

MARCH 2026

ART AS ORGANIZING: CREATIVE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN CENTRAL NEW YORK

CAPTURING 3 YEARS OF ARTISTIC
INTERVENTIONS TO SUPPORT FOOD SYSTEM
COMPREHENSION, ACTION, COMMUNITY
BUILDING, AND EXPRESSION.



Syracuse-Onondaga
Food Systems Alliance



CREATING SPACE FOR ART

Honoring the connection between culture and movement building, SOFSA has been working on curating spaces and “activations” that encourage participants to engage with art and performance as part of their exploration of food, organizing, and civic engagement. Throughout the last few years, We’ve incorporated art:

- As performance, to open spaces and create a container of joint celebration
- For its visual appeal, to draw folks into shared space
- As a tool for program participants to explore their own relationship to food and food systems
- As an advocacy tool creating imagery to support storytelling to effect policy change
- As a site of co-creation and intention setting.

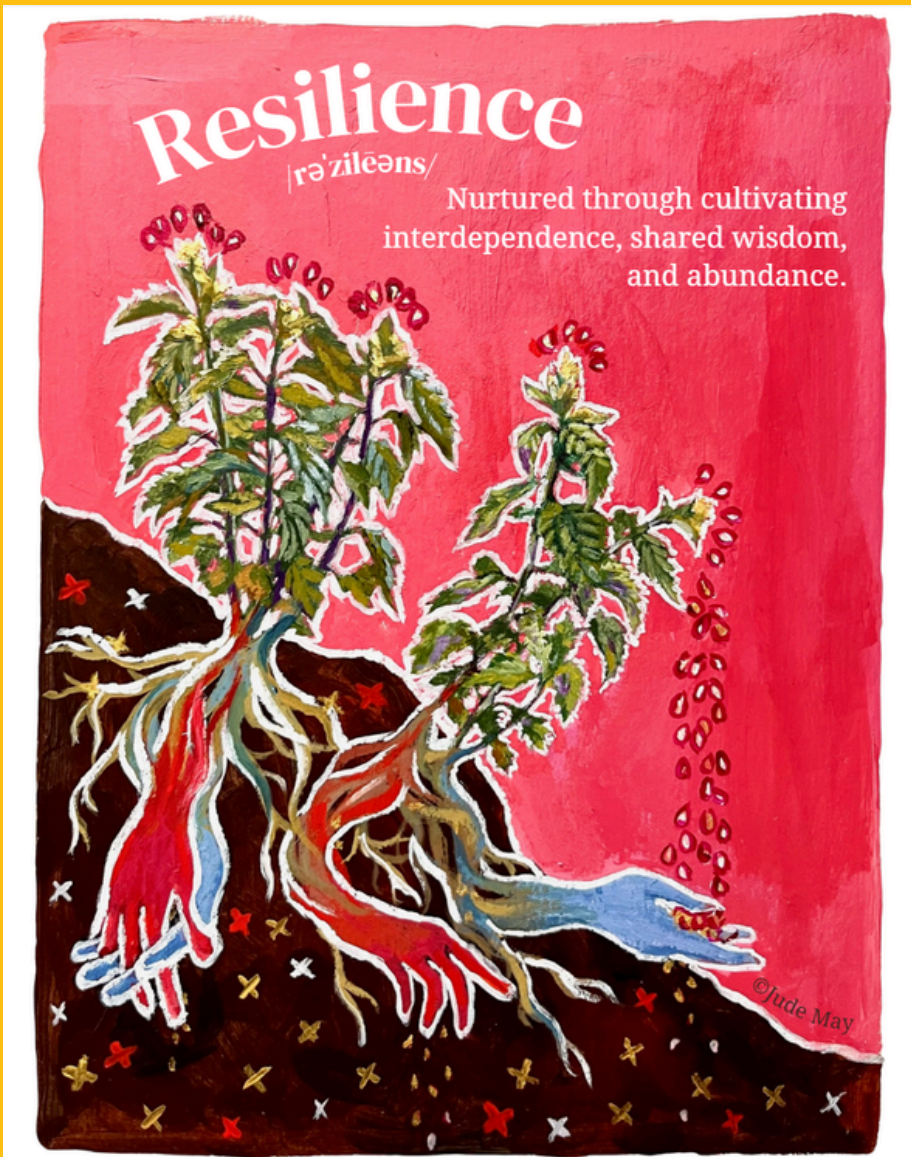
WHAT TO EXPECT

In the pages that follow, we showcase some of the works produced by artists we’ve engaged for different workshops and events, as well as some of the ways we’ve used art to engage participants and capture the experience of people in the network.



