



*Creating a Hunger-Free
Community*

Pantry Times

January 2021

Groceries to the Rescue

When grocery shopping, do you ever wonder how items get to the stores or what happens to products not ultimately sold? At Helena Food Share, the food we share comes from a variety of sources, and our local stores play an especially important role.

Before last spring, the Helena community provided food through multiple food drives. Then, and more importantly today, your financial donations to Helena Food Share are used to purchase food items through a wide range of outlets. Food providers include local retail and wholesale outlets, Montana farmers and gardeners, the Montana Food Bank Network (both purchased and donated items), and donated commodities from the federal government. All of this accounts for approximately 60 percent of the food distributed through Helena Food Share programs.

The biggest single source, nearly 40 percent, is food donated from over a dozen businesses in the Helena area through Helena Food Share's Grocery Rescue program. Each location donates various products to Helena Food

Share because they know of the need in our community. So when they have excess, they gladly share with us. While it may be food that won't be sold, it's still good food.

Each day that Helena Food Share is open, grocery rescue staff and volunteers arrive early at the pantry, grab a cup of coffee, jump into a delivery truck and begin making the rounds of collecting food at 17 local stores.



On a typical morning, Dave and Leroy or Steve and Joe, head out to stores across the valley to gather items that will soon become available later that day for customers at one of our pantries. About an hour and a half into the morning and after stopping by 5-6 stores, the truck,

filled with bakery goods, fruits and vegetables, milk, deli items, and assorted canned foods, heads back to the pantry where the drivers unload the truck. The crew then completes their rounds of all the other stores before calling it a morning.

This Grocery Rescue program is a critical part of being able to provide food to our neighbors in need. It is also an important part of our community's food cycle, ensuring it gets to those in need of food rather than becoming waste in our landfills.

Thank You to Grocery Rescue Partners!

- ◆ Albertsons
- ◆ Bagel Company
- ◆ Big Lots
- ◆ Bimbo Bakeries USA
- ◆ Bob's Valley Market
- ◆ Costco Wholesale
- ◆ Great Harvest Bread Co.
- ◆ Heritage Food Store
- ◆ Natural Grocers
- ◆ Real Food Market & Deli
- ◆ Safeway
- ◆ Super 1 Foods
- ◆ Target
- ◆ Van's Thriftway
- ◆ Walmart
- ◆ Wheat Montana Bakery & Deli
- ◆ WinCo Foods

Food Drives Turn to Virtual Fund Drives



In addition to a virtual Turkey Challenge, food drives have morphed into virtual fund drives to ensure our donors, staff, and volunteers' safety. Individuals, local businesses, schools, churches and service groups have created virtual fund drives to support this year's

care of. No one should have to go hungry, so giving a little bit during the holiday season can help alleviate some of the burdens for those that are a little less fortunate."

Our friends in East Helena also jumped in with a virtual challenge for the East Helena School District. Superintendent Ron Whitmoyer shared his appreciation for his community.

Other groups challenged coworkers, family and friends to support Helena Food Share. These funds purchase food for our neighbors in need, and because we can buy at wholesale, bulk prices, we stretch those dollars further!

Everyone participating in this year's challenges are heroes, making so many people's holidays a bit brighter.

"In 2020 it has become especially important to make sure that folks in our community are taken care of."

— SoFi team captains, Kurt and James

Turkey Challenge and general food donations. As a result, individuals from these groups have hopped online to make a gift and then challenged others to do the same. For example, the employees at SoFi created teams from their two office floors and then competed between the two floors to raise money for this year's Turkey Challenge. SoFi second floor has this year's bragging rights.

When asked about setting up their challenge, Kurt and James, the SoFi team captains, shared, "At SoFi we hold a core value of taking care of other people. In 2020 it has become especially important to make sure that folks in our community are taken

"More than 200 kids will benefit each month from these generous donations through the Kid Pack program," Whitmoyer said. "This amazing service from Helena Food Share makes sure every child in the district has nutritious food in the house over the weekends when hot lunch is not available at school. As in the past, East Helena once again has shown support for their families, and we are very thankful that this blessing will last throughout the year, not just during this Christmas season."

In other online challenges, The Helena Employee Association donated in the name of their favorite Montana college team – Cats, Griz, or Saints – with the Cats winning this competition.

Thank you to Virtual Fund Drives Heroes!

