



# Pantry Times

helenafoodshare.org | MAY 2017

## Starting Over, with a Little Help from Helena Food Share

**W**hen Aaron and April arrived in Helena three years ago, they didn't know anyone and didn't know where to turn for help. Having left their home country, Cuba, Aaron and April were trying to start a new life and contribute to a new community. But first, they needed food.

April had recently given birth to the couple's first child, a little girl. Aaron was eager to find work. Helpful Helena residents quickly directed the family to Helena Food Share for immediate food assistance.

"We were so thankful to find a place to get food for our daughter and enough for us to have a meal, too," April recalls. "Having food helps with everything else. We had the energy to do all the other things that come along with moving."

A small supply of essential foods was the first step in rebuilding a life in a new place. College educated and fluent in four languages, April and Aaron quickly found work and a sense of belonging in a new place. In Helena, the couple welcomed their second child, another beautiful little girl.

Aaron and April give back whenever they are able. They occasionally visit the Helena Food Share pantry if they are struggling between paychecks. The family of three is now a family of four. With two growing daughters, Aaron says he is grateful for Helena Food Share easing the burden of hefty grocery bills.

"Food for children can be expensive," Aaron says. "Our girls love coming here and we love knowing we can feed them and they don't have to go without meals."

One daughter enjoys macaroni and

cheese while the other loves produce from the Helena Food Share pantry. Aaron says he wishes he could create pantries like Helena Food Share all over the world.

"Every place should have some place like Helena Food Share," Aaron says. "It would help so many people and change people's lives.

It's a really good place."

For a family far from home, having a place to find food and reassurance was paramount. While Helena is much different than Cuba, Aaron, April and the girls are thankful to have landed in such a welcoming, generous community. 🍌

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—Aaron, Helena Food Share Customer.



# FAST FACTS

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ABOUT

## THE FOOD PANTRY



1 new Farm Stand rolling out fresh produce for customers.



**\$120,000**

to purchase all the food necessary for Kid Packs.



**1,417**

households served in April.



**53**

new households using HFS services in April.



**112,723**

lbs of food distributed in April.

## YOU can become a Hunger Hero like Tammy! Join the heroes, and feed our neighbors facing hunger

Long before she ever moved to Helena, Tammy Plubell was helping build community, lending a hand where she could. Tammy says she always loved causes that benefitted children.

Tammy and her husband had three daughters of their own. The family moved to Helena and Tammy kept busy as a mom and working as an assistant attorney general.

Though she was scarce on time, Tammy wanted to give back in Helena. Tammy remembers being approached by a local pediatrician about being a Helena Food Share Board Member. Tammy said yes.

“My mom grew up around the era of the depression,” Tammy says. “So it was important for her to teach us kids to share. Whatever you have, share it. She was just a generous person. That has always carried through with me.”

While Tammy donates her time as a Helena Food Share Board Member, she also donates her finances, every month. Tammy is a Hunger Hero.

“For me, it just makes so much sense to give monthly to Food Share,” Tammy says. “Everything ebbs and flows. There are times when the food just comes in and times when it’s



“For me, it just makes so much sense to give monthly to Food Share. Everything ebbs and flows. There are times when the food just comes in and times when it’s really slow. It’s the same with money.”

—Tammy, Helena Food Share board member and donor.

really slow. It’s the same with money. It’s such a value to the organization to have predictability and to be able to count on that support.”

From increasingly healthy food options on pantry shelves, to a welcoming environment for nervous or embarrassed customers, Tammy says she sees firsthand how her monthly gift helps.

“Everyone is worth it,” Tammy says. “Everyone has meaning. For me, Helena Food Share embodies that through their employees and volunteers and just the atmosphere itself. It is not humiliating to come here. It doesn’t matter why you walk through the door; you

just need to leave with food.”

Becoming a Hunger Hero is easy. Gifts of any amount help Helena residents struggling right now with hunger.