FOOD JUSTICE GATHERING POSTERS

POSTER DESIGNS ARE COMMISSIONED FROM THE "ARTIST OF THE YEAR." THE ARTIST INTERPRETS THE THEME OF THE GATHERING, AND WORKS WITH SOFSA'S COMMUNICATION COORDINATOR TO FINE-TUNE THE DESIGN. THE DESIGN IS ULTIMATELY USED FOR POSTCARDS, STICKERS, AND OFFICIAL EVENT MATERIALS.

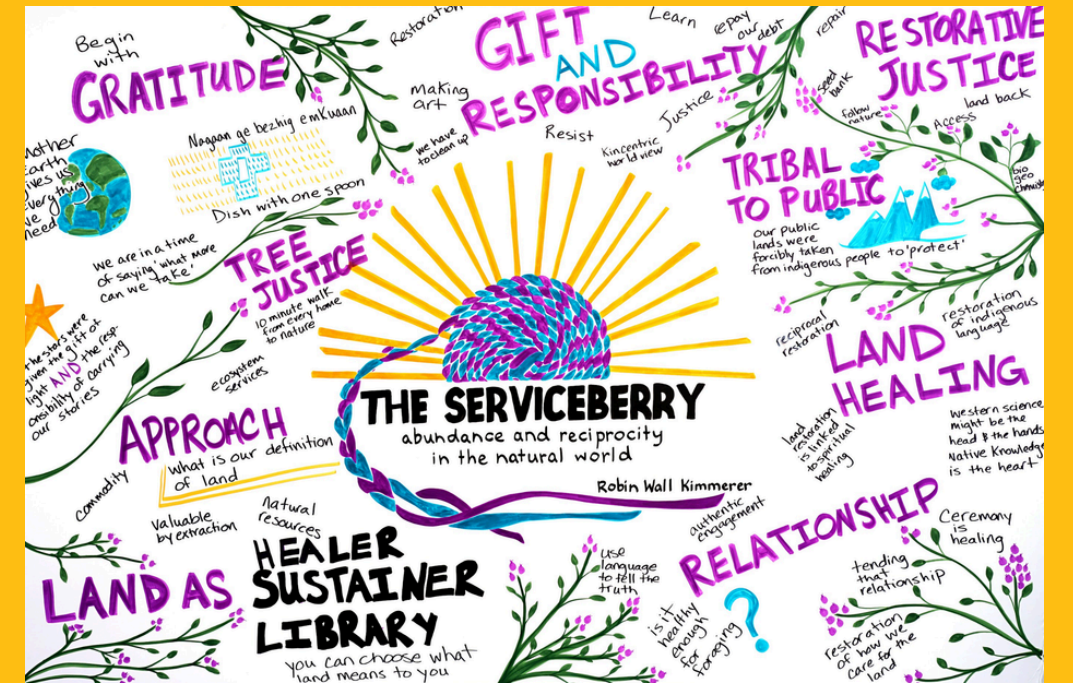
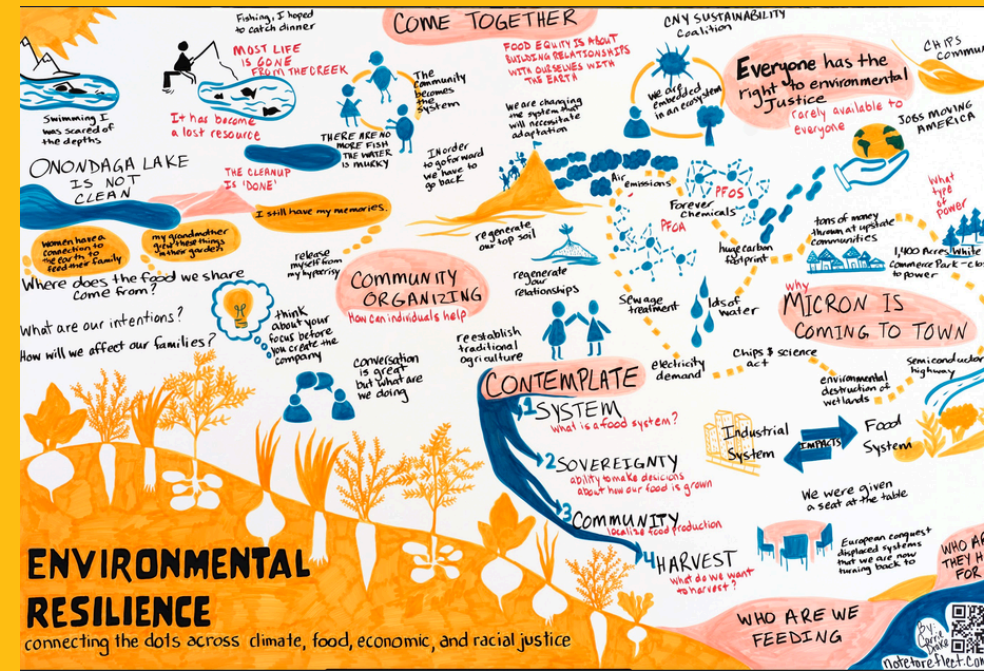


