

NAPERVILLE SUN

Endeavor Health donates \$5M to help Loaves & Fishes expand operations



Naperville-based Loaves & Fishes Community Services plans to expand its Aurora food distribution hub using a \$5 million grant from Endeavor Health's Impact Award. (Endeavor Health)



By **MARIE WILSON** | Naperville Sun

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Loaves & Fishes Community Services will receive \$1 million a year for the next five years through the largest grant in the organization's history — a new Impact Award from Endeavor Health.

Naperville-based Loaves & Fishes is the first to receive the large-scale award from Endeavor's Community Investment Fund. The money will help the nonprofit food pantry add on to its distribution hub in Aurora to increase efficiency, better partner with other agencies and assist more people.

The pantry plans an expansion dubbed "Hub 2.0" to add 32,000 square feet to its Aurora distribution facility at 580 Exchange Court, doubling its total space and quadrupling cold storage areas.



Mike Havala, CEO of Loaves & Fishes Community Services in Naperville, says the organization will be able to expand its reach and better collaborate with other food pantry partners thanks to \$1 million a year grant for the next five years from the Endeavor Health Impact Award. (Endeavor Health)

The warehouse, which opened in 2021, is "the hub of the hub-and-spoke model, where food comes in and gets sorted, stored, inventoried and goes out to multiple spoke locations," Loaves & Fishes CEO Mike Havala said. The pantry delivers food to 13 spokes from the hub, including sites in Naperville, Aurora, Bolingbrook and Plainfield, helping it serve 10,000 people a week.



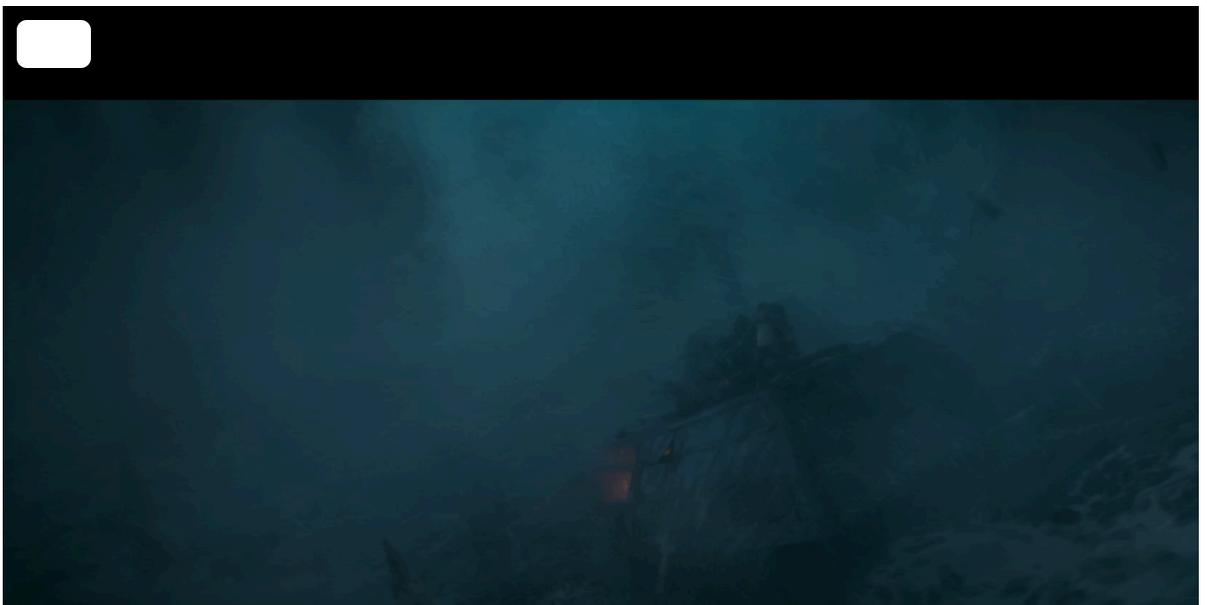


“Unfortunately, because the demand has grown so quickly over the last number of years, we’re out of space and already at capacity at the hub in its current form,” Havala said. “By doubling the size of that hub, it allows us to do so much more, including opening up more spokes out in the community. It facilitates more collaboration with other organizations.”

Endeavor chose Loaves & Fishes from a field of 85 applicants for the inaugural Impact Award, citing the potential of the Hub 2.0 plan to improve the health of local residents through consistent access to fresh, healthy food.

Jeff Zakem, Endeavor’s director of community impact and equity, runs the Community Investment Fund. He said the Impact Award aims to support organizations that present innovative ideas to address the complex societal factors affecting public health — including access to health care, behavioral health care, food insecurity, housing insecurity and workforce development.

“All of these really have large contributions to health outcomes,” Zakem said. “As you think about the health of an individual, it’s important to also consider these social drivers of health.”





Endeavor officials said Loaves & Fishes' Hub 2.0 proposal hits a sweet spot for promoting health through its potential to increase food delivery to a broader swath of those in need.

"Their proposal was a unique opportunity to invest in a way that grew their infrastructure and grew their opportunities to drive partnerships through procurement, shared space and nutrition programming," Zakem said.

With \$1 million a year coming from the Impact Award, Loaves & Fishes plans to break ground next year on the hub expansion, Havala said. The additional space is expected to become operational in spring 2027.

Havala said the extra room will allow new shared storage with pantry partners and more "cobuying" of supplies, so pantries can share shipments to lower costs.

"That really moves the needle in getting the most out of our dollars," Havala said.

The new Impact Award isn't the first time Endeavor Health has supported Loaves & Fishes. Previous Endeavor grants in 2022 and 2024 helped the charitable food provider expand its mobile food program and increase evening and weekend hours at its grocery market in Naperville, Havala said. Plus the hospital system has a history of providing volunteers and hosting events that benefit Loaves & Fishes.

Endeavor's creation of the Impact Award follows \$31.2 million the system has granted through its Community Investment Fund since 2022 across its nine-hospital service area in Chicago and the north and west suburbs.

Endeavor's team will remain connected with Loaves & Fishes throughout the five-year Impact Award period and will look for opportunities for the hospital system's reach and expertise to further support the mission of providing healthy food.

"Our goal with the Community Investment Fund is also to develop relationships," Zakem said. "This isn't just a financial award and 'good luck.' This is a partnership."

Marie Wilson is a freelance reporter for the Naperville Sun.

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