“Food Share needs everyone,” Tammy urges. “You can’t just take for granted that there will be food at the pantry. You have to make sure there will be food at the pantry.”

YOU can become a Helena Food Share monthly donor and Hunger Hero! To sign up return the enclosed envelope with your monthly gift or visit us online at [helenafoodshare.org](http://helenafoodshare.org). You can call us to learn more at 443-3663. 🍎

## Farm Stand offers fresh, local produce to Helena residents in need

They say innovation is born of necessity. At Helena Food Share, that saying rings especially true during harvest season. Helena-area gardeners and farmers generously donate vibrant fruit and veggies to Helena Food Share each year.

At times the beautiful local yields are more than can be stored or displayed in the pantry. The one small produce cooler isn't enough for all the fruits and vegetables donated during prime harvest time. Because of the lack of space and our inability to wash or process produce, a majority of the crops had to be left outside and unwashed.

Helena Food Share Program Manager Kara Snyder came up with a better way to process and distribute the fruits and vegetables. Last spring, Helena Food Share was awarded a grant from the Montana Partnership to End Childhood Hunger to build a produce processing and distribution stand. They were so im-

pressed with the idea that they granted Helena Food Share \$200 more than requested to create the Farm Stand. With funding in hand and generous donations from local businesses, the new idea took off and construction soon began.

garden yields. The free produce will be available to Helena Food Share customers and others in need. The farm stand is an extra service on top of the programs already operating at Helena Food Share, Kara said. It would also offer a way to honor both customer and grower.

“For people who donate produce, they get to see it distributed in a respectful way,” Kara said. “The stand allows us to treat our neighbors and food with respect.”

Revitalize Construction and Renovation Owner Neil Patterson donated use of his tools and two of his employees volunteered time to build the Farm Stand. Clayton Goodhart was one of those employees. Clayton says he was recruited to the project by a co-worker, but he's happy to help Helena Food Share.

“Four years ago, I was down on my luck and I came to Food Share,” Clayton explains.

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—Clayton Goodhart, volunteer.

pressed with the idea that they granted Helena Food Share \$200 more than requested to create the Farm Stand. With funding in hand and generous donations from local businesses, the new idea took off and construction soon began.

The Farm Stand will function as the washing, weighing and bagging station for local produce donations and for Helena Food Share

“It's nice to give back for a change.”

Neil said his employee, Chase Krywaruchka, approached him about the project. Chase rallied his friends and co-workers around the idea and hosted a building party to put the Farm Stand together. Neil said lending tools was the least he could do to help Chase and Helena Food Share.



“I like to support my employees in what they want to do,” Neil said. “I think it's a good cause and I was happy to do it.”

The Helena Food Share staff is excited for the future of the Farm Stand, hoping it will increase the amount of fresh, locally grown nutrition available to our neighbors facing hunger. There will be a Farm Stand rollout party for customers on June 9. Join Helena Food Share for a barbecue and fresh produce!

Projects like these would not be possible without support from generous donors like YOU. We would like to thank Pro Build, Fastenal, Bridger Steel, BMC and Home Depot for graciously supplying building materials for the Farm Stand. 🌱

## Staff Profile

Join John in ending hunger!

John Dendy is the newest member of the Helena Food Share team. John joins Helena Food Share as the Program Operations Assistant. Teresa Asleson, who was also recently hired, splits the position with John.

Before landing at Helena Food Share, John had a career in energy efficiency and conservation, often working in offices. Getting away from the office and working in a fast-paced food pantry has been a welcome change, John says.

As the Program Operations Assistant, John is responsible for running the storeroom and the warehouse and working with volunteers that stock shelves at Helena Food Share. John juggles questions from



volunteers and customers while carefully moving around pallets of food and making sure the Helena Food Share pantry is tidy and inviting each day.

“The goal is to provide the best product we can to customers,” John says. “Food is one of the most basic needs. I believe everyone deserves to be fed and treated with respect.”

Working with volunteers has also been a rewarding experience for John.