- ◆ Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
- ◆ East Helena School District
- ◆ First Presbyterian Church
- ◆ Helena Employee Association
- ◆ Helena Kiwanis
- ◆ Lewis and Clark County
- ◆ MDT Bridge Division
- ◆ MDT Consultant Design Bureau
- ◆ Montana Department of Justice
- ◆ Montana State Fund
- ◆ Optimal Sports
- ◆ Our Redeemer's Lutheran Church
- ◆ Pacific Steel and Recycling
- ◆ Premiere Dance Company
- ◆ SoFi
- ◆ WWC Engineering

TURKEY CHALLENGE

2020-Style



With so many things in 2020, hosting a treasured community event safely presented a new challenge. For the past nine years, Helenans came to the Lewis & Clark Library the Friday before Thanksgiving with turkeys to share so their neighbors in need could enjoy a traditional holiday meal. However, the desire to keep people safe by following social distancing guidelines meant this would not be possible.

As a result, the 2020 Turkey Challenge became a virtual event. Rather than donating turkeys, this year's challenge moved to online donations with the goal of funding 2,500 turkeys and accompanying sides to provide a full holiday meal for anyone who could not otherwise put this type of meal on their table.

The camaraderie of generous friends stopping by the library to drop off turkeys was not a

part of this year's big day. Still, the excitement and energy of competitive turkey drives and watching donations add up throughout Friday created a new sense of community. Helena stepped up in record numbers and donated online to support their neighbors. They met our challenge goal by providing funds for over 2,500 meals.

Event sponsors Cochrane Insurance, Big Sky Acoustics, Montana Radio Company, KTVH/MTN, and the Lewis and Clark Library all played significant roles in the successful event. Their financial support, enthusiasm, creativity, and good work ensured the tenth annual Turkey Challenge was a triumph. The support of long-time business partners, including Capital Sports, Marks Lumber, Mediterranean Grill, Rock Hand Hardware, Tempest Technologies, and those hosting a virtual Turkey Challenge drive (see page 2), also made this a banner year.

Funding was just the first step in meeting the challenge in 2020. Safely sharing food with customers was the next critical piece. Customers selected pick-up times online. Then, a few days before the holidays, a turkey or ham, vegetables, stuffing, rolls, cranberries, and other meal essentials were boxed up and loaded into each customer's car.

Cards arrived shortly after with words of gratitude. One customer shared, *"Thank you again for being there when I'm out of food. Every month I can count on you still being there. You care so much that I feel like giving back sometimes too. My heart and mind give you all the love one person can handle. May your holidays be happy and cheerful this year. I would shake your hand and give you a hug, but I can't, so it's the thought that counts."*

Pantry Times

January 2021

Pantry Times is a publication of Helena Food Share.

Contact Us: (406) 443-3663

To Volunteer: ext. 106

To Donate: ext. 104

To Get Help: ext. 110

Our Pantries:

1616 Lewis Street, Helena
50 Prickley Pear, East Helena

Office: 1437 Helena Avenue

HelenaFoodShare.org





Creating a Hunger-Free
Community

PO Box 943, Helena, MT 59624

NONPROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
HELENA, MT 59601
PERMIT NO. 266

Pantry Times

HelenaFoodShare.org

HUNGER HEROES

Who is a Hunger Hero?

he-ro /'hirō/ noun – a person noted for courageous acts or nobility of character.

Karen decided to become a Hunger Hero when she realized she didn't need a cape or mask to do something that makes the world a better place. Her superpower was always a part of her. Karen knows that ensuring no one goes hungry is a noble act, and anyone can participate.

"Hunger in this community is an ongoing concern and I want to help. If I can make a difference for one person, I'm happy," said Karen. "After learning the importance of monthly support and the stability it provides, I knew this was the best way I could address hunger issues."

It's Easy to Become a Hunger Hero

Sign up at HelenaFoodShare.org/hunger-hero/

New in 2021: Hunger Heroes will receive monthly updates on the many ways their support helps reduce food insecurity in our community.

WHAT'S INSIDE:

- Groceries to the Rescue
- Report to the Community
- Turkey Challenge Results

Monthly Support from Our Hunger Heroes:

- Ensures **1,500 local families** can shop for groceries at Helena Food Share
- Makes it possible for nearly **6,000 pounds of groceries** to go home with over 100 families who visit the pantry each day
- Helps distribute over **1,100 Kid Packs** to local elementary students each week
- And so much more!

