

SPRING 2023

AT THE TABLE

NEWS FROM THE HUNGER SOLUTION CENTER AT FOOD LIFELINE

**FOOD
LIFELINE**
HUNGER DOESN'T HAVE TO HAPPEN

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COMMUNITIES COLLABORATE TO EXPAND HUNGER RELIEF EFFORTS IN SOUTH PARK PAGE 2

"I know what a difference this kind of support makes." — **Senator Murray**



A COALITION UNITES TO CREATE THE SOUTH SEATTLE COMMUNITY FOOD HUB



Senator Patty Murray toured the future home of the South Seattle Community Food Hub on February 22. Senator Murray played a critical role in securing \$4 million in federal funding to seed the project. The Hub's goal is to support and promote a more local, just, and sustainable food economy by prioritizing BIPOC, Immigrant, and Refugee-led and -serving community-based organizations, growers, and producers in the area; serving as a space to convene, to store fresh produce and package it for distribution, prepare produce for cooking, and more.



“Food insecurity was an issue before the pandemic,” say Senator Murray, **“The pandemic made it public...it’s not the time to start cutting back on investments. It’s a time to make sure we’re doing what we need for the future.”**

Garnering local support is key to getting the project launched. The Advisory Committee hosted Seattle Deputy Mayor Greg Wong and representatives from King County Executive Dow Constantine’s office. **“I’m really excited...to see both Food Lifeline and the community work in partnership**

together to create something that improves how we are thinking about food and solving for food insecurity,” says Deputy Mayor Wong.



“If we are going to have a robust, healthy system of food security, then we are going to have to have diversity,” says Ray Williams, Director of Black Farmers Collective, *“It’s important to support all aspects of the food system.”*

— Ray Williams, Director, Black Farms Collective



— Yamila Sterling, Solid Ground



COLLEGE STUDENTS EXPERIENCE HIGH RATES OF HUNGER

Every Tuesday afternoon, students and community members walk and drive up to receive bags of food from the food pantry at North Seattle College. “Our work is about breaking the cycle of poverty” says Kathleen Crompt, Integration Manager at the Opportunity Center for Employment & Education on campus. For many, a college degree is the key to being competitive for higher paying jobs, but when you are already facing food insecurity paying for tuition can seem impossible.

“Enrollment in colleges tanked during the pandemic”, says Kathleen. “When college students don’t have their basic needs met, they can’t go to school.”



Students struggle to meet their basic needs. Estimates suggest 40% of students face low to very low food security. 53% face housing insecurity.

The food pantry at NSC is invaluable to help students continue their education. Kathleen mentions a student, a refugee from Central Africa. “She worked hard to stay in school, but she could not have done it without the support of the pantry, piecing together all the support is what allowed her to finish. She got her associate degree. She’s now transferring to the University of Washington School of Social Work so she can give back to immigrant families.”

For each distribution, the food pantry serves 90-95 households, with some clients picking up bags for the neighbors who need assistance and are unable to drive to the distributions.

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– **Kathleen Crompt, Integration Manager at the Opportunity Center for Employment & Education on campus**

“No single entity can address these problems on their own. It takes a collaboration and a partnership where both parties are truly in it”, says Kathleen. Volunteers and the U District Food Bank are key to making this food pantry run, but further investment in North Seattle College and programs like it is needed to reach more existing students and reduce the barriers for future students.



THE PANDEMIC SOCIAL SAFETY NET WORKED

March 2020 seems like a lifetime in the past, forever changed and still recovering. It's fair to say that the entire world was disrupted and that none of us could anticipate such a damaging public health crisis that forever reshaped our future. The need for food today is higher than it has ever been, and inventory levels in food banks and pantries across the nation sit incredibly low. In essence, our cupboards are near bare.

While inflation plays a major role, it's not the key driver. During the pandemic, state and federal governments stepped up to create a social safety net to help our country weather the storm. The last remaining supports, enhanced SNAP benefits expired at the end of February. Overnight, 93 million dollars a month in Washington state food assistance disappeared. Coupled with the expiration of the expanded Child Tax Credit (credited with reducing childhood poverty by 40%) and families have plunged back into poverty.

Recent history demonstrates that public action creates meaningful change. Food Lifeline's Director of Advocacy, Aaron Szyzewski shares, "From the point of view of one who has made hunger advocacy my career, the pandemic showcased the incredible power we have to affect change. Despite its vast complexity and contradiction, we live in a society where a single person can make a difference, and your beliefs can inspire others to action."

Ending hunger is possible. Let's end it together, not just for today, but for good. Participating in simple one-to-five-minute actions can motivate our local, state, and federal lawmakers to act for the benefit of our neighbors, and advance legislation that has the power to end hunger



"Over the course of the pandemic, Congress and the Washington State Legislature appropriated record amounts of funding to support emergency food purchases and the costs of distributing this food. As Covid relief packages expire, food insecurity continues."

**— Aaron C —
Director of Advocacy**

Join our movement at
foodlifeline.org/advocacy



DEMAND SURGES AMID INFLATION & BENEFIT LOSSES



Inflation. Fears of recession. Expired pandemic food assistance benefits. Bracing winter cold. So many variables came together to sharply propel the need for food assistance in the wrong direction. In Western Washington and across the country, food pantries, meal programs, and shelters are overwhelmed by the rapid increase in need, often exceeding the demand experienced at the height of the pandemic, but minus the federally provided safety net created to help us ride out the crisis.

“We don’t know exactly what this year is going to look like... everything has been upside down since 2020,” said Dan Lancaster, Director of the Federal Way Food Bank.

