

# Addressing Food Insecurity on Martha's Vineyard

University of Massachusetts Medical School Rural Health Scholars

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“  
*We can't help everyone, but everyone  
can help someone.*”

*Dr. Loretta Scott*

# Presentation Outline

I: Introduction and goals of the project

II: Defining food insecurity

III: Food insecurity on Martha's Vineyard

IV: Food insecurity in the Brazilian population

V: Food insecurity in the elderly population

VI: Food insecurity in the acutely/chronically ill population

VII: Conclusions: Final Group Recommendations



# 2020 Rural Health Scholars: Who Are We?

**Nick Bergeron**  
Hometown: Durham, NH



**Elizabeth Brown**  
Hometown: Hamilton, MA



**Charles Feinberg**  
Hometown: Brookline, MA



**Gabby Paquette**  
Hometown: Berkley, MA



**Marianna (Mari) Paradise**  
Hometown: North Andover, MA



**Mike Urbanowski**  
Hometown: Paxton, MA



Where we are now:



+



+



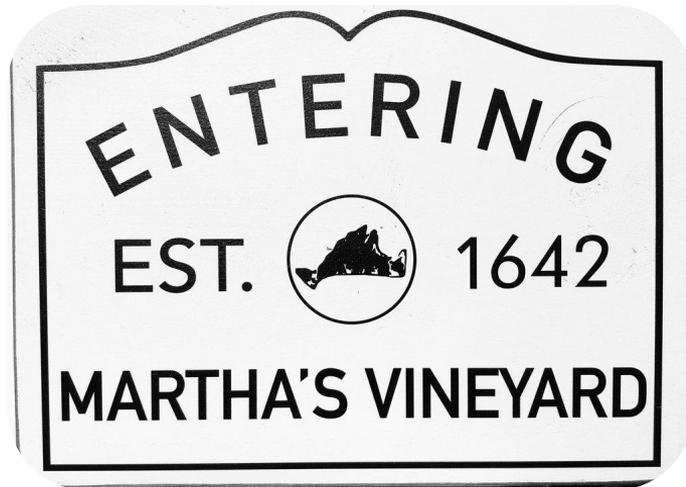
# Food Insecurity on Martha's Vineyard

Our Mission:

To examine food needs for three underserved populations on Martha's Vineyard and make recommendations to improve on their food needs.

Who are the populations?

1. Brazilian Population
2. Chronically Ill Patients
3. Elders



# Methods

## Group Assignments

Brazilian population  
  
Gabby Paquette  
Charles Feinberg

Elders  
  
Marianna Paradise  
Mike Urbanowski

Acute/Chronically Ill  
  
Elizabeth Brown  
Nick Bergeron

## Interviews

English Language Program for MVYPS  
ELL Students  
Vineyard Grocer  
Board of Health  
School Nurses  
Boys and Girls Club  
MV Commission  
Health Imperatives  
MV Family Center  
Community Services for Behavioral Health  
Vineyard Healthcare Access  
Island Wide Youth Collaborative

West Tisbury Congregational Church  
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Visiting Nurses Association  
Hospice MV  
Wampanoag Women's Center  
Harbor Homes  
Food Pantry  
Town Board of Health Agents  
Island Food Pantry  
Island Grown Initiative

## Analysis/Reflection

Quantitative  
Qualitative

Quantitative  
Qualitative

Quantitative  
Qualitative

Combine Reflection and Analysis

## Presentation



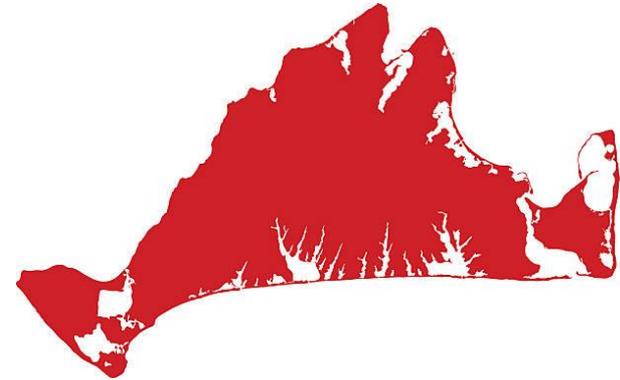
# By the Numbers: Food Insecurity

**Food Insecurity in 2018 on MV: 7.3%**

Food Insecurity in 2018 in MA: 8.9%

**Food Insecurity in 2020 on MV (Projected): 12.3%**

Food Insecurity in 2020 in MA (Projected): 13.7%



Source: Feeding America; U.S. Department of Agriculture, Household Food Security in the United States Report

