



Creating a Hunger-Free Community

# Pantry Times

October 2022

## Experience Matters

**Y**ou never know when or how life will present a new opportunity. Growing up, Conrad Taylor had shopped with his mom at Helena Food Share, relying on Grocery Share from time to time for the food they needed.

As a customer waiting in line before the Pantry opened and

*“It is great to see folks who may be sad or tentative when they enter but leave with a smile on their face because they were welcomed with dignity and respect.” –Conrad*

sharing stories with other shoppers, Conrad learned firsthand that it’s not easy to make that initial trip to Helena Food Share when you have to decide between paying bills or buying the food you need. Through life and work experience, Conrad had learned that programs like those at Helena Food Share are critical safety nets for our neighbors during times of need.

Required to complete community service a few years ago, Conrad fulfilled it by

volunteering at Helena Food Share, a place he knew well. That experience led to a part-time position. Soon after, Conrad became the full-time Operations Coordinator for Helena Food Share. Now, Conrad makes sure the Pantry is ready for shoppers each day, paying close attention to making the experience a positive one for customers and volunteers alike.

*“I try to create opportunities that bring a smile to people’s faces,”* Conrad said. It might be helping them find a specific item they need. His mom has health issues that require her to stick to a vegan diet. This has given Conrad the drive to ensure vegan, gluten-free, and other healthy options are labeled and available for customers who need them.

He is also ready to encourage anyone who might feel embarrassed to ask for help. He shared, *“I had a friend who*



*Conrad, showing off cabbage donated from a local garden*

*couldn’t afford food after paying rent. He was finishing school and was a legal intern but unsure about coming to the Pantry for food. He came, and it helped him through a difficult period. Now he’s working full-time as a public defender, giving back to our community.”* Conrad added, *“It is great to see folks who may be sad or tentative when they enter but leave with a smile on their face because they were welcomed with dignity and respect.”*

Conrad’s life experience has taught him that we all need a helping hand sometimes. And, when we give of ourselves, we can change lives.

# Giving Back: The Friday Morning Crew

It's not an exaggeration to say, "Volunteers are the lifeblood of Helena Food Share." Food wouldn't get to the Pantry, it wouldn't be cleaned and sorted, it wouldn't be stocked in coolers and on the shelves each day, and customers couldn't shop without

town. They also take time to fold donated plastic bags, break down boxes, or whatever is required to get the Pantry ready for the day. Each crew member takes great pride in how the Pantry looks and ensures it has the feel of a regular grocery store for Helena

to compost or agricultural use. They all take pride in leaving the Pantry in tip-top shape for the customers when it opens. They are committed to Helena Food Share, and all agree that one of the best parts of their work is how it feels, knowing food is getting to those who need it.



If you are interested in volunteering at Helena Food Share – moving food, greeting customers, or working in the garden – please get in touch with Cathy: [Cathy@HelenaFoodShare.org](mailto:Cathy@HelenaFoodShare.org) or (406) 443-3663, ext 106. More details are available on our website: [HelenaFoodShare.org/Volunteer](http://HelenaFoodShare.org/Volunteer).

The Friday Morning Crew: Judy, Linda, Mary, Nancy, Cheryl, and Mary Elizabeth

the support of our volunteers. The nearly 600 volunteers serving throughout the year provide over 13,000 hours of service, equivalent to \$389,350 in wages and benefits.

Most volunteers have regular weekly shifts for the specific work they do. On a recent Friday morning, the self-named "Friday Morning Crew" shared why they love to volunteer at Helena Food Share. Cheryl, Judy, Linda, Mary, Mary Elizabeth, and Nancy are an energetic group who look forward to their time together each week. For two hours, they sort produce, stock bread, dairy, and canned goods on the shelves, and organize the best-looking produce cooler in

Food Share customers. Some have volunteered for over ten years, and some for just a few months. They have found their rhythm and have come to know how best to assist one another with the morning tasks.

