNECTION, AND COMMUNITY*

Throughout the year, TENN hosted game nights and celebrations that strengthened relationships and fostered a sense of belonging beyond direct service. Students and community partners came together for shared fun, including a Black History Month art project honoring Alma Woodsey Thomas, Halloween game night, and spring wind chime-making celebration strengthened trust, celebrated partnerships, and created space for meaningful dialogue that informs future programming.



GRANT AWARDS: INVESTING IN JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY WELLNESS

In 2025, TENN received generous support from partners who share our vision for equity, sustainability and holistic well-being. These grants expanded our reach and strengthened our impact across campus and the surrounding neighborhoods.

- **Sisters of Mercy of the Americas** – Detroit Mercy's Seven-Year Laudato Si' Action Plan: A \$40,000 grant supported initiatives advancing environmental stewardship and social justice. Funding enabled partnerships with the Great Lakes Bioneers Conference and the Laudato Si' Taskforce to host educational and community-engaged events.
- **Catholic Foundation of Southeast Michigan** – Taking a Bite Out of Food Waste: With \$5,000 in grant support, TENN launched a Community Composting Pilot in the Martin Park neighborhood, diverting 15,000 pounds of food waste, producing compost for local gardens, and hosting four waste-reduction workshops with Make Food Not Waste and Chef Chi Walker.
- **Michigan Health Endowment Fund** – People's Path to Wellness: A \$180,000, award supports TENN's partnership with the **McAuley School of Nursing, Martin Park**, and the **Fitzgerald/Marygrove** neighborhoods to establish a Community Wellness Council focused on advancing health, food access, and overall community well-being.

Together, these grants represent more than financial support—they are affirmations of a shared vision of justice, sustainability, and care for our neighbors.

TENN 2025 DONORS

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Joseph T. Zalke

Andreas and Loi Drath

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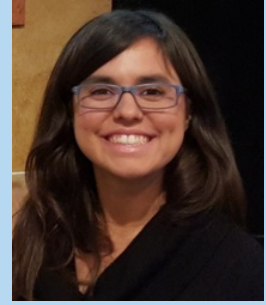
TENN ADVISORY BOARD



Bridget Brown '12 was the student manager of "Campus Kitchen," the precursor for TENN. She brings more than 10 years' experience in operations, development and community engagement at Gleaners Community Food Bank. She was chair of the Livingston County Hunger Council for four years and is currently Chief Operating Officer at the United Community Housing Coalition.



Rev. Dr. Blanton L. Banks is Senior Pastor at Good Shepherd Lutheran Detroit. He is the vice President of New Martin Park District Association. The founder of GSLC and NMPDA Outreach distribution program works closely with TENN on a variety of food access programs.



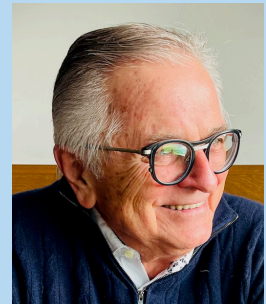
Theresa Tejada has worked for approximately 10 years at the National Kidney Foundation of Michigan focusing on nutrition education, access to food, health promotion, and chronic disease prevention strategies. She currently is Program Manager of NKFM's Community Outreach team and facilitates the Western Wayne County Food Policy Council.



Jim Vella '89 brings expertise in marketing and communication and nonprofit management. He is CEO and founder of the Vella Group, a nonprofit consulting firm. Past president of the Ford Motor Company Fund, and has served on national, state and local nonprofit boards. He has a background in television news.



Joan Walton brings experience and connections from working at variety of nonprofits in metro Detroit including the DIA, Bell Isle Conservancy, Gleaners Food Bank, and Zaman International.



Joe Zalke '60 is a Detroit Mercy alumnus and brings expertise earned from a career in the food industry, including work at RJR Foods and New England Fish Company. In 1980 he started his own company which he ran for 40 years and eventually became InnovAsian Cuisine Enterprises, Inc.



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