# Brazilian Population: Goals

## The Brazilian Population

- Track Brazilian demographics on and migration patterns to Martha's Vineyard
- Identify the barriers that contribute to food insecurity
- Determine the greatest food needs
- Understand how food needs are being met
- Explore how food can help overcome the segregation in MV community
- Generate short and long-term recommendations to improve Brazilian food security and community engagement



# Brazilian Population: Demographics

## Brazilian Population

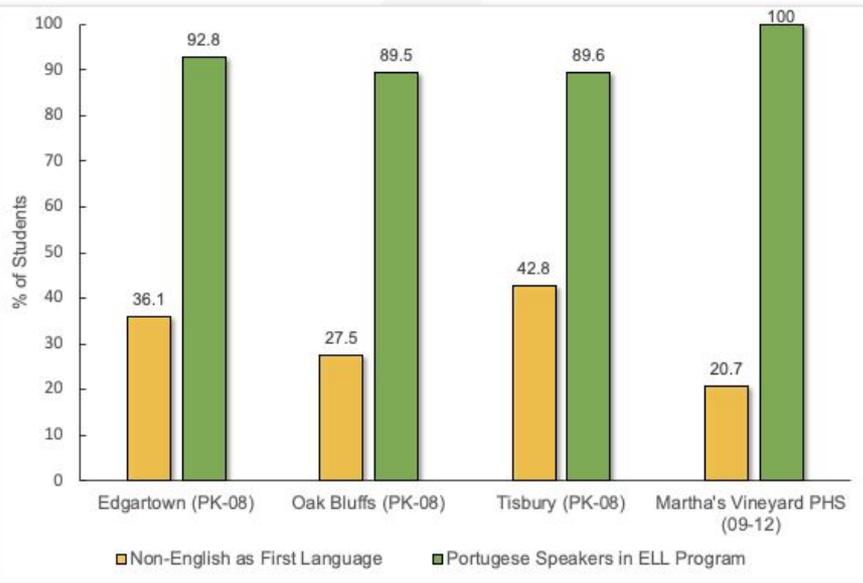
Large history of under-reporting of Brazilian population

Anecdotal Estimation: 5,000 to 6,000 Brazilians or up to a third of island year-round population

School data supports such estimates

## Migration Patterns

Migration from two states in Central-Eastern Brazil



“Yo-yo migration” to Boston/North East → MV

- Started in early 1990’s to meet low-wage labor needs as island tourism grew

Economy and season dictates migration:

- Increase: migrants come in March/April and leave in October/November
- Decrease: 2008 recession, COVID pandemic

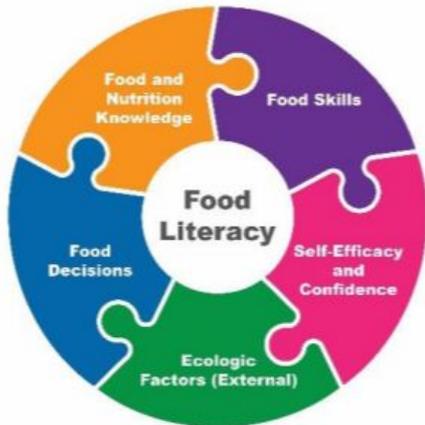
# Brazilian population: Barriers to food security



# Food Insecurity in the Brazilian Population

## General food needs

- Low cost foods, especially in the **winter**
- Prepared foods, especially in the **summer**
- **Emergency food** for recent immigrants



## Unique food needs *extend beyond food access*

- **Nutrition Education**
  - Increasing utilization of fresh produce into traditional diets
- **Food literacy**

