



*Creating a Hunger-Free
Community*

Pantry Times

May 2021

The Face of Hunger: **Food Insecurity Among Seniors**

Food insecurity for older adults is a growing problem in America, more than doubling since 2001. A 2020 report on hunger by Feeding America indicates 4.4% of our Montana neighbors over the age of 60 face food insecurity. They may be disabled, dealing with health issues, supporting children or grandchildren, and often live on fixed incomes. Also, many seniors cope with limited mobility and face social isolation, making hunger often unseen and life-threatening.

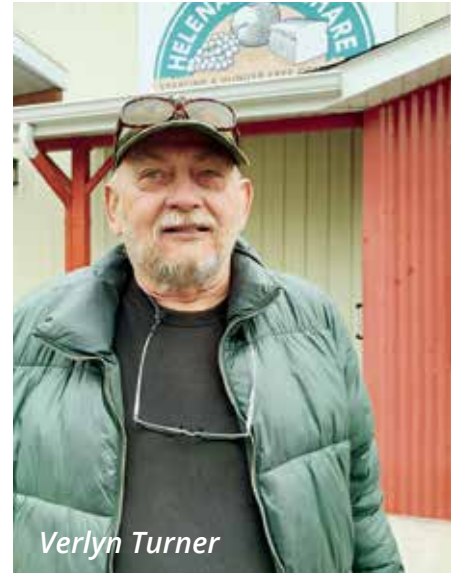
Verlyn Turner, a 75-year-old retiree on a fixed income, found himself without a home a few years ago. While living in his car, he turned to Helena Food Share for food. Because he didn't have access to a kitchen, our pantry staff and volunteers quickly helped Verlyn find food that he could easily prepare. They also helped Verlyn connect with community resources that eventually enabled him to locate affordable housing.

Verlyn told us recently, "If it hadn't been for Food Share, I would have been starving."

Today, Verlyn has an apartment but still needs help with food each month. He's grateful for the support and understanding of everyone in the pantry. "They're a great bunch of people to be with and talk to," he said. "Whenever I have asked to substitute a few items, they are more than willing to help me out." Unfortunately, Verlyn's situation is not rare.

Shopping for and preparing nutritious food can be overwhelming or physically demanding for some seniors. If you know someone over 60 facing hunger or who may need help getting the food they need, consider the following and help them reach out for support.

- Offer transportation to and from a grocery store, our food pantry or a farmer's market.
- Provide recipe ideas and cooking tips.
- Shop with them – offer help reading labels or finding the most nutritious options.
- Assist with enrollment in Senior Commodities, Farmer's Market Coupons, Meals On Wheels, Rocky's Dinner Clubs or SNAP.



Verlyn Turner

Your support of Helena Food Share programs is vital for providing programs specifically for seniors. It helps deliver federally-funded nutrition programs such as Senior Commodities, which provide a staple of nutritious food every two months for income-eligible adults over 60. These customers may also qualify for USDA-funded Farmer's Market coupons. Distributed by Helena Food Share each summer, the coupons allow seniors to shop and supplement their diets with fresh produce.

Understanding the many faces of hunger is essential for creating a hunger-free community and meeting the unique needs of older adults.

Soil, Seeds & Sunshine: The Roots of Good Nutrition



What is more satisfying than a juicy strawberry, freshly picked from the garden and warm from the sunshine? Succulent fruit is one of the many treasures found in a garden. Each item delights our taste buds and is a critical nutritional component of our diets. At Helena Food Share, the pantry garden produces fresh food to share with our neighbors in need. Our community's generosity and hard work make it possible to offer garden-fresh food to our customers throughout the growing season.

This spring, Gardenwerks provided soil for new beds in the garden, and Carroll's Gardening

and Community Health class jumped into action again this year, planting seeds and seedlings in the new high tunnel greenhouse. Since then, students have been tending to the plants, along with volunteers who will harvest the fruits of everyone's labor this season.

The Helena Food Share garden is just one source of locally grown produce during the summer. Other gardeners across the valley have planted a row or more just for Helena Food Share. Both a few blocks away from the pantry, the Sixth Ward Community Garden and the St. Mary Catholic Community Jubilee Garden contribute vital produce each year.

