



# FISH FOOD BANK 2018 NEWSLETTER

FISH Food Bank would like to extend its appreciation to all our many donors and supporters. We continue to be blessed with a very supportive community and want you to know that we have worked hard to use your donations to improve the quality of life for our friends and neighbors who are food insecure. With the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the food bank rapidly approaching, we would like to share some of our successes with you.

## **FISH Food Bank** – a Brief History (Becky Bugge)

**FISH** Food Bank (Friendly, Instant, Sympathetic, Help) has been around for a long time, having been established in 1969, at which time our clients received a loaf of bread and a block of cheese. We have moved several times, finally arriving in our new—and permanent—home at 1130 Tucker Road in Hood River.



After four years of fundraising, and with the help of Our Redeemer Lutheran Church (now Spirit of Grace Church), FISH Food Bank embarked on a plan to build a new warehouse/ distribution center. We established several building committees and began a strong fundraising campaign. All our efforts culminated in ground breaking in 2014, with completion of the building in May of 2015. Thanks to the commitment of many friends and benefactors, the building was completely paid for prior to ground breaking.

Our new building offers clients a warm and friendly lobby space, grocery-store shopping, and clean restrooms.



Our staff now has an office, with a space for storage of all mandatory records. In addition, we have a large warehouse and community room/kitchen. Hood River clients can obtain food on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday afternoons, and on Saturday morning.

Beginning in April 2007, Parkdale clients have been able to obtain food each Monday at the Parkdale Community Church which provides space at no cost to FISH.

FISH opened a third site in May of 2010 located in the Mid-Valley (Odell) area, with the owner of the building allowing FISH to operate at no cost other than utilities. Sadly, in August 2018, the owner anticipated renovation of the building, requiring us to vacate the premises. We are grateful for his generosity and celebrate the successes we had in Odell, and all the many friends we made and clients we helped while operating there.

In January 2011, FISH was contacted and requested to establish a FISH Food Bank site in Cascade Locks. This site required no upgrades as the Cascade Locks City Hall provides space for our use. The first distribution for this site was in February 2011. Clients receive food on the fourth Wednesday of each month and the following Saturday. The volunteers and clients in Cascade Locks have thoroughly embraced their new food bank. In fact, many of the clients are also our volunteers.

## **Food Donations** (Lorinda Hoffman)

**FOOD** is what we are all about, and donations keep us healthy and our clients well fed. FISH would not be able to provide the quantity or variety of food we are able to offer our clients without the donations we receive from the community. Last year, we received almost 185,000 lbs. of food from different donors in our area, and we are on track to meet or exceed that amount this year. Many local groups and individuals contribute shelf-stable foods throughout the year. We receive donated meat, dairy products, produce, bakery items, and dry goods from our local grocery stores. In addition, businesses donate products they sell, including bread, bagels, coffee, eggs, jam, juice, meat, popcorn, salsa, sauerkraut, and tortilla chips.

## **Volunteering** (Billie Stevens)

**FISH** volunteers are the backbone of the FISH Food Bank. In 2017, there were 519 unduplicated volunteers that helped in some aspect at the food bank. On an average, about 180 different volunteers assist at the food bank each month. Last year, volunteers generously dedicated over 11,200 hours of time.

We have a wide variety of volunteer opportunities, allowing individuals the chance to utilize their skills and match their interests. There is a wonderful warehouse crew that does everything from organizing the food and unloading the trucks to helping sort and prepare the food for distribution. Another group of volunteers help with transporting food, some taking food to Parkdale and Cascade Locks, while others pick up food from local grocery stores. Volunteers assist in organizing the distribution areas of the food bank so it is ready for clients. Another very special group of volunteers delivers food to our clients who are home-bound. Many volunteers are needed to assist with the actual distribution of the food to our clients. The FISH Board of Directors plays a vital role in keeping the organization running smoothly.

The role of the volunteer is extremely important. Last year, we had approximately 315 different food distribution days, all of which are conducted by volunteers. The Fish Food Bank very much appreciates the time, effort, and invaluable skills the volunteers provide.

If you would like to become part of the FISH volunteer team, contact Billie Stevens, Volunteer Coordinator, at FISH (541-386-3474) to discuss the many different possibilities.

## **Local Gardens/Farmers Sharing it Forward** (Trina McAlexander)

**MORE** and more local produce is being donated and shared forward so everyone in our community can

enjoy local fresh fruit and veggies. The word is out that we love taking in your delicious extra fruit and veggies at the Food Bank, and the whole community is expanding their gardens and sharing their harvests each week with us. Local farmers have sent fruit harvests, literally by the ton, and the smallest of gardeners are donating their ample crops of zucchini, kale, and beans. We are also enjoying the “fruits of their labor” from the Spirit of Grace Church garden. We couldn’t be more delighted to see our clients enjoying more fresh food each night with their families, so we want to thank you all for growing and donating your fresh produce.



