



Creating a Hunger-Free Community

Pantry Times

Spring 2023



We believe that by working together, we accomplish more.

Kid Packs: Helping Kids Thrive

Most of the 1,200 Kid Packs delivered to schools each week go to Helena and East Helena elementary and middle schools. Did you know 140 packs go to students at Family Outreach, Rocky Head Start, CTI, PAL, and the Ray Bjork Learning Center each week? These vital community support organizations serve families facing financial constraints and often developmental, physical, or mental health challenges. For these kids, the packs are important nutrition while participating in the program or at home over the weekend.

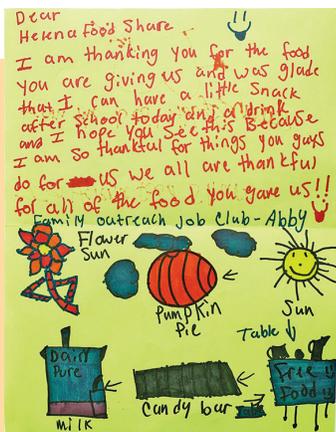
Shanell Marshall from Family Outreach let us know how important the packs are for the students with disabilities who come to their after-school Job Club each week. "They are usually

very hungry after school," said Shanell, "so the packs provide an important source of nutrition while they learn about jobs that might be a fit for them when they graduate. No one liked hummus for the first two months, putting it in the 'barter pile' where others could take it if they wanted. A few kids asked if they could take them because they didn't have enough food at home. After trying it at home, one of the girls decided it tasted great. It was just food the students had never had an opportunity to try before."

In addition to supporting Helena's kids, 10 Kid Packs make their way to Lincoln each week for kids there. PureView Health Center travels weekly to Lincoln, bringing Kid Packs and mobile pantry support for our neighbors in need to the north.

Part of the Helena Food Share philosophy is, "By working together, we accomplish more." Our donors share this philosophy, and we embrace it by working closely with the many organizations serving families in Helena to ensure no one, especially children, goes hungry.

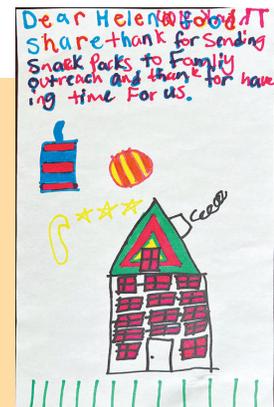
This issue of Pantry Times highlights a few ways this philosophy shapes our work. Because of you and the organizations serving families in our community, we can provide weekend nutrition to kids who need it. Our volunteers make it possible to get food to folks in the Pantry each day. And through partnerships with healthcare, we can bring the Charlie Cart to Helena kids and nutrition to those in need. Thank you!



Dear Helena Food Share,

I am thanking you for the food you are giving us and was glad that I can have a little snack after school today and a drink. I hope you see this because I am so thankful for things you guys do for us. We all are thankful for all of the food you gave us.

- Abby at Family Outreach Job Club



Dear Helena Food Share,

I want to thank you for supplying us with snack packs. We know that you work really hard so I want to say good job.

- Marcus at Family Outreach Job Club



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Volunteer Spotlight: Giving back feels good!



Paul and Roberta Spengler, ready to start their Wednesday shift.

Roberta Spengler and her husband Paul have volunteered most every Wednesday in the Pantry since 2014 and 2018, respectively, providing 1,604 hours of service to their neighbors.

Inspired one day after retiring as an East Helena Public School teacher, Roberta stopped by the Pantry to learn about volunteer opportunities.

Roberta talked to staff and soon found herself volunteering at the front desk, checking customers in to shop. Later, she began assisting customers in finding products they needed when shopping. Seeing how much she loved volunteering each week, Paul followed Roberta a few years later after he retired from Lewis and Clark County Disaster and Emergency Services.

Paul and Roberta help customers shop in the Pantry each week, letting them know what items and quantities are available that day. “I just love visiting with the customers,” said Roberta. “Many shoppers come the same day every

week, so you get to know people and hear what’s going on in their lives.”

They both talked about the challenge of having to ask for food. “Customers are here because they need to be,” said Roberta. “It’s hard to come here, especially the first time or two. It’s hard to ask for food. I’ve seen people in tears. My job is to make them feel

welcome and comfortable while shopping here. Some of my former students come in, and it’s fun to hear, ‘Hey, Mrs. Spengler!’”

Paul agreed and added, “I look forward to it every Wednesday. Not only do I enjoy working with our customers, but I also enjoy working with the staff. They are so helpful, pleasant, easy, and fun to work with. Research shows that people who volunteer lead happier and healthier lives.”

When asked about Helena Food Share’s impact on our community, both touched on how food availability affects every part of our lives. “Without food, you can’t get a good night’s sleep, you can’t hold a job, you can’t raise your kids, and your kids can’t do well in school, affecting almost every aspect of your life,” said Roberta. Paul added, “We all know food insecurity exists, and it is so important for our community to have a well-organized food bank to help people get food. It

helps them have what they need for other necessities in life—gas, housing,

and healthcare. Helena Food Share has a huge impact on our community.”

Paul and Roberta wanted to share with anyone considering becoming a volunteer. “Come on down. There are so many roles that will fit a variety of interests, and it feels good to get to know and help your neighbors.”

“It’s hard to ask for food. I’ve seen people in tears. My job is to make them feel welcome and comfortable while shopping here.”



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Charlie Cart: a passion for food education

Several times a month, the Charlie Cart at Helena Food Share appears in the Pantry, serving up nutritious food samples made from food available on the Pantry shelves for customers. Local chefs demonstrate how to cook the food, often highlighting and sharing recipes featuring Montana Harvest of the Month ingredients.

The Charlie Cart is a mobile kitchen; equipped with a cooktop, appliances, utensils, bowls, and pans found in a well-stocked kitchen. Just about any meal can be prepared on the cart. Funded through a grant from the City of Helena, the Charlie Cart also travels to elementary schools throughout the school year, serving up lessons and cooking experiences for K-5 students in Helena. Helena Food Share staff transports the cart to schools where Kim Lloyd, the Montana Harvest of the Month Community Coordinator at St. Peter's Health, delivers age-appropriate lessons to each class.

In March, Kim and the Charlie Cart visited Warren School. Kim taught the younger students about the Brussels sprout—where they come from, how they grow, why they are nutritious, and how to make Brussels Sprouts Chips. The chips were a big hit with the students, and one mom later shared that her daughter came

home saying she loved Brussels sprouts and asked her mom to fix them. The older students were divided into teams and given a recipe to make granola. Each team had to follow the recipe, assign tasks, and measure ingredients. Several students asked for the recipe so they could make it at home for their families.



Warren Elementary students making granola.

Learning about and tasting food that is good for you is the primary goal of the Charlie Cart in schools. Kim also incorporates food basics in her lessons, covering the USDA food groups, how the food is grown, how to prepare food safely, and how to measure ingredients. Kim shared, “Preparing meals involves math, science, reading,



Kim Lloyd cooking on the Charlie Cart at Bryant Elementary.

and art—incorporating all these subjects into one activity for the kids.”

Warren Elementary School Principal Tia Wilkins said, “The Charlie Cart visit made for an exciting day. Students got a hands-on experience; smells floated throughout the school, and students exclaimed as they walked by the cart, ‘I got to do that today!’” She added, “Nutrition is an abstract concept, and getting to learn about, prepare, and taste healthy food, makes it concrete, something they can begin to relate to.”

Fourth-grade teacher Juliann Solomon asked her students to share with us what the experience meant to them. This student summed it up perfectly, “It was a great experience, and we learned how to work together. It was awesome because we got to learn how to cook.”

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Pantry Times is a publication of Helena Food Share.

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HelenaFoodShare.org



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Please join us for



EMPTY BOWLS HELENA

Help *fill empty bowls with nutritious food* for our neighbors in need!

Enjoy soup prepared by local chefs in ceramic bowls handcrafted by Helena artists, along with bread and desserts donated by our favorite hometown bakeries.

Tickets are limited and **go on sale April 21** at HelenaFoodShare.org/EmptyBowls2023

**THURSDAY-4:30 P.M.
MAY 18, 2023**

**HELENA CIVIC
CENTER**

TICKETS: \$50
**INCLUDES A HANDMADE BOWL,
FOOD AND DRINKS**



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