

2022 Annual Report



Our Mission

The Fit and Food Connection offers people living in food and fitness deserts access to free nutritious food, physical activities, educational workshops, and personal coaching to encourage and support healthy living.

Our Vision

We envision a world where people in underserved communities all have strong minds and healthy bodies.

Reflecting as we look ahead...

As we settle into the new year, our community is clear on the needs and priorities that will strengthen people and sustain our neighborhood. Fit and Food Connection will continue to address the barriers and concerns in Northern Saint Louis region focusing on the healing and wellbeing of our community members. We are dedicated to adjusting our focus and direction to address the current state of our neighborhoods through physical exercise, nutrition education, mindfulness, and healthy food access. The Fit and Food family extend our arms-wide to welcome you fully into our work with the goal to make real impact. Thank you for following along the journey to create a well space for people in North St. Louis to have healthy minds and strong bodies.

Gabi Cole

Executive Director and Co-Founder



The Health of Our Community

In the underserved neighborhoods of St. Louis, residents have limited access to nutritious food and affordable, holistic wellness resources, which raises the risk of chronic health conditions such as heart disease, obesity, and diabetes, and lowers life expectancy.

37%

of residents on the north side of the city live below the poverty line

23.4%

of St. Louis City residents do not have reliable access to nutritious food

38%

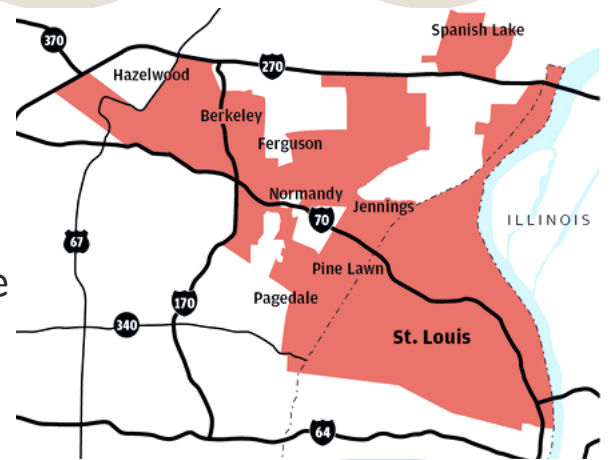
of Black adults in St. Louis City are obese

90%+

of the City's vacant properties are in majority-Black neighborhoods

The STL Promise Zone

The Fit and Food Connection works primarily in the **St. Louis Promise Zone**, an area in which **strong local partnerships** provide communities with the tools they need to rebuild and revitalize after decades of **systemic disinvestment** with lack of equitable resources.



Our community members' experiences

"Sometimes we just don't have the funds to eat healthy so we just get what we can. It's bad."

"We have only a few stores, we live in a food desert and the bills are making us go for the cheaper option of fast food. We are trying to save money but hurting ourselves in the long run."

Our Programs

Responding to the need for equity around wellness and food accessibility, Fit and Food works to positively impact the wellbeing of our community through our holistic, health-supporting programs.

Food Access Programs



- Organic Garden
- Food Assistance & Delivery

In 2022, we had

More than
800

fitness and nutrition
session attendances

Wellness Programs



- Group Fit
- Group Nutrition
- One-on-One Coaching

Approximately

1,300 lbs.

organic fruits and vegetables
grown at our garden

And over

60,000

healthy meals delivered to our
community members' homes



Our 2022 Impact

To determine the success and impact of our programs, we look to our community of wonderful people who trust us as partners in their health. Input from community members throughout the year and on our annual surveys keep our work community centered and evolving as needs change.

IN 2022,
WE SURVEYED
OUR COMMUNITY
MEMBERS WHO
REPORTED

♥ Feelings of empowerment in their wellness with an increased sense of community

♥ Increased levels of activity/exercise and the knowledge to do so safely

♥ Improved energy level, sleep habits, stress levels, and mood

♥ Decreased stress about where their next meal will come from

♥ Healthier and increased nutritious food consumption with improved knowledge of healthy meal preparation



"I just appreciate you all so much."

How We Prioritize Our Growth

As Fit and Food continues to grow, we have taken the time to assess and check in with our community on the next phase of our work.

Growing Community 2026

The Fit and Food Connection will work to further promote equity around wellness and food accessibility through our Growing Community 2026 project, which we announced in 2022. This capacity-building project focuses on strengthening the health of our community with constituents' voices and needs elevated to the forefront of our planning and growth.

Our capacity-building project includes: increased efficiency and reach of our programs, eliminating our waitlist, substantial expansion of our garden allowing for more produce grown and more opportunities for wellness programming on site, outdoor learning space, nature play areas, rain garden, walking trail, multipurpose building, and open-air corner store.

Groundbreaking in Spring of 2023!

This project will help us to address urgent and ongoing community health and wellness needs through:

- INVESTMENT
- VOLUNTEERISM
- COMMUNITY
- SUSTAINABILITY



The Fit and Food Family

Our team is comprised of dedicated volunteers, passionate board members, and staff members who work day in and day out to improve the health of our community.

*We thank you
for your support!*

STAFF & FOUNDERS

- Gabi Cole** Executive Director and Co-Founder
- Joy Millner** Co-Founder and Advisor
- Jessica Carter** Director of Personnel
- James Donegan** Food Pantry Manager
- Drew Foster** Urban Garden Coordinator
- Shaknoteya Jones** Program Manager
- Rebecca Punselie** Fundraising Director
- Heather Zago** Program Director



BOARD MEMBERS

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- Lei Deng** Vice Chair
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fitandfoodconnection.org