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.

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.

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.

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.

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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 workforce.

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.
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.

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.