

FISH Food Bank
March 2019
Coordinators Newsletter

Last month was a wild month with a lot of snow followed by very cold weather. It didn't take long for me to get tired of shoveling snow and fighting the cold. During the month I had the opportunity to talk with many of our clients. I would ask them how they were dealing with the cold and snow. Soon I realize that I had nothing to complain about, as I have a warm house, cupboard full of food and a car to get me around.

I wanted to share a few stories about our clients' lives. One of the most interesting experiences was one morning we went to put cardboard in the recycle bin and there was a young man sleeping in there. We know he came back other nights because we could see his footprints in the snow. We wish we could catch up with him to see if needs any food.

Then there was the couple that showed up on the first snowy weekend, pushing a wheelchair. No, they were not in the wheelchair, it was the way they planned to take their food home. They were living in a tent behind the Red Carpet Restaurant and walked up to the food bank. Thanks to Dave, he took them back down Wal-mart. They then placed their food into the chair and pushed off.

There was the young couple with two children. They answered the question on how they were doing by saying they were doing OK. They are living in a tent and were excited to learn about our "Green Dot" policy of being able to return for food. She said, "That helps a whole lot."

Another gentleman who also is living in a tent, said he was staying warm because his daughter bought him a Coleman stove. He sometimes eats at the warming shelter but does not like to stay the night. His big problem was he could not get his cell phone to charge. After finding out the disposable phone only cost about \$15 dollars, we gave him the money for a new phone.

With school being canceled a lot last month, the kids were not getting their free and reduced meals at school and that puts a strain on the food supply for some families. One family with three children had been to the food bank at the beginning of the month but by the end of the month they had no food left. So they came back to FISH and we were able to help them.

It was just a hard month for many people. I know the agricultural workers and construction workers have not been able to work this last month, so we are seeing an increase number of these families. Also a few new families signed up because of the way the SNAP benefits were distributed for February.

Hopefully, this weather will turn to spring and we can start shoveling in the garden instead of the driveway. Please stay warm and safe.

Billie Stevens
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Conversation about Homelessness

I was talking to a postal worker and they asked if we had seen an increase in numbers at FISH, specifically with people experiencing homelessness. When I shared we had seen a dramatic increase, she replied that she had seen the same thing at the Post Office. There has been a real increase in postal general delivery and most of those using the service are experiencing homelessness. Seem that the trend we are seeing at FISH with an increased number of individuals who are not in permanent housing is mirrored in other places in our county.

Extra Milk

Currently there is a surplus of milk and the USDA is distributing this to food banks. We have been getting the milk on the last Oregon Food Bank truck delivery of the month. Because the milk does have a "best use by date", we are offering families up to 3 half gallons of milk so it does not get too old.

In Hood River, we gave out Rainchecks to the families that came at the end of February. So if your group is distributing food, the person at the desk might have someone coming in to redeem one of the Rainchecks. If they are not getting food, they can just go back and get their milk. We put a March 9 date on the Raincheck. We plan to give it out until we run out of the USDA milk.

Last month in Cascade Locks we had a special milk distribution. The timing was great because it was just before the first big storm. At last Saturday's distribution we had the opportunity to give out the extra milk and we may do

another the special give away again.

Helpful Hints for Client Registration

As I work with the client registration paperwork there are a few things I would like to remind the registration volunteer about:

1. When a potential client comes and says they are new, **always check the computer first**, even if they say they have never been to the food bank. In a recent example, one client said she had never been there, however she had been at the Pine Street site but not to the Tucker Road site. So she was in the system. Another person was on a card with a different partner, so he was actually in the system.

2. The second thing to **look at is the date the card was issued**, not just if the month has been punched. If the card is over a year old, a new card needs to be reissued, even if there are only a few punches left on their card. We are getting many clients that are coming back after a year or two of hiatus. So when this happens, FISH need to update their file and give them a new card. They keep the same number, just a new card.

3. Also if possible please check their name in the computer, not just the hard copy list of names.

a. The list only has names from the last two years, so if they have not been in since before 2017, their name is not on the list.

b. The clients do not always remember who they have listed as family members in the household, so we need to double check if the list is correct.

Thanks for your help, everyone does a fantastic job.

Clients at FISH

The weather, the government, cost of living, housing and availability of work all seem to have an effect on the number of clients who participate in the services of FISH. In March of 2014 we started keeping close track of how many unduplicated clients we were serving. I thought it would be fun to compare 2014 to 2019 numbers.

Unduplicated Clients Served	Families Served	Adults Served	Children Served	%of Children Served
March 2014	420	860	464	35%
March 2019	591	1025	520	34%

FISH Board Meeting—March 13

The March FISH Board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 13 at 12:00 Noon at the Hood River FISH Site. There is a lot happening and a lot of planning that needs to happen. It is important to have all board members attend. The meetings are open and anyone who would like to attend is welcome.

Important Dates to Put on Your Calendar

March 13 FISH Board Meeting, 12:00 Noon, Hood River FISH Site

March 14 Oregon Food Bank Truck delivery, 8:00 AM, Hood River FISH

March 28 Oregon Food Bank Truck delivery 8:00 AM, Hood River FISH

Tucker Road Site.

“This institution is an equal opportunity provider.”



Happy St. Patrick's Day!
Have a warm and safe March.

Billie Stevens
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