

# REVEALING THE FACES OF HUNGER

# COVID-19 RESPONSE REPORT

**Before the pandemic, Food Lifeline provided more than 60 million pounds of food every year to more than 300 food banks, shelters and meal programs. With COVID - 19, in one dramatic moment our world changed. 70% of donated food streams dried up overnight.** Grocery store shelves were empty. Food rescue partner restaurants shuttered. Mandatory social distancing guidelines closed down Food Lifeline's volunteer work force representing the equivalent of 31 full-time employees. As school's shifted to remote learning, districts scrambled to find new and alternative ways to get breakfast and lunch to students facing hunger.

**More than 560,000 people lost their jobs in our region.** In the midst of the greatest decline in the economy since the Great Depression, Food Lifeline's food resources were depleted and demand doubled. **The pandemic revealed what we long knew, many people are one job, one paycheck away from food insecurity. Time for reinvention...**

**Community and corporate support was overwhelming. Local, state and federal government stepped in with new grants and innovative programs.**

## FOOD LIFELINE RESPONDS

**We secured a large warehouse in SODO** which provided for social distancing and engaged 277 members of the National Guard to replace the work our volunteer work force

**We worked fast to establish relationships with colleges, community centers and shopping malls to create drive-through community food distribution centers,** an ideal way to get resources directly into the neighborhoods and populations that were most in need of food.

**We partnered with local media, television and radio stations to get the word out** to thousands of people who had never experienced food insecurity or visited a food bank before so they could access the nutritious food they needed for themselves and their families. We captured more than 500 earned media engagements as Food Lifeline's story captured local and national audiences.

**We shifted traditional warehouse operations to building food boxes** to support our partner agencies and community food distributions - supplying more than one million boxes and supporting more than 246,000 families.

**We sourced government contracts, grants, and charitable gifts to meet the overwhelming need to purchase food** to feed our communities, enabling us to spend more than \$17 million dollars since the pandemic began.

**We secured a Feeding America grant** which allows us to directly hire a local staff member in the Skagit and Whatcom communities focused on migrant and indigenous communities.

**We are proud at how we stepped up to meet the moment, doubling our ability to serve** in mere months, but the demand isn't abating. Projections suggest the worst is still ahead, fully 1 in 5 people are expected to experience food insecurity this winter. We do not know what another wave looks like, or how long it will take our region to recover economically.

**We do know your on-going support is critical in the months ahead.**

### Van

*"My family and I are grateful for this food. These are scary times for all of us. Now we have food for the whole family. It's so nice."*



Van is the head of a multi-generational family in South Seattle that has struggled financially since the pandemic. The food he receives at Food Lifeline's public distributions at the Rainier Beach Community Center keeps his family from having to choose between paying for utilities and putting nutritious food on the table.

Carol is one of many special people who volunteer so others have enough food on the table. She reaches out to neighbors who lack transportation or are housebound, making sure everyone near her has the food they need to stay safe and healthy.



### Carol

*"I send out an e-mail each week to my neighbors and see who needs food. Then I pick it up and deliver it to them. They are so grateful."*

### Marlene

*"This food is definitely helping us."*



Marlene lives with her husband and three daughters, all who have been out of work since the crisis began. Her husband works from home, but it isn't enough to care for their family of five. They visit the North Seattle College food distribution each week for boxes of fresh produce and dairy.

Del is a senior citizen whose unemployment recently ran out. He can deal without having much money, he says, but not having enough food is "frightening". He takes comfort knowing that with Food Lifeline's assistance, he will eat every day.



### Del

*"I'm not sure what I would do without this food. It's such a wonderful help."*

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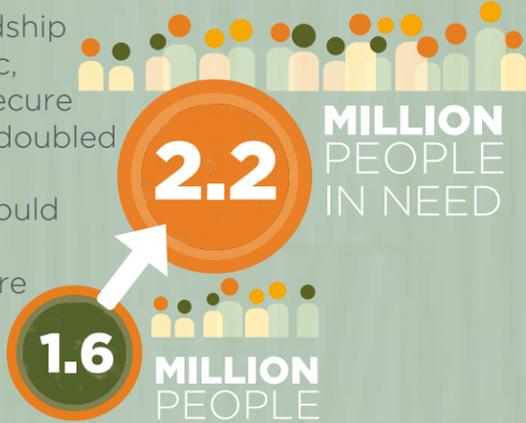
## SITUATION:

In the wake of the **COVID-19** pandemic and our state's statewide stay-at-home order in March, Food Lifeline had to quickly adapt to dramatically increased demand for food.

For perspective, in a typical year about **850,000 people in Washington** experience food insecurity.



With the economic hardship caused by the pandemic, the number of food-insecure people in our state has doubled to **1.6 million people**. Projections suggest it could reach more than **2.2 million people** before the crisis begins to subside.



## CHALLENGE:

**Donated food** generally represents **4.4 million pounds** of Food Lifeline's supply every month, but with the **COVID-19** pandemic, those **donations dropped by 70%**.



## SOLUTION:

Food Lifeline began the effort with producing emergency food boxes containing a variety of shelf stable items.

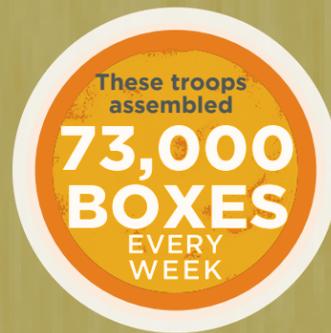


Responding to community requests, Food Lifeline added boxes of produce and assorted dairy to our distributions. We added 36 new agencies/food pantries to support high-need neighborhoods.



## PRODUCTION:

**277 members** of the **Washington National Guard** worked full-time at an emergency warehouse in the SODO district.



## EMERGENCY DISTRIBUTION: April - November



## DRIVE-THROUGH COMMUNITY DISTRIBUTION:

To meet the dramatic increase in need, Food Lifeline has initiated public distributions at local shopping malls, community centers, colleges, and the Hunger Solution Center. These distributions are for anyone who needs food during the crisis.

**To date, Food Lifeline has distributed 120,000+ boxes through this program.**



## When Crisis Hits... Hunger Happens

- More than **40%** of clients during the pandemic are visiting food banks for the first time.
- Black, Indigenous, Immigrant, and Refugee communities are disproportionately impacted by the crisis, **40%** of people of color are currently experiencing hunger.
- Government projections anticipate one in five people may become food insecure in Washington during the winter of 2020-2021.
- As COVID-19 resurges, Food Lifeline must be prepared to meet our communities' needs, be innovative in sourcing nutritious and culturally appropriate food. We must continue to learn, evolve and respond.