“I really admire and enjoy working with the volunteers,” he says. “They are cheerful and dedicated, and they treat their work like it's a paying job.”

When John isn't keeping the pantry humming along in an orderly manner, he enjoys playing music. John is in two local bands, Los Marvelitos and Cottonwood Club. In the summer, John hits the trails for hiking and backpacking with his wife Claire. 🌱



# Pantry Times

## Contact us:

Phone: 406.443.3663

E-mail: [info@helenafoodshare.org](mailto:info@helenafoodshare.org)

 Find us on Facebook!

## Learn more:

Get a "behind-the-scenes" tour the second Tuesday of each month, and enjoy lunch with us! Call or email us to sign up for a tour.

Graphic design by Luke Duran, Element L Design



Montana Nonprofit Association



- ▶ Folding Machine
- ▶ 10 Folding Chairs
- ▶ New Phone System
- ▶ Large Whiteboard
- ▶ Seeds for HFS Garden
- ▶ Gardening Tools
- ▶ Organic Straw Bales

Please contact Hannah for more information about Helena Food Share's wish list. Call **443-3663 x105** or email at [Hannah@helenafoodshare.org](mailto:Hannah@helenafoodshare.org)  
Thank you!

## Helena Food Share Upcoming Events

- ▶ **May 24 & 25** Senior Commodity Distribution (Helena Food Share Pantry)
- ▶ **June 9** HFS Lot BBQ Bash (Helena Food Share Pantry 11 a.m.-3 p.m.)
- ▶ **June 13** Helena Food Share Pantry Tour (Call 443-3663 to sign up)
- ▶ **July 1** Kid Pack Challenge Kickoff
- ▶ **July 15** Symphony Under the Stars Food Drive (Carroll College)

## Calling all big-hearted businesses!

Do you have exemplary employees who constantly strive to create a better community? Are you a boss who leads by setting a great example? We need YOU!

With summer just around the corner, Helena Food Share is busy preparing for another school year. This means raising funds for our Kid Pack program and partnering with incredible local businesses in a fun challenge to ensure local kids have enough to eat on the weekends when they aren't in school. The Kid Pack challenge is an exciting way to get your business involved in feeding hungry children in our community while building camaraderie among employees.

From July 1 to September 30, participating businesses make a financial contribution to our Kid Pack Program and then can also heat up some friendly competition. Local businesses square off around the Kid Pack table and race to see who can assemble the most Kid Packs in an hour.

During last year's Kid Pack Challenge, First Interstate Bank took on DA Davidson. The teams valiantly raced around the packing table while laughing and exchanging some good-natured ribbing. Mike Holland, a financial adviser with DA Davison and a Helena Food Share board member, is the driving force behind growing the Kid Pack Challenge.

"It's such a fun competition," Mike says. "There is more ownership of it when you see how much food goes out each week for Kid Packs."

Mike wants at least 10 more businesses to step up and accept the Kid Pack Challenge. Building the packs for kids is easy and giving can be, too.

"Employees could give \$10 a month," Mike explains. "If 20 people gave \$10 a month and their companies matched that, it would be great. Going from giving at that corporate level to the individual level is so important."

If enough businesses buy in



to the fun, Mike hopes that the Kid Pack program, which costs Helena Food Share \$120,000 for food alone, could be mostly paid for.

"This isn't just for financial institutions," Mike says. "There are many other great local businesses that could participate in the Kid Pack Challenge."

David Peretto, Vice President of First Interstate Bank, says the Kid Pack Challenge makes sense, because taking care of children makes sense.

"We believe our bank is only as strong as the community we serve," David says. "Getting our staff involved, many of whom have kids and see the value of this program, is an important part of our bank's mission to serve the community and young people in need."

To find out more about the Kid Pack Challenge or get your company involved, call Daneal at 443-3663 ext. 104 or email [info@helenafoodshare.org](mailto:info@helenafoodshare.org).