Helen and Joe Beausoleil are founding members of the Jubilee Garden. They shared, "From the inception of the Jubilee Garden, our vision was to support the Helena community by providing growing opportunities for gardeners and fresh produce for Helena Food Share. Many hands



A load of produce from the Jubilee Garden heading to Helena Food Share. In total, the garden donated 3,600 lbs. of food to Helena Food Share last year. (Photo courtesy of St. Mary Catholic Community)

help grow, maintain, and harvest the produce throughout the season. In this way, we all fulfill what the sign outside our garden states: *Jubilee Garden - Common Ground for the Common Good.*"

With food from these and many other community gardens and backyard plots, **30,000-40,000** pounds of fresh produce grown right here in Helena can go directly to people who visit the pantry.

With humble apologies to a well-known quote, we like to say that ***it takes a village to grow a garden.*** Helena, you are a generous village, and your gardens' bounty will provide critical nutrition for our neighbors in need this summer and fall. *Thank you!*



We invite anyone to "Grow-A-Row" in your garden. Your green thumb can provide healthy, locally grown food for many area families. **For information about growing a row or volunteering in our garden, call Jami at (406) 443-3663 ext. 106.**

Sally Beck demonstrating healthy recipes in the pantry.



it provides confidence for trying something new.

When asked if she found any ingredients challenging to use, Sally quickly shared, “Boy, I can’t think of any. I enjoy discovering new ingredients that I’ve never used before. All it takes is a little research and some trial and error to find new things to love.”

Discover all the “Eat Well & Share” articles and recipes on our website at helenafoodshare.org/get-recipes/. We think you’ll enjoy these tried and true dishes—some with a fun new twist—and maybe even find something new to love.

Insider Tip:

When asked what ingredients are essential for any kitchen, Sally offered, “Olive oil, vinegar, fresh produce, garlic, onion, red pepper flakes, and lemons will help make almost anything better.”

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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



Eat Well & Share: Learning to Eat for Life

At most nonprofit organizations, you will find employees wearing many hats. Helena Food Share is no exception. However, few of us can claim our Executive Assistant’s varied duties and expertise. Sally Beck keeps all of us on top of our administrative tasks. She is also a gifted chef who brings her talents to work. You might find Sally giving cooking demonstrations in the pantry or garden, or writing her monthly feature “Eat Well & Share” for the *Helena Independent Record*.

“Eat Well & Share” is an outgrowth of Helena Food Share’s nutrition education program. These delicious recipes feature whole foods, local produce and often, seasonal

items. Each monthly article highlights two recipes designed to inspire and educate all of us to eat more nutritiously. Sally says, “I tend to focus on vegetarian options, but I’m not strict about it. I mostly use healthy fats and try to avoid any processed ingredients.”

These and other recipes are shared with customers in the Pantry, where shoppers may occasionally encounter ingredients they have never used before. Having the recipe card alongside the food provides help and inspiration for cooking something new. In addition to the recipes, Sally and other local chefs offer cooking demonstrations in the pantry, utilizing the recipes. Seeing the food prepared and then sampling



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You Did It!

10,000 Kid Packs

While hard to imagine, childhood hunger is a real issue in our community. Thankfully, **you** are

part of the solution. In 2020, your generosity provided more than 39,000 Kid Packs to elementary

difference for the 1 in 5 children who struggle with hunger in Helena. Your generosity provides nutrition and peace of mind for these kids to learn, grow, and play – you know, kid stuff.

“We could not be more thankful for the tremendous support from this community and for this incredible gift they have given our students.”

— Bryant Elementary School Principal Trish Klock



Trish Klock stands next to the crates filled with Kid Packs, ready to be given out to her students for the weekend.

school and Head Start students in the Helena and East Helena school districts.

In March, we set a goal to raise funds to build 10,000 Kid Packs. Thanks to you, we exceeded that goal and can now finish out the 2020-2021 school year. *Thank You!* You make a

Estate Planning: Leave A Legacy of Caring

Providing for Helena Food Share with a gift in your estate planning will assure your caring and compassion live on by helping to provide food to all who need it in our community.

For more details about making a gift in your estate, please contact Liz Harrison, liz@helenafoodshare.org or 406-443-3663, ext 104.