# Food Insecurity in the Brazilian Population

## Current Resources

Church support networks

Facebook support networks

*Martha's Vineyard Community Ambassador Partnership*

Island Food Pantry

MVYPS/Community Lunch program

Vineyard Healthcare Access

Boys and Girls Club

Local Grocers



**MVYPS**

Martha's Vineyard Public Schools

# Brazilian Population: Short-Term Recommendations



## Strategies to Improve Food Literacy

- Incorporate **nutrition** and **healthy diets** into the **Adult Learning Programs**



- Introduce **Food Coding** at the food pantry and local grocers  
[Example Food Pantry](#)

## Strategies to Improve Food Access

- Information, updates, and programming advertised and dispersed via **videos** or **word of mouth**
- Expansion of the **Mobile Market** and **IGI to-go program** to Brazilian community

## Strategies to Celebrate Brazilian Culture through Food

- “**Local Business of the Week**” as a weekly/monthly highlight on MVTV or MV publications for “hidden gems” on the island
- **Festa Junina**: Harvest Celebration on June First

# Brazilian Population: Long-Term Recommendations

Task MV Commission with obtaining population data to provide evidence for representation and resource allocation



Create internships for HS students in community service organizations



Continue promoting Vision Fellowship Scholarships and College Mentorship programs



Connect the Interpreter Training program to the Adult Learning Center and MV Hospital



Integration into  
Community  
Organizations  
and Local  
Government  
Positions

Build Trust and  
Improve Utilization  
of Community  
Resources

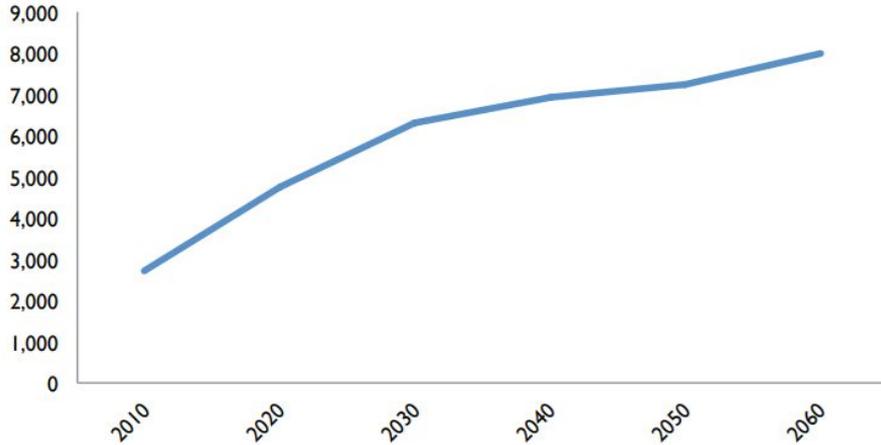
## The Elderly

- Determine how many island elders are currently accessing food support resources
- Determine how many island elders are NOT currently accessing food support resources
- Understand key barriers elders face in accessing the food support they need
- Understand gaps in existing resources and suggest solutions

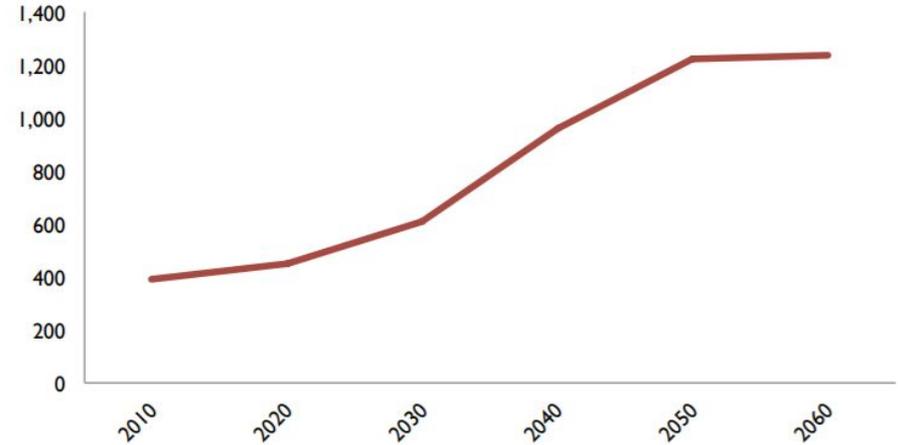


# By the Numbers: Elderly Population on MV

## Population 65 and Over



## Population 85 and Over



Source: MV Commission; Sources: US Census; 2018 MA Healthy Aging Community Profile

