



Creating a Hunger-Free  
Community

# Pantry Times

October 2020

## Hunger-Free, Because of People Like You



***“The most meaningful interactions I have with customers are those who come to Helena Food Share for the first time.***

Usually their anxiety is high, you can see they are nervous. Working as a greeter at the door, I try to ease that anxiety, and encourage them to come back,” shares Laurie.

Laurie is a retired clinical social worker and a longtime donor to Helena Food Share. She had always thought about volunteering, and when the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March, she knew it was time. “I saw that volunteers were needed, the pandemic really pushed me

to sign up. Now I volunteer every Monday and Tuesday afternoon.”

Since March, Helena Food Share has seen many new faces. New volunteers who have signed up to help, and new customers who never thought they’d need the help. Laurie shares that she’s been amazed to see just how many families are coming in for the first time. “People have lost their jobs, or their hours have been cut. Some have just lost their housing and some are on the brink, wondering how they will pay next month’s rent or mortgage. I’ve helped individuals and families living in motorhomes, camp trailers, or tents. What people survive is truly amazing.”

“Some of the things that have touched me the most include seeing young families with children. Or parents who have grown children with families of their own who have returned to live with them due to circumstance. There are grandparents who have grandchildren living with them,” explains Laurie.

As a donor, she says that she knew her donations were

servicing direct needs, but as a volunteer, she shares, “I can see the evidence of the good all donations do. It makes me want to give more, because now I can really see the need.” Laurie has also been inspired by the other volunteers who have come out to help. She says, “There are many young people who are giving their time to help others. At a time like this, it gives me so much hope. Watching others give their time and their resources has been just as meaningful to me as helping those in need.”

Above all, Laurie is moved by the gratitude she witnesses. ***Each week she sees that those coming for help still smile, say thank you, remain positive, and want to help the other customers they stand in line with.***

Because of people like you, and people like Laurie, who donate and volunteer, there is help here for those who need it. Our community thrives because of the commitment and compassion of people like you who want to help and do. Thank you for being a part of making our community hunger-free.

# We Take Care of Each Other

*The following story was told to us and shared by a Helena Food Share volunteer.*

“I’ll never forget it. A lady, probably in her mid 40’s, came through the line to pick up a turkey and holiday sides for her family. Her hair was dark brown, twisted up and pinned nicely on the back of her head. She had on

***“I was worried if someone saw my car they wouldn’t let us pick up food.”***

a nice leopard print jacket and sunglasses. She didn’t say much, kept her head down and her voice low.

I could tell she was trying to be discreet, so I kept the conversation to a minimum, helped her load up her box of food, and started carrying her

groceries out to her car. I asked which way, and she pointed up the street. We walked fast and in silence. When we got to the end of the block she took a left and kept walking, so I followed. I was a little confused, and a little nervous as we walked past five or six open parking spots that she could have taken. I kept thinking, oh it must be this car with the

missing bumper, or this car with cracked windshield and taped up side-window, or this old one with the peeling paint and all the dents, but we

walked by them all. Finally, at the very end of the street she stopped next to a big, nice, new, shiny, immaculate SUV.

I think she could sense my surprise, or she just expected it. As she opened the back hatch she quickly blurted out, ‘I’m sorry I parked so far away. I was

worried if someone saw my car they wouldn’t let us pick up food. We bought this car last year. We’ve always had enough money, my husband’s always had a good job. But he got laid off last year and the job he has now isn’t quite as good. We’ve been struggling to keep up. I don’t want to sell my car, it’s reliable and it’s the only one we have. My husband and I share it to get to and from work and to drop the kids at school.’

I cut in to tell her she didn’t owe me an explanation and that we were happy she came to get food if she needed it. She adjusted her sunglasses and closed the door of the car as I set the food inside. Then, she thanked me and said, ‘I’ve been dreading the holidays. The kids don’t know how tight things are. You don’t know how much this turkey means to me.’

Truthfully, I was caught off guard and didn’t know what to say, so I wished her a happy Thanksgiving and told her to hang in there. As I started the walk back up the road to the pantry, I thought about her situation and how often we judge someone’s circumstances on the clothes they wear, or the car they drive. The truth is, we never really know what someone is going through. I’m proud to live in a community that takes care of the person who stands in the food pantry line every year for a holiday meal, and the person who only needs to come once in a lifetime. We take care of each other, and that’s Helena.”



*It’s hard to imagine Thanksgiving without a turkey, but we’ve done it before. A friend told me to come to Helena Food Share this year. Now, look at all this stuff! I can’t wait to surprise my kids with pumpkin pie. And this turkey will feed our family for a week!*

*–Helena Food Share customer*

# Holiday Meal Sharing During Covid-19

Each year, supporters of Helena Food Share- like yourself- donate generously