

FISH Food Bank
July 2017
Coordinators Newsletter

Every once and while I get to help during distribution by working at the registration desk. I find this a great opportunity to get a feel for what is happening in our client's lives. It was fun to hear about the family who took a hike on Mt. Hood and discovered Umbrella Falls, or client who has committed to exercising 5 days a week, or the short term seasonal worker who came to pick cherries to get money for his college fund.

However, many stories I hear are not as positive. For example one client has recently been struggling, as she lost her job and now has multiple health issue. When I ask how she was doing, she shared not so great as she lost her housing and was going to start camping the next day.

Last week we provided 6 emergency bags to clients. A couple were to the short term seasonal workers who have not been able to pick cherries yet. Then others were families living in Hood River County and were out of food. I am always so grateful that we can be that bridge to food, because what would you do if you have no money and no food? It has to be a very hopeless and helpless feeling.

I have had a feeling that this year we are serving more homeless clients than in the past. I know that several clients are camping and come in a couple of times a month because they cannot take a full amount at one time. So I decided to look back in the records to see if I could get a feeling of how many of our clients are homeless.

Because of how I track clients, it is difficult to get an exact count but as a rough figure it appear that so far in 2017 we have about 16% or 283 out of 1754 of our clients are listed as homeless. During the same time in 2016 about 13% or 213 out of 1761 our clients are listed as homeless. Then in 2015 11% or 178 out of 1631 were listed as homeless.

While many of our clients have sad stories, the atmosphere at the FISH Food Banks always seem positive. I always love listening to the constant conversation and laughter that erupts in the waiting room while clients are waiting. When the nights are busy I often asked the clients to please have patience with us and they always respond positively and thank us for being there to help. The majority of our clients **really** need our help and show their gratitude by giving thanks and hugs.

Thank you for giving of your time to help families get through the tough times.

Billie Stevens
FISH Food Bank

Community Health Worker

FISH received a grant from Providence of Hood River to help serve our clients beyond just giving them food. FISH hired Silvia Maciel as a Community Health Worker for the summer. In her position she will be visiting the different food banks to talk with the clients about healthy eating, answer questions and take blood pressure. Her focus will be to help our clients focus on healthy eating and discuss the importance of good health.

Silvia is outgoing and very friendly, so when she comes in please be sure to meet her and assist her if she needs something. On the flip side she can always help you if you need something. Often times she brings her beautiful daughters and they are there to give an extra hand, so do not be afraid to put them to work.

Silvia will focus her work in Hood River and Cascade Locks but she will visit Parkdale and Mid-Valley when her schedule allows. She is only working about 10 hours a week.

Short Term Seasonal Workers

It is cherry season and the seasonal workers are now in our area and they are visiting the FISH Food Bank. I know there is still confusion on the difference between short term seasonal workers and the long term farm workers.

The reason we deal with the short term workers a little different is because they are only in our area for 1 to 2 month. We could give them a punch card as homeless since they do not have a permanent address here, but it would only be used once or maybe twice and most of them probably would not keep it. So to save us money by not making a permanent card, we just keep a paper record.

While the short term seasonal workers could be in the computer system, it just seems faster to look up their registration form and not have to deal with the computer.

Many of the other farmworkers who work in the apples and pears are here at least 5 to 6 month, it just makes it easy for them to have a card.

Hope this clears up why we use two systems. If you have a better idea please share it as I am always open to new ways to make things go smoother.

Volunteer Help During the Summer

Because we do have an influx of farm workers and most of them are Spanish speakers, I would strongly encourage each distribution group to have at least one Spanish speaker helping during the distribution. It is really helpful if there is a Spanish speaker at the desk, then we are able to better serve our clients.

Also summer brings a higher number of clients. Last week in Hood River two of the nights had over 30 clients. Because of this it is important in Hood River that you try to have at least 5 volunteers working in the food distribution area. If one person is designated to just prepare the carts to go out, it saves about 5 minutes a person.

I realize with it being summer, a lot of people are on vacation. But the truth of the matter is, if you have at least 5 people helping shop you can get through 30 clients in the hours we are open, otherwise it takes a lot longer.

Also please remember we are asking, if a client come after the closing time, that you still serve them. We are taking this approach, instead of extending our hours. So please be sure to have two individuals willing to stay and work with the late arrivals. We want two volunteers at the food bank when clients are shopping, this is just a safety issue.

Summer Lunch Program

Two FISH Board members, Katie Haynie and Marianne Brevard have worked very hard all spring to put together the FISH Food Bank Free Summer Lunch Program. This program provide a free lunch meal to all children ages 1 to 18 during the month of July.

They were successful in receiving a grant from Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon plus many other great donations.

The meals are served each Tuesday and Thursday in July at the Indian Creek Apartments and the Hood River Mobile Manor. In addition to the meals, there will be daily activities such as story-time, reading buddies, games and free books. On Thursday, take home bags are also available.

I would like to give special kudos to both Katie and Marianne plus all the volunteers helping them. This program is filling an important need and feeding hungry children, who often rely on school lunch program for their food each day. Thank you ladies, for all your work!

Help Sorting Bottles—

One of our volunteers Ann Marie Jelderks, has been assisting FISH by collecting empty product bottles and returning them for a refund. This not only helps the environment it give FISH some extra funds. She also is collecting bottles like pop and beer, and gives this money also to FISH.

She is needing a little extra help and was hoping to have a teenage volunteer to help her sort the bottles. She has the bottles stored in basement of the Subi Hair Saloon building on the corner of 12th and B Street.

Please pass this request on to anyone who might be willing to help her sort the cans, plastic and glass bottles. You can let me know and I will share the information with Ann Marie.

FISH Board Meeting-July 12

The July FISH Board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, July 12 at 12:00 Noon at the Hood River Tucker Road FISH Site. The meeting is open and anyone who would like to attend is welcome.

Important Dates to Put on Your Calendar

July 6	Oregon Food Bank Truck Delivery, 7:00 AM
July 12	FISH Board of Directors meeting, 12:00 Noon
July 20	Oregon Food Bank Truck Delivery, 7:00 AM

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