# Organizations That Serve the Elderly Population



Island Food Pantry  
MV Community Services  
IGI



Councils on Aging  
Elder Services of Cape Cod and the Islands  
Meals on Wheels



Healthy Aging Martha's Vineyard  
The YMCA

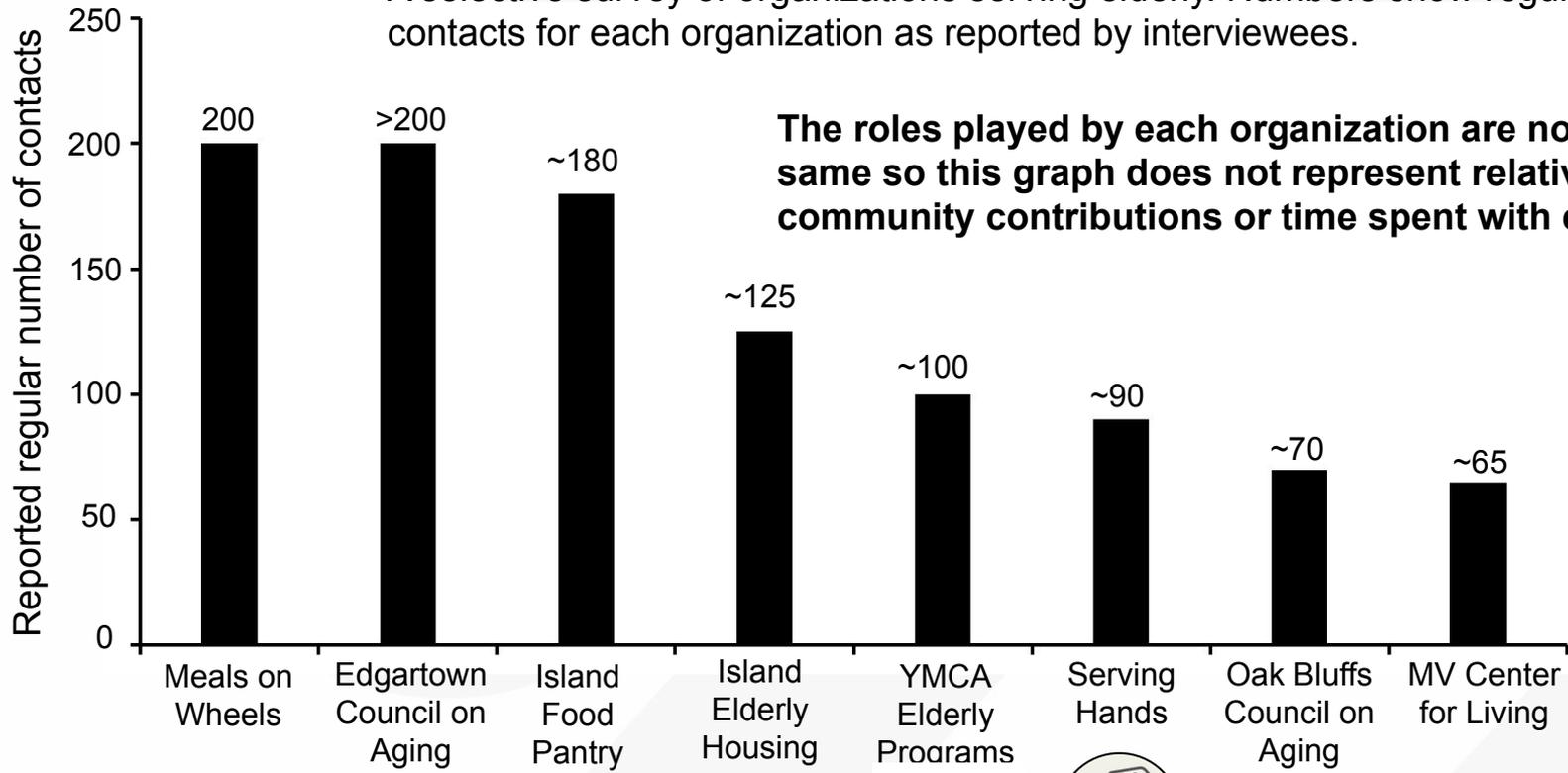


Serving Hands  
Local churches  
MV Hospital  
MV Center for Living  
Island Elderly Housing  
Elder Services  
Social workers



# Reported Number of Elders Served

A selective survey of organizations serving elderly. Numbers show regular contacts for each organization as reported by interviewees.