**Summer Lunches** (Marianne Brevard)

**THIS** summer found FISH and its numerous volunteers once again taking nutritious lunches to two locations in Hood River, to the Mid-Valley Elementary School, and to Cascade Locks in a very successful effort to provide lunches to those children who may not receive a good lunch. During the month of August at the Hood River Sites, you helped serve 492 meals to children and 130 meals to adults (mostly parents). Roughly 3,000 shelf-stable snacks were sent home with the children, and 300 donated children’s books were distributed. With the cooperation of Columbia Market, we began a voucher program for Cascade Locks. The new meal program at Mid-Valley Elementary in Odell saw 280 lunches served. In total, 988 meals were served this summer; and over 200 volunteer hours were reported. The volunteers represented FISH Food Bank in a very positive way. Thank you to all the businesses and individuals that enthusiastically supported the summer lunch program. Well-fed children are happy children!

**Farm to FISH Fundraiser** (Becky Bugge)

**JULY 28** found FISH board members greeting guests at the first annual Farm-to-FISH brunch fundraiser held at the spectacular Mt. View Orchards. This was a great



opportunity to kick-off the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of FISH Food Bank. Music was provided by Erick Haynie and John Durkan. Guests dined on a gourmet breakfast prepared by chef Kathy Watson, toured the orchard, enjoyed breakfast cocktails, and bid on desserts and auction items. All in all, it was a very successful and fun-filled morning and raised over \$10,000 to help us purchase food for our clients. Many thanks go to Mt. View Orchards, to the musicians, to all the businesses that donated food and auction items, and to everyone who attended and supported our event.

**Community Room** (Gail Lyon)

**WHEN** FISH Food Bank and the Spirit of Grace Church began planning for the new building, they envisioned a multi-use facility that could serve the wider community, as well as serving the clients of FISH. That is exactly what happened. The large, airy room looking out on the FISH/Spirit of Grace garden and equipped with a modern demonstration kitchen has (and is) hosting many community groups. In fact, the space has been scheduled almost every day.

Health and fitness are frequent themes for the users of the space. Yoga classes are offered. The Gorge Master Gardeners use the kitchen and space for their Seed- to- Supper program. The Mid-Columbia Center for Living uses the space for a cooking skills/nutrition program, and the OSU Extension uses the space for Healthy Meal preparation. Other groups use the room for health, nutrition, and wellness education. Providence HR Memorial Hospital has used the space for a Diabetes Prevention Class, and One Community Health has taught Family Steps to Wellness. The Hood River County Prevention Department has used the room to teach Alcohol Server Training. Various groups also use the community room for their weekly, monthly or occasional meetings, including The Gorge Grown Food Network, GEM, One Community Health, Hood River Lions, Columbia Gorge Health Council, and the FISH board. The Hood River Art Club also meets in the community room each week.

Surprisingly, one of the biggest uses of the FISH community room has been for private family parties for weddings, baptisms, and graduations. During Thanksgiving, our kitchen is used to cook the turkeys for the free Thanksgiving meal, and in December the room will be used for Christmas basket preparation.

Some groups (like private parties) pay to use the space; however, other non-profit groups that share the mission of FISH and Spirit of Grace Church may use the room free of charge. We have made about \$2,000 this year from rentals of the space, and that money goes into the Operations and Maintenance account for the upkeep of the facility.

We at FISH are very gratified that the community room has been such a well-used space for so many groups.

**Our Clients** (Billie Stevens)

**FISH** Food Bank serves clients in Hood River County and Mosier. Last year, we helped 1,284 different families. Of the individuals served, 37% were children. Over the last few years, we have also seen an alarming increase in the number of clients who are experiencing homelessness, from 14% in 2014 to 20% currently. We treat all individuals with the utmost respect, privacy, and sensitivity, never discriminating.



FISH Food Bank is a nonprofit entity operating in Hood River County and Mosier, serving an average of 400 hungry families each month. We are fortunate to be in an area that supports the Food Bank with generous donations of food and with outstanding monetary donations and grants. You can visit our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/FISHhoodriver> to learn more about FISH. In addition, our web site, [www.fish-food-bank.com](http://www.fish-food-bank.com) will give you information on ordering a commemorative brick or making donations electronically through PayPal. Or, you can send your donation to 1767 – 12<sup>th</sup> Street, No. 147, Hood River, OR 97031. Call us at 541-386-3474 if you have any questions. From all of us at FISH, thank you for your continued support and generosity!

*...because no one should be hungry...*