The Federal Way Food Bank and others throughout our 17-county service area are reporting critically low inventory levels of food on hand coupled with far more weekly visits. More than a million people in Western Washington alone are living with food insecurity - every week we see single parents raising families on one income, college students who can’t afford to eat, retirees who planned well for a retirement only to be derailed by relentless increases to housing and medical costs.

For people experiencing homelessness, migrant farmworkers, BIPOC households, and immigrant and refugee communities, food insecurity multiplies



“My wife and I are both living off of my social security disability income, so if it wasn’t for the food bank, things would be really bad....my own health issues, the high cost of food, and our lack of income make things rather difficult.”

— Mark B, Maple Valley Food Bank Guest

To contribute to our work, consider donating at foodlifeline.org/newslettergift.





KOMO AND FOOD LIFELINE TEAM UP TO TACKLE HUNGER

In February, Food Lifeline and KOMO News teamed up to raise funds and food to tackle Hunger. It was an action-packed day, with KOMO News crews reporting live at the Hunger Solution Center and in KOMO's Seattle based television studios, where volunteers staffed the phone bank to take donations from the public. BECU matched caller donations with a \$25,000 donation, helping us raise, nearly \$70,000.

Reporter Holly Menino said, "There's a pretty big need in Washington State when it comes to hunger. We've got more than a million people in our state that live in a home that struggles to put food on the table, which is shocking to when you think how prosperous Washington is."

David Jefferson, marketing and communications strategist at Food Lifeline spoke with KOMO about the importance of the food drive and our distribution partners. "There's a reason we call them our partners," Jefferson said, "these food banks, shelters, and meal programs create the distribution network through our 17-county service area. We are aligned together in our mission to end hunger."

Community involvement is equally important. Mark Coleman, Senior Media and Marketing Officer at Food Lifeline, added "We're trying to build a movement to end hunger. We're trying to get people engaged at whatever level they can meet us at. Every single dollar counts."



"Hunger is real, the need is real."

— Holly Menino, KOMO Reporter



Special thanks to the sponsors of our special event with KOMO Tackle Hunger, BECU, Rich's for the Home, Ford Genesis Hyundai of Kirkland, and Kroger's Zero Hunger Zero Waste Foundation





THE KRAKEN & CLIMATE PLEDGE ARENA VOLUNTEERS TAKE OVER

More than 135 volunteers from the Seattle Kraken and Climate Pledge Arena flooded through the doors of Food Lifeline to help their neighbors experiencing food insecurity. There was chanting, Kraken team gear, and enough determination to fill a hockey arena.

In the morning volunteer session, the teams got to work sorting 44,000 pounds of produce. “It’s amazing to think of all these pears going to hungry families”, said Kraken staffer Sam Morgan.

“We had a game last night, but we were excited to get up this morning and get here to lend a hand”, said Kraken CEO, Tod Leiweke. Leiweke was impressed with how smooth the experience was. “This is such an organized and efficient operation. Everything has been laid out so all we had to do was come in and do the work,” he said, adding, “In this day and age, there is no reason anyone should be hungry. We’re proud to be a part of Food Lifeline’s solution to helping those in our community who struggle with food insecurity.”

Beyond a shared belief in ending hunger, the team from Climate Pledge Arena shares a focus on mitigating climate change. The arena was built, and is managed, with the mission of protecting the environment. At Food Lifeline, recovering fresh, nutritious food destined for the landfill is a practice that both feeds more than a million people, while being good stewards of our natural resources.



**“I ❤️ Food Lifeline”
- Buoy, Kraken Mascot**

According to Climate Pledge Arena’s Rob Johnson, that makes Food Lifeline and his team a great match. “We’re on the same page when it comes to the environment”.

In a day’s work, the Kraken sorted more than 77,000 pounds of fresh produce, the equivalent of more than 64,000 meals to help feed our neighbors in Western Washington distributed through more than 400 food pantries, meal programs, and shelters Food Lifeline serves every day. **Go Kraken!!!**

SAVE THE



DATE

@ FOOD LIFELINE

GIVE BIG! MAY 2 - 3, 2023

Double Your Donation through GiveBig! Support your favorite charity during the largest two-day donation drive across Washington state. We combine your donation with a generous match pool to double your impact! To register, visit foodlifeline.org/givebig



STAMP OUT HUNGER MAY 13, 2023

It's the biggest single day canned food drive across the country! Fill your donation bag and leave it by your mailbox! Letter Carriers pick up! To learn more visit foodlifeline.org/stampouthunger



ADVOCACY TOWN HALL MAY 30, 2023

Join Food Lifeline as we host Congresswoman Marilyn Strickland and a panel of military families, state lawmakers, and representatives from Veteran Affairs' National Food Security Program as we discuss important legislation designed to address food insecurity among military families. Learn more foodlifeline.org/advocacy

ROOT OUT HUNGER FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN JUNE 1 - AUGUST 31, 2023

Summer can be a difficult time for families who rely on schools for their meals during the week, help us bridge the summer meal gap so that all kids have the nutrition they need to grow, learn, and thrive.

Visit foodlifeline.org/rootouthunger

FOOD FRENZY JULY 14 - JULY 28, 2023

Teams both large and small join this friendly competition to raise funds, collect food, and volunteer with Food Lifeline. Help us make 2023 our biggest event yet. For more information about getting involved, visit foodlifeline.org/food-frenzy



RENEW YOUR SUPPORT! DONATE TO HELP FAMILIES FACING HUNGER

JOIN US

ADVOCATE

DONATE

VOLUNTEER

I want to help families facing hunger receive the food they need to thrive!

Visit foodlifeline.org/newslettergift to donate