**The roles played by each organization are not the same so this graph does not represent relative community contributions or time spent with elders.**



# Barriers Elders Face in Accessing Foods

Frequency that organization representatives reported specific barriers to elderly food access

Barrier	Frequency Reported
Transportation	++++
Substance abuse	+++++
Homebound status	+
Stigma of receiving food support	+++++++ <sup>1</sup>
Ability to prepare foods	++++
Appeal of foods	+++
Dietary restrictions	+++
Finances	++++
Access to technology	++
Knowledge of resources	2
Mental disability/depression	+++++
Insufficient support system	+++ <sup>3</sup>
COVID precautions/breaking isolation	+

1. COVID has paradoxically increased cultural receptiveness to receiving supplemental food resources.
2. Knowledge of resources was cited as a likely barrier, but many interviewees found it hard to estimate the extent of influence.
3. Among elders caring for other elders, it was noted that the primary care-taker may not know how to prepare foods

## What's working:

- Meals on Wheels delivery system
  - Built-in wellness check
- IGI Mobile Market
  - Quality food
  - Well received
- IGI to-go meals
  - People love the soup!
- Sense of community
  - Elders supporting elders
- Community Suppers
  - Pre-COVID, very popular social event at churches
- Gleaning
- Bluefish Derby (Pre-COVID)
- Community garden plots behind Island Elderly Housing facility



# Gaps in Existing Resources

- Outreach programs for homebound or at-risk elderly
  - **CORE**
- Adequate food delivery programs
  - Meals on Wheels
  - IGI To-Go
- **Prepared food** options
- **Psych professionals** to address mental health needs among elders
- **Medically tailored meals**

# Challenges of the next decade

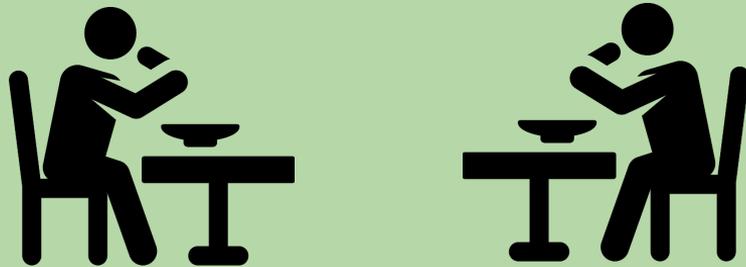
- Affordable workforce shortage to help elders maintain properties and conduct Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (e.g. maintain property)
- Year round population of the island is increasing - concerns about sufficient resources for elderly (nursing homes, elderly housing).
- Changing population architecture
  - Aging population
  - Younger individuals cannot afford to stay on island
- Housing and transportation on the island for the elderly.
  - Waitlist for elder housing is years long.
  - *Anecdotally*, an estimated deficit of 1000 affordable housing units on the island.
- “Affordability gap” (Dukes County Regional Housing Authority)
  - (2013) Weekly wages 29% below the state average
  - Rentals run 17% above state average
  - Home prices are higher by 54%
- Year-round leases are at a premium
  - Seasonal housing makes up 41% to 75% of the housing stock in different Island towns

# Recommendation: Community advertising campaigns for elder wellness

The Campaign for Food Resource Acceptance

Join the  
Community Dinner

*on*



*Martha's Vineyard*

[firststopmv.org](http://firststopmv.org)

The Campaign for Wellness Checks

Neighbors Care On

*Martha's Vineyard*



Wave



Call



Check-in

On your older neighbors

... and if you are worried, contact your local police department and ask for a wellness check.

