



Creating a Hunger-Free
Community

Pantry Times

January 2022

The Face of Hunger: Children

We all know the feeling when we've pushed past our regular mealtime, and our stomach and brain are both saying, "Can we get some food? I can't do any more until we refuel!"

Now, imagine if you had missed more than one meal. Would you feel like playing basketball in PE class? Could you concentrate on times tables or taking a quiz? Would you see yourself capable of excelling in a sport, an academic activity, or a creative pursuit? One in five Helena-area children knows what this is like; unable to focus at school because of not having enough to eat.

Dr. David Krainacker, a family practice physician at St. Peter's Heath and board eligible in Obesity Medicine, shared two broad health issues for kids facing food insecurity. "First, they are hungry, not getting enough calories essential for the mental and physical energy to learn and grow. Learning is no longer a priority, and overall development is compromised."

"Secondly," Dr. Krainacker continued, "many are not getting

the nutrition they need and rely on low-cost, high-calorie foods that contribute to lifelong health issues, including heart disease, diabetes, high cholesterol, and many kinds of cancer."

Teachers see the effects of hunger on children first hand. Bryant Principal Trish Klock shared a recent interaction with one of her students:

"A student was having difficulty staying awake and following instructions. He was becoming increasingly frustrated and was starting to escalate. Being as in-tune with the child as she was, the teacher sent the kid on an 'errand' to the principal. I knew this errand was to have me check in with him! As we were talking, he told me he was so hungry. When I asked when he ate last, he said lunch yesterday. I wondered why he didn't eat dinner, and he shared that he had to make sure his younger siblings got enough to eat because mom was working and they needed more food than he does. I immediately grabbed as many snacks and other items as I could find to send home with him. He ate two breakfasts and then happily put the rest in his bag. He said he would put them in

a special spot to keep them if he needed to feed his siblings again."

Your support of Helena Food Share makes a difference for these children in two



important ways. Each week, it provides over 1,000 Kid Packs to Helena-area preschool and elementary students. These easy-to-fix snacks and meals help kids whose families face food insecurity get through the weekend when school meals are unavailable. Donations also stock the Pantry with fruit, vegetables, grains, meat, and dairy as part of the Grocery Share and Nutrition programs so families can shop for nutritionally balanced food.

Grateful Volunteers

Our Redeemer's Lutheran Church Hunger Team

Three times a month at 4:00 on a Tuesday, a group of about 15 volunteers from Our Redeemer's Lutheran Church arrives at the Helena Food Share warehouse to build over 1,000 Kid Packs for the coming weekend.

Judy McMaster, a member of Our Redeemer's Lutheran Church,

“additional members from the Helena community who are not part of the congregation happily support the Hunger Team's work by volunteering each month. We



A few of the Our Redeemer's Lutheran Church Hunger Team volunteers building Kid Packs.

“The need is there, and we feel not just thankful but truly grateful that we can provide this service to our community.” —Judy McMaster

is the coordinator of this year's Hunger Team volunteers. Judy emails potential volunteers to organize Kid Pack builds each month. “While many team members are parishioners at Our Redeemer's,” she shared,

have a wonderful core group of volunteers.”

Judy also told us about the origin of the group, “The Hunger Team was formed several years ago with the purpose to help those

in need. It is so important that in this community, when we have over 1,000 children going without food and necessities, that we come together to address the need.”

in bags for children to eat next weekend, many conversations are happening at once. Stories shared of their daily activities and their families. The joy of coming together to do something positive for their community is evident in the laughter they easily share. When asked for her thoughts on why they do this work each month, Judy said, “The need is there, and we feel not just thankful but truly grateful that we can provide this service to our community.”



Meals and snacks found in a Kid Pack.

As the volunteers move up and down the assembly line, placing food items

**This fall, volunteers
gave 412 hours to build
15,926 Kid Packs.**

Students Learning to Make a Difference



Ms. Sutkis's students hosting a recent food drive at Safeway.

The students in Kari Sutkis's 6th- and 7th-grade PEAK program wanted to understand the effects of food insecurity on our community. They invited Helena Food Share staff to join their class at the Ray Bjork Learning Center last month to learn more about what we do. After hearing about the programs and services we provide, we had a lively discussion about the need for food in the larger Helena community, who it affects, and why. The students asked informed questions of staff; "What help is available for people who need food? Has the need increased? How can people get involved?" They also showed a good understanding of the factors contributing to food insecurity.



Rounding out their lesson on hunger in our community, the students held a food drive at Safeway in the afternoon. Student Weston McNearney shared this about his food drive experience; "For me, volunteering is a way to give back and help out the many families in the Helena community that are in need. This made me feel happy for those who received the food and thankful for those who donated."

Farewell & Welcome

With great appreciation for their service, professional expertise and leadership, we wish a fond farewell to two Board Directors this year. Meghan Bronec, who served for over six years, is currently a CPA with Benchmark Capital in Helena. Also leaving after six years of service is Amanda Harrow who is currently a Program Specialist at the Department of Public Health and Human Services. We thank both Amanda and Meghan for their dedication to Helena Food Share.

We welcome three new incoming Board Directors whose service begins this month. Brett Clark is an attorney with the Clowley Fleck Law Firm, Christopher Cordingley is an Associate at Civitas Public Affairs Group, and Alyssa Sorensen is a Performance Auditor for the Montana State Legislature.

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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

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HelenaFoodShare.org

HUNGER HEROES

Who are Hunger Heroes?

A passionate group of monthly donors on a mission to end hunger in Helena.

Did you know it costs just 62¢ to provide one meal?

As a Hunger Hero, Your Monthly Gift of:

- \$5** provides 8 meals for those in need
- \$20** provides 32 meals for a family working to make ends meet
- \$50** provides 3 meals a day for someone who's hungry

As a **Hunger Hero**, you'll receive a special sticker to display proudly, as well as exclusive monthly updates on the impact your gift is making.

It's Easy to Become a Hunger Hero

Sign up at HelenaFoodShare.org/hunger-hero/

Or return the enclosed envelope (be sure the check the box, "Make it Monthly!")

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