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From Island Fields to Food Pantry Shelves: Fresh Produce Reaches Door County Families

October 1, 2025 – Washington Island, Wisconsin – For the first time, the Door County Food Pantry Coalition and Gathering Ground have joined forces to bring fresh, locally grown produce to all ten food pantries in Door County. Nearly 1,500 pounds of onions, garlic, shallots, and butternut squash - grown on Washington Island - are making their way across Death's Door to fill pantry shelves this fall, providing families with produce that will last well beyond the harvest season.

On Tuesday, October 7, trucks and trailers loaded with Gathering Ground produce will board the Washington Island Ferry bound for food pantries throughout the mainland peninsula, with some traveling more than 50 miles to reach southern Door County communities. For many pantries, this collaboration will infuse varieties of unique produce that food pantries typically wouldn't have available.

"This new partnership makes a real difference for our pantry," said Mike Longley, pantry manager at Sturgeon Bay Community Church Food Pantry. "The fresh, shelf-stable produce allows us to offer nutritious options that our families might not otherwise have access to."

This collaborative effort brings high-quality, long-lasting produce to hundreds of families in need. Harvested with food pantry use in mind, the crops were planted last spring at Gathering Ground, a nonprofit farm committed to sustainable agriculture, conservation, and education. Alongside the produce, Gathering Ground is providing recipes and educational resources to help families enjoy and prepare the food in new ways.

"We are very excited that our recent expansion of our farms and programs has allowed us to contribute to the food security of our friends and neighbors in Door County," said Alessandra Rolffs of Gathering Ground. "We hope to see this partnership continue to grow next year."

The Door County Food Pantry Coalition, a fund of the Door County Community Foundation, and collaboration with United Way of Door County, includes the following member pantries:

- Bay View Lutheran Food Pantry (Sturgeon Bay)
- Door of Life Pantry (Sister Bay)
- Feed and Clothe My People of Door County (Sturgeon Bay)

- Holy Name of Mary Food Pantry (Maplewood)
- Klaud's Food Pantry at Shepherd of the Bay (Ellison Bay)
- Koinonia Kupboard at First Baptist Church (Sister Bay)
- Lakeshore CAP Food Pantry (Sturgeon Bay)
- Stella Maris CARE 24/7 Food Pantry (Fish Creek)
- Sturgeon Bay Community Church Pantry (Sturgeon Bay)
- Washington Island Community Health Program Food Pantry (Washington Island)

The Door County Community Foundation, Inc. is a collection of separate charitable funds set up by individuals, families, non-profit organizations, private foundations and businesses that are managed, invested and disbursed for the current and future good of Door County. The Community Foundation was launched in 1999, currently administers more than \$65 million in assets, and distributes more than \$7 million to charities every year.

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Gathering Ground volunteer Mike Walters helps with the harvest. Photo by Frank Stonaker.