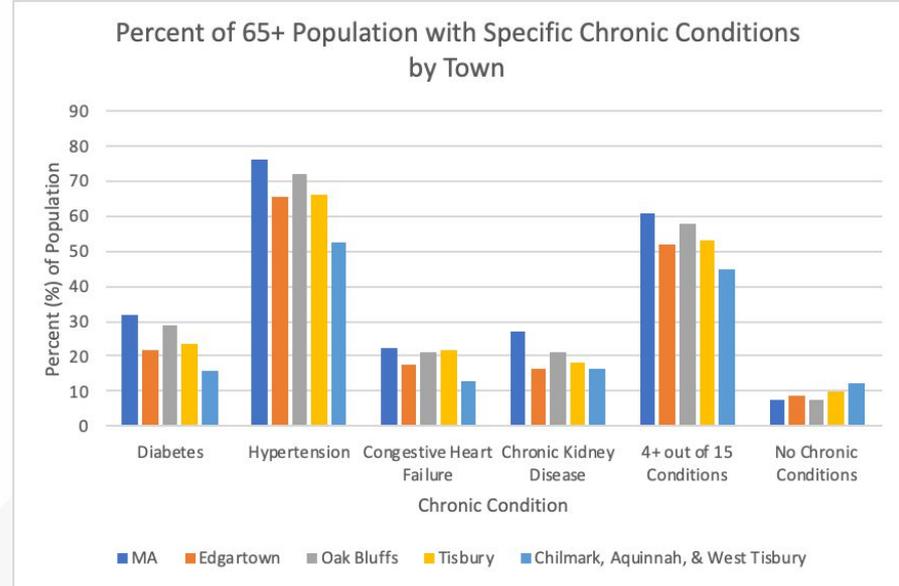
# Recommendations for the Elderly Population

- Increase **affordable housing options** for seniors and the workforce
  - **Political support** for subsidized housing
  - Publicly supported housing
    - **Island Elderly Housing**
- Increase **caretakers** for homebound elders
  - Incentives for healthcare professionals (primary care providers, psychiatrists, CNAs, nurses, dentists, etc) to move to the island
  - Housing would incentivize more caretakers to come to MV
- Distribute **pamphlets** through the Councils on Aging and MV Hospital
  - Reach elderly who don't have access to proper technology
- **Public campaigns** (per previous slide) to combat stigma



# By the Numbers: MV Acutely/Chronically Ill Population

- Covid19 has drastically changed the landscape of care on the island
- Currently 167 patients are receiving oncological care at MVH
- Number of individuals receiving dialysis has increased
- MVH Average census of 9 patients
- MVH ER has 30-40 patients/day in the offseason, 100 in the summer
- Approximately 30 Hospice patients
- About 100 households are at risk of homelessness annually



(MA Healthy Aging Collaborative, 2019)

# Who is Currently Advocating for this Population?

- Social workers
- Public health nurses
- Primary Care and Specialty Care providers
- System Administrators
- Advocates for the Elderly
- Disability Advocates
- Family members and caregivers



MARTHA'S  
VINEYARD  
HOSPITAL



HOSPICE  
of Martha's Vineyard



Island  
Health  
Care



ISLAND DISABILITY  
COALITION  
JOIN THE CONVERSATION

HEALTHY AGING  
MARTHA'S VINEYARD



VISITING NURSE ASSOCIATION  
OF CAPE COD

Member Cape Cod Healthcare



# What are we Hearing from Patient Advocates about this Community?

*“The resources are all there, but the communication between them isn’t”*

*“For some of the chronically ill, it is not necessarily a question of whether we can get them food, but whether we can get them the human contact customary for eating.”*

*“There’s a population here that we may not have eyes on, and I’m sure there is food needs falling through those cracks.”*

*“I’m delivering meals on my own time with my kids. I’m sure there are people in this community willing to volunteer to do this work.”*

*“We have the demand to hand out more premade meals, but we don’t have the space to store them.”*

*“Food needs differ greatly between populations. People undergoing chemo have different dietary constraints than those with CKD.”*

*“Can you guys recommend that the towns work together on this? We need some form of centralization.”*

# What are the Barriers to Accessing Food?



**Financial** - high cost of living, high cost of foods in grocery stores, high cost of locally grown foods and high cost of medical care



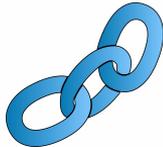
**Transportation**



**Homelessness** and/or inadequate cooking facilities within homes



**Stigma** of using food resources and the mentality of “Others need it more”



**Connection** between individuals and resources



**Nutrition education** and lack of options for medically tailored meals

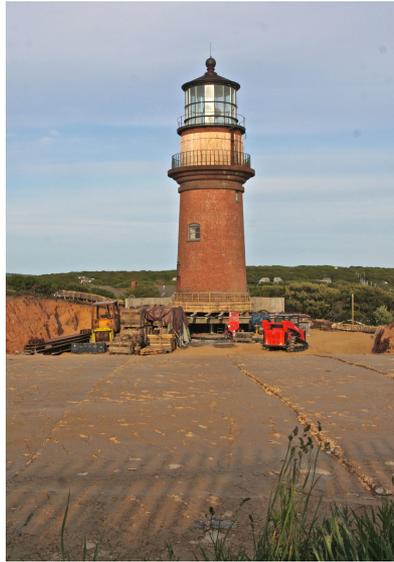
# What do Patient Advocates Recommend?

Community health worker  
model

On-site hospital food pantry

Unlimited SNAP

Neighborhood program



Volunteer based delivery  
network

Community kitchens

Community farming

Towns coming together

# Acute/Chronically Ill: Short Term Recommendations

- Collaboration between Island Food Pantry/IGI, MVH and Harbor Homes to ensure food can be provided to the warming shelters for the homeless this winter.
- Incorporate a request system for IGI To-Go meals on the IGI website
  - Advantages: database of who needs pre-made meals, count of how many meals are needed per week, increased utilization of resources
- Create a volunteer network to assist in the delivery of both premade meals and food pantry goods throughout the community

# Acute/Chronically Ill: Long Term Recommendations

- Increased food storage space on site at Martha's Vineyard Hospital for patients/patrons of the hospital. This could be used to store IGI to-go meals, medically tailored meals to be sent home after discharge and some products from the food pantry
- Build a centralized facility with the capacity to create meals on-site with a food pantry and adequate food storage capacity to serve the island
- Create greater unity within existing structures to promote collaboration in supporting those who need access to any and all SDOH resources
- Consider reimagining Meals on Wheels as a community level service with healthy, locally grown and prepared foods (Ex. Bennington, VT)

# Conclusion: Final Group Recommendations

- Medically tailored meals within the IGI/Food Pantry network with collaboration of MVH
- Support/invest in an Island central composting facility with soil distribution to MV farms.
  - Decreased cost of exporting food waste
  - Dramatically improve island farm soil quality in the upcoming decades.
  - Increased island food production
- Load balancing internet-based application for multi-organization food distribution.
  - *Expensive!* - probably requires a grant
  - Requires perpetual maintenance.
  - Advantages: balances supply and demand from distributors to food recipients and over-time as supply changes
- Reduce stigma and promote the acceptance of receiving food aid in any form



# Thank you to those we interviewed!!!



## **Brazilian Population**

English Language Program for  
MVYPS  
ELL Students  
Vineyard Grocer  
Board of Health Representatives  
School Nurses  
Boys and Girls Club  
MV Commission  
Health Imperatives  
MV Family Center  
Community Services for Behavioral  
Health  
Vineyard Healthcare Access  
Island Wide Youth Collaborative

## **Elderly**

West Tisbury Congregational Church  
Healthy Aging MV  
Elder Services of Cape Cod and the  
Islands  
Oak Bluffs COA  
Edgartown COA  
Serving Hands  
MV Hospital  
MV Center for Living  
Island Elderly Housing  
YMCA of MV  
Elder Services

## **Acutely/Chronically Ill**

MV Hospital  
Island Health Care  
Vineyard Healthcare Access  
Visiting Nurses Association  
Hospice MV  
Wampanoag Women's Center  
Harbor Homes  
Town Board of Health Agents  
Island Food Pantry  
Island Grown Initiative

# Acknowledgments



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Rebecca & Matt with North Tabor Farm



# Questions?