2024 DESIGN BY JUDE MAY
ADAPTED INTO PROGRAM BY MICAH ORIETA

2025 DESIGN BY BHARATI MAHAJAN
ADAPTED INTO POSTER BY MICAH ORIETA

VISUAL NOTETAKING AT THE FOOD JUSTICE GATHERING

BY CARRIE DRAKE OF NOTE TO REFLECT



^ 2023

^ 2024

^ 2025



VISUAL NOTETAKING AS ARCHIVING



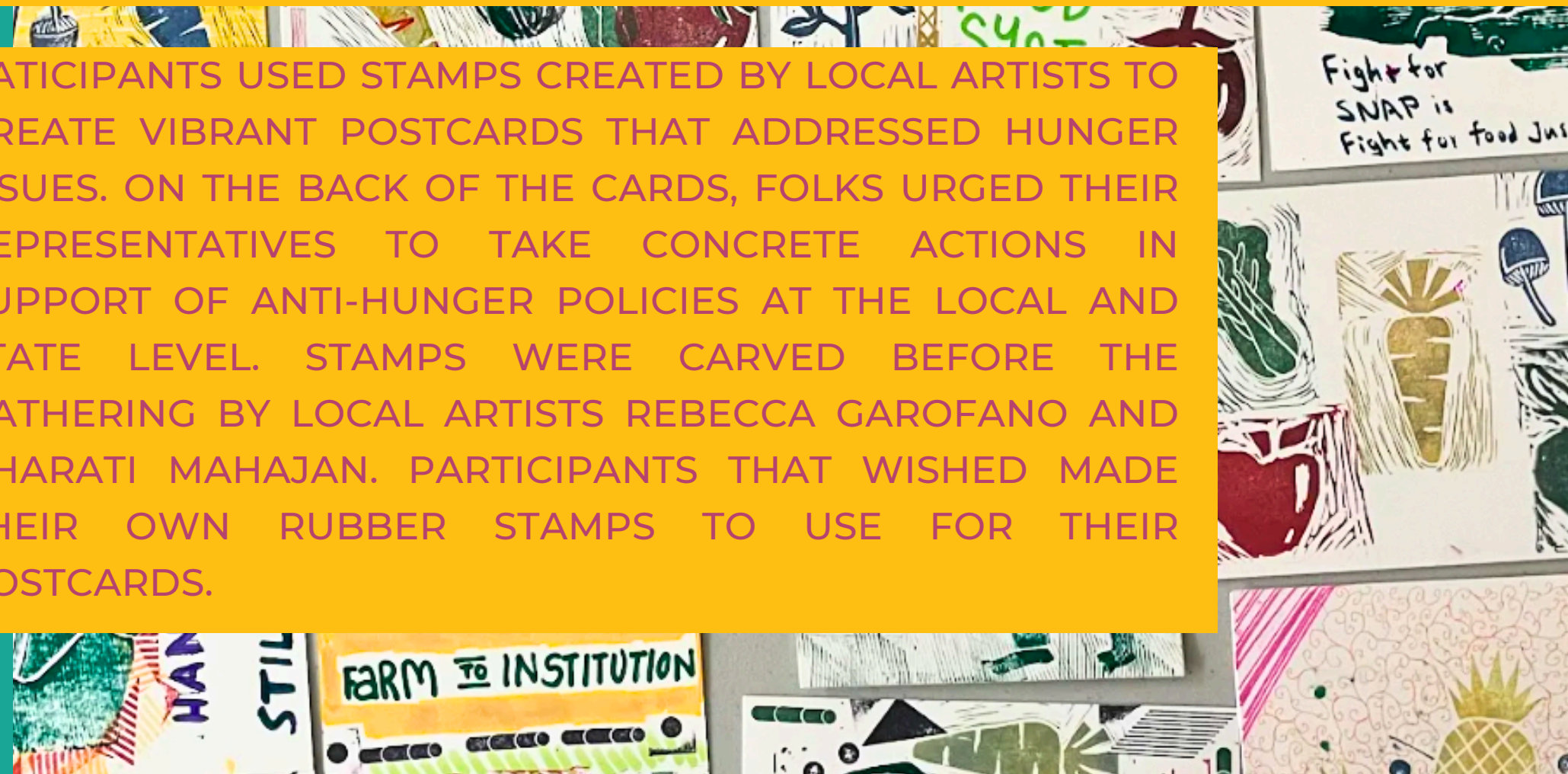
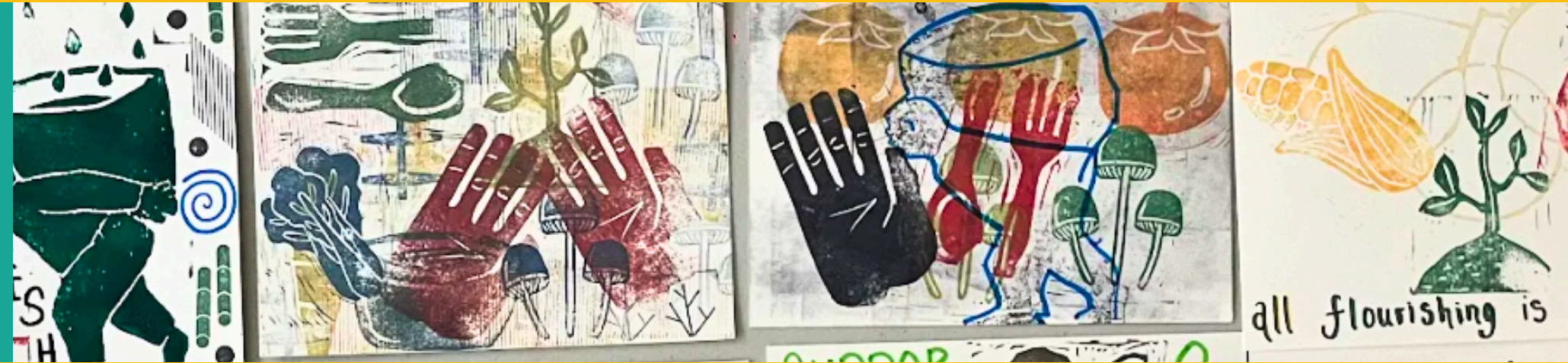
VISUAL NOTETAKING BOARDS ARE USED BEYOND JUST THE MOMENT OF CREATION. THEY SERVE AS ARCHIVES OF CONVERSATIONS HAD AT THE GATHERING AND AS DATA POINTS FOR UNDERSTANDING CONNECTIONS ACROSS FOOD SYSTEMS WORK. THEY ARE INCORPORATED INTO OTHER NARRATIVE MATERIALS TO ADD VISUAL APPEAL AND FURTHER TELL STORIES OF OUR FOOD SYSTEM.

ADVOCACY POSTCARDS



FOOD JUSTICE GATHERING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT ACTIVATION

PARTICIPANTS USED STAMPS CREATED BY LOCAL ARTISTS TO CREATE VIBRANT POSTCARDS THAT ADDRESSED HUNGER ISSUES. ON THE BACK OF THE CARDS, FOLKS URGED THEIR REPRESENTATIVES TO TAKE CONCRETE ACTIONS IN SUPPORT OF ANTI-HUNGER POLICIES AT THE LOCAL AND STATE LEVEL. STAMPS WERE CARVED BEFORE THE GATHERING BY LOCAL ARTISTS REBECCA GAROFANO AND BHARATI MAHAJAN. PARTICIPANTS THAT WISHED MADE THEIR OWN RUBBER STAMPS TO USE FOR THEIR POSTCARDS.





WEAVING INTENTION

ATTENDEES AT THE FOOD JUSTICE GATHERING WERE INVITED TO BRING WEAVING MATERIALS AND ADD TO OUR GIANT LOOM. USING TRAVEL LABELS, FOLKS WROTE DOWN THEIR DREAMS FOR THE FOOD SYSTEM, CREATING A COLLABORATIVE PIECE

FALL 2025

PERFORMANCE INVITATION

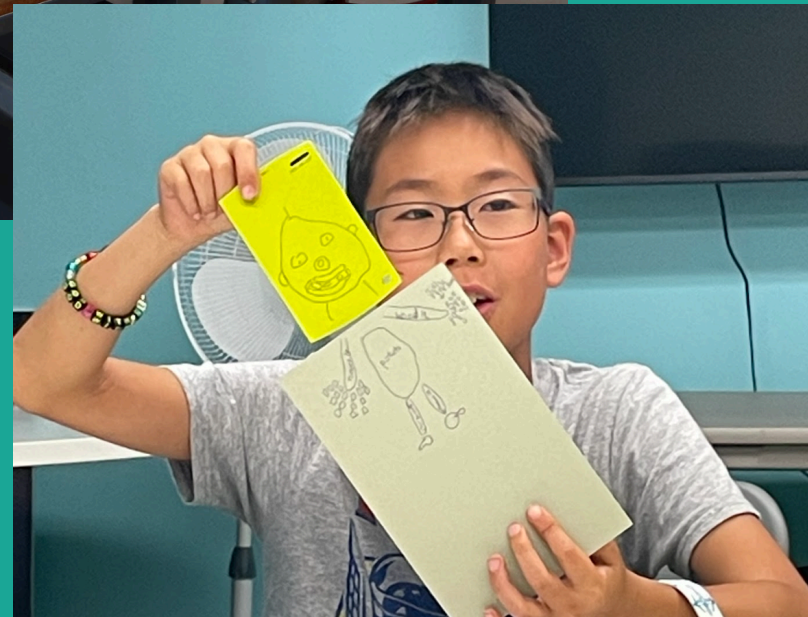


SINCE 2024 MARY NICKSON HAS BEEN OPENING THE FOOD JUSTICE GATHERING WITH ORIGINAL MUSIC INSPIRED BY THE GATHERING'S THEME. THE PIECES HAVE MARKED AN "ARRIVING" FOR ATTENDANTS, AND ARE A MEANINGFUL PART OF SETTING INTENTION FOR THE DAY: ONE OF SHARING AND CELEBRATION OF LOCAL WORK, NOT OF ACADEMIC DISCUSSIONS REMOVED FROM COMMUNITY CONTEXT.

CAPTURING PERSONAL STORIES

THROUGHOUT 2025 WE WORKED WITH SOFIA GUTIERREZ TO HOST A SERIES OF ZINE WORKSHOPS FOR YOUTH. PARTICIPANTS WERE ENCOURAGED TO THINK ABOUT WHAT FOOD MEANT TO THEM, AND HOW TO REPRESENT IT VISUALLY IN THE FORM OF ILLUSTRATED RECIPES AND FREE FORM ILLUSTRATION.

AS PART OF THE SERIES, WE USED POETRY AS AN ENTRY POINT TO ENGAGE WITH FOOD, INVITING POET JULIAN GUY TO LEAD EXPLORATIONS OF TASTE, SMELL, AND MEMORY. PARTICIPANTS ALSO EXPLORED RECIPE-MAKING AFTER AN HORCHATA-MAKING DEMONSTRATION BY JOANNE VILLEGAS OF BRUJAS AGUAS FRESCAS.



SUMMER 2025

CAPTURING MOVEMENT MOMENTS

THROUGHOUT ALL OF SOFSA EVENTS, WE ARE INTENTIONAL ABOUT CAPTURING PHOTOGRAPHY. FOR BIGGER EVENTS, WE HIRE LOCAL PHOTOGRAPHERS TO LEND THEIR EXPERTISE AND HELP US CAPTURE THE ESSENCE OF GATHERING. PHOTOGRAPHS HELP US ARCHIVE THE WORK WE'VE DONE, AND CREATE MOMENTUM THAT SPURS ONGOING INVOLVEMENT. WE ARE ITERATING NEW WAYS TO SHARE THESE PHOTOS AS PART OF THE BIGGER STORY OF OUR WORK.



GALLERY INSTALLATION AS PART OF THE 2025 FOOD JUSTICE GATHERING



2026 GALLERY EXHIBIT AT ART IN THE ATRIUM