When asked why they enjoy their work, they eagerly share how much fun they have with one another, enjoying lively conversation, laughter, and camaraderie. Some crew members said they like the physical movement involved in getting food ready and on the shelves. Others have enjoyed learning about food movement – from rescuing food daily, providing it to those in need, and moving unused food

## With Appreciation



Silver Apron honorees Roberta Spangler and Paul Ferry.

This year's Volunteer Appreciation event at the Lewis & Clark Brewery was a fun way to say "Thank You!" to the remarkable people who make it possible to open our doors each day. As part of the festivities, Silver Aprons were presented to volunteers Roberta Spangler, Paul Ferry, and Sally Bostrum in recognition of volunteering over one thousand hours at Helena Food Share.

# Reducing Food Waste

In 2021, the Helena City Commission adopted a Resolution to establish a goal for the City to reduce solid waste disposal to landfills by 50% by 2040, with an interim target of 35% reduction by 2030.

**Nearly 40% of all food produced in the United States goes uneaten, with 95% of it going into landfills. Food waste is the largest component of municipal solid waste at 21%.** Helena Food Share plays a vital role in reducing the amount of food that would otherwise end up in the landfill by collecting donated food from 17 local stores.



Joe bringing bread into the Pantry from grocery rescue.

This past year (July 2021 through June 2022), Helena Food Share **rescued 896,066 lbs. of food.** Rescued food accounts for 40% of the food distributed in the Pantry. Once drivers bring rescued food to the Pantry, volunteers sort and stock the food or prepare it for delivery to

other local entities, with **80,475 lbs. distributed through other agencies in FY21.**

Some donated items cannot go into the Pantry because they are too old or have some spoilage. Rather than throwing it away, we set it aside for local farmers who pick it up daily for livestock feed. **39,476 lbs. of food were reallocated to farm use** last year.

In addition to repurposing food, all suitable packaging – cardboard, glass, aluminum cans, and plastic – is recycled, keeping it out of the landfill. Some recyclable materials gain a second life at Helena Food Share. Food in the Pantry is packed into cardboard boxes recycled from area liquor stores for customers to carry their groceries home. Some customers return those boxes to be used again. Donated plastic bags and egg cartons are also used for product packaging in the Pantry, giving them a longer life. Finally, all garden waste is composted and used to fertilize next year's garden.



Unusable food going to feed farm animals.

At Helena Food Share, we will continue to look for new opportunities to play a significant role in helping reach the City's goals to reduce waste in Helena.

**BE A FRIEND IN DEED**  
**HELP THOSE IN NEED**  
ANNUAL FOOD BANK CAMPAIGN

This fall, the **Town Pump Charitable Foundation** is matching donations made to Helena Food Share, up to \$50,000. *Make your donation soon and double the impact of your gift!*

Use the enclosed envelope to mail your gift or give online at [HelenaFoodShare.org/Give](https://HelenaFoodShare.org/Give).

## Pantry Times | October 2022

*Pantry Times is a publication of Helena Food Share.*

### Contact Us:

(406) 443-3663

To Volunteer: ext. 106

To Donate: ext. 103

To Get Help: ext. 110

### Helena Pantry:

1616 Lewis Street, Helena

### East Helena Mobile Pantry:

50 Prickley Pear, East Helena

**Office:** 1437 Helena Avenue, Helena



[HelenaFoodShare.org](https://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

**VIRTUAL  
TURKEY  
CHALLENGE**

*Donate & Learn more at:*  
**[HelenaFoodShare.org/turkey-challenge/](http://HelenaFoodShare.org/turkey-challenge/)**

**NOVEMBER  
18th**

Donate your VIRTUAL turkey online anytime. Then, join us for fun activities at the Library on November 18 to celebrate nutrition, community and the spirit of human kindness.



**COCHRANE  
INSURANCE**  
AUTO • HOME • BUSINESS

**Will Match  
Up To \$10,000  
Donated  
NOV. 18**

**LEWIS & CLARK  
LIBRARY**

**Big Sky Acoustics**