

CASE STUDY: RICH PRODUCTS

SUPPORTING MAP'S INITIATIVES WITH A \$50,000 GRANT



COMPANY

A food company on a mission to eradicate food insecurity in the local communities

In 1945, Rich Products was born when its founder Robert E. Rich, Sr. created the world's first non-dairy whipped topping. Over the next 75 years, Rich's has pioneered many of the food industry's most game-changing products, setting – and resetting – a new benchmark of success. From Rich's Whip Topping – dubbed the miracle cream from a soya bean – to acquisitions, international expansion, and continued innovations, the company hasn't slowed down since.

Rich's has participated in sustainability work for the last 11 years through its energy and water efficiency projects, and established a more formal sustainability strategy in 2020. Rich Products believes in the power of partnership. They believe in giving back to the community, which starts in their own backyard. During the pandemic, Rich Products awarded Massachusetts Avenue Project (MAP) a \$50,000 grant to combat unprecedented threats to local food security in Buffalo, NY.



**RICH FAMILY
FOUNDATION**



CHALLENGES

Tackling food insecurity in a community with growing poverty rates

MAP supports communities in Buffalo impacted by Food Apartheid. Prior to the pandemic, Buffalo was already one of the most impoverished cities in New York with 30% of households being food insecure, a rate more than double for all of Erie County, leading to residents cutting down on the food products purchased for their daily needs.

SOLUTIONS

In the extraordinary year of 2020, MAP combated unprecedented threats to local food security from farm to family table through their Mobile Market Food Access Initiative. Along with MAP's urban farmhouse on Buffalo's West Side, locations were set up across Buffalo targeting communities impacted by Food Apartheid, guaranteeing service to those in need. Rich Products supported MAP in their initiatives by providing a \$50,000 grant, which gave MAP the funding it needed to fight for food justice, security, and receding access stemming from the economic fallout of COVID-19. Serving 1,596 customers from mid-August through December, MAP tackled this project in a dual solution approach with an "All Access Pass" customer discount program and a Food Box concept. Together, these strategies maximized food equity in our unpredictable new reality.

RESULTS

In addition to achieving all its primary project goals, MAP contributed to people, planet, and prosperity factors with the project's byproducts. Partnering with fourteen farms and three wholesalers in the WNY area, MAP balanced rural farm yields to maximize the output and variety from their urban plots. With COVID heavily impacting the food-service industry, local farmers had excess produce but lacked avenues to offload. Through MAP's collaborative initiative they were able to generate economic value, as well as develop local connections. MAP also partnered with numerous organizations, such as UB, at sites for program implementation to promote a healthier community. MAP was not only profitable but had positive financial and economic impacts in the community. They created a high-performing, inclusive initiative that allowed them to double the customers served from 2019. Nearly tripling their market share from 2019, they were also able to extend their season by eight weeks generating an additional 340 hours of job security.

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One of SBR's founding Board members used to lead Sustainability at Rich Products and really set us on our journey towards a more strategic approach.



Rich's actions and results have been reported within the framework of The WNYSBR's Recognition Program, a continuous improvement program structured to help businesses reach achievable sustainable targets. The program encourages companies to implement a comprehensive sustainability plan. This includes systematic benchmarking, identifying further environmental efficiency opportunities, and quantifying results when improvements are put into place.

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