



*Creating a Hunger-Free
Community*

Pantry Times

February 2020

Stretching to Make Ends Meet:

“Mary” and “Bill” are Both Customers and Volunteers

Even before their grandchildren had to come live with them for a year, the couple had depended on Helena Food Share for the groceries they needed to get by. But the addition of three children, aged eight months

The couple could empathize with others relying on Helena Food Share. The decision to donate time to the organization wasn't difficult, because the two 72-year-olds say Helena Food Share stood out among

says of the pantry. “Without it, there would be a lot of people hurting.”

Still, they realize some people in need may be reluctant to utilize what Helena Food Share offers. The couple has a friend who seems “too proud” to pick up food despite his dire need. He appears ashamed that he cannot provide for himself, they say.

“We were able to put food on the table because of Food Share.”

to six years, sent that need skyrocketing for “Bill” and “Mary” of Helena. The arrival of their grandchildren meant they were confronted with having to choose between competing demands for limited money. On one hand, they needed food. But they also had to pay for utilities, gasoline, day care and diapers. Helena Food Share allowed them to meet those demands.

The bottom line, Mary says, “We were able to put food on the table because of Food Share.”

Their realization of how critical the Grocery Share food distribution program was to their lives was part of the reason Bill and Mary – not their real names – also became volunteers.

the nonprofits in the Helena area. “We felt they did the most for the community,” Mary says. Beyond that, she adds, it was the staff and fellow volunteers that drew her in. “They’re all nice. Everybody works together,” she says. Although a nagging back problem keeps Bill from volunteering today, Mary still works two shifts a week processing produce and stocking shelves.

Mary says people sometimes come in off the street while she’s working at the pantry and they are hungry or complain of low blood sugar. They need something to eat promptly and they get it with no questions asked.

“It’s amazing how many people have the need to go there,” Bill



But Bill and Mary want those in need to know the wide array of food that is available at the pantry and to not be hesitant to make use of the program that exists specifically for them.

“Come on down one time and check it out,” Mary urges.

Hungry in Helena: Your Support Helps Kids

The Kid Pack Program

Research has revealed the devastating effects that hunger and food insecurity have on children. Not having enough to eat causes kids to be at risk for everything from slower cognitive development to chronic illnesses like asthma, to toxic stress, malnutrition and depression. Hunger also makes it hard for kids to focus at school, affecting their ability to learn.

In our community, the statistics are harrowing; one in five kids face hunger in the greater Helena area. Parents report that they often don't know how they will put food on the table. During the school week, meals are offered to children at school. But on the weekends, it's often a different story.

Thankfully, with your support, Helena Food Share is able to deliver more than 1,150 Kid Packs each week to 17 schools in our area. From East Helena to the Valley, children who are at risk for hunger on the weekends go home after school on Fridays with a Kid Pack, filled with foods that will get them through the weekend.

What's in a Kid Pack?

- Low sugar granola bars, juice boxes and fruit cups
- Oatmeal packets
- Peanut butter
- Mac and cheese
- Pudding cups

Recently, a local teacher told us that some of her students ask her several times a week, "Is this the day we get the food packs?" You can see from the thank you notes some students have sent that Kid Packs are much appreciated.



If you would like to help children facing hunger here in Helena, you can participate in our annual "Doorsteps to Kid Packs" food and fundraising drive on March 4th. This city-wide event gathers over 10,000 pounds of food in just a few hours. It's easy — just leave kid-pack food items on your doorstep (before 1pm) on March 4th, and an AmeriCorps member will come by between 2 and 4pm to pick it up. You can also participate by visiting your local grocery and purchasing Kid Pack food there. If you would like to support the program financially, simply go to our secure website www.helenafoodshare.org, or mail a check to Helena Food Share, P.O. Box 943, Helena, MT 59624. **Your gifts make a difference!**

Wish List

- A business-quality copier
- Dorm-sized refridgerator
- 4-Wheeler with snow plow
- Heavy-duty packing tape
- Disinfecting wipes
- 10' x 10' event tent

If you can help with any of these items, please call:
(406) 443-3663, x 104

Become a Hunger Hero!

Sign up to make a monthly donation. Simply visit HelenaFoodShare.org/hunger-hero and choose how much you would like to donate each month. Thanks to your gift, thousands of our neighbors will be able to count on receiving nutritious food.

Pantry Times

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Pantry Times is a publication of Helena Food Share.

Special thanks to Bob Anez for donating his editorial expertise.

Contact Us: (406) 443-3663

To Volunteer: x 106

To Donate: x 104

Need Help?: x 110

Pantry: 1616 Lewis Street

Office: 1437 Helena Avenue

HelenaFoodShare.org



Giving to Make a Difference

School Nurse Reflects on Childhood Hunger

A child comes to school and complains of stomach pain, a headache, and a lack of energy or other ailments. She ends up in the school nurse's office and admits she hasn't had breakfast; her last meal was more than 12 hours earlier. Sue Ann Buswell saw plenty of such children during her 15 years as a nurse in the Helena school system.

"Kids who are chronically hungry are physically, emotionally and cognitively affected negatively," she said. "They can't concentrate in school. They have to deal with the physical stress of hunger, worrying about where their next meal is coming from and whether there will be any food when they get home."

Some children came to the Sue Ann's office with physical complaints, but embarrassment often made them reluctant to acknowledge their hunger pangs. They may have missed breakfast because their single parent had to rush off to work without preparing something to eat. Or

maybe there was nothing to eat in the house because the family lacked a vehicle to go to the store.

Buswell bought food to have on hand for such emergencies and she would try to wrangle some milk or a snack from the cafeteria so a child would not have to wait until lunch. Buswell said that while schools do a lot to combat hunger, offering free or reduced-cost lunches, but they can't feed kids on the weekends. Kid Packs, the Helena Food Share program that supplies 1,150 school-age children with food to take home over the weekend, is a crucial piece of the anti-hunger effort in schools, Buswell noted. She became a donor to this Helena Food Share program that last year distributed well over 43,000 Kid Packs to children facing hunger.

Buswell recalled seeing some students picking up their Kid Packs on Fridays who were so hungry they began eating the food immediately. Other

children would take several Kid Packs home so they could share the food with their siblings.

"It broke my heart seeing that," she said. "It really concerned me that there were so many kids in a family without food." Sue Ann donates to the Kid Pack program because, as she says, "I trust the work that Helena Food Share does to eliminate childhood hunger, and I know that those Kid Packs make a huge difference to kids who suffer from hunger."

If you would like to make a donation to the Helena Food Share Kid Pack program, please visit HelenaFoodShare.org or call (406) 443-3663, x 104.



COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

Join Us on February 25th!

5-8 p.m | Blackfoot Brewery | 66 S. Park Avenue, Helena

It's Fat Tuesday, just in time to sample this year's **Mardi Gras Red Ale**, specially brewed by **The Blackfoot River Brewery** to benefit **Helena Food Share**. Come on down, pick up some Mardi Gras beads and a fun Mardi Gras mask, sip the **Red Ale**, enjoy food from Murry's, and help beat hunger in Helena! **Generously supported by Blackfoot River Brewing Company and Mosaic Architecture.**





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SAVE THE DATE!

"March Forth" to feed 1 in 5 kids in Helena experiencing hunger



DOORSTEPS TO KID PACKS Food Drive

HELENA AND EAST HELENA
MARCH 4

Place Kid Pack food on your doorstep by 1:00 p.m. and AmeriCorps members will pick it up

Don't live in town? Participate at your grocery store from 2-6 p.m. on Wednesday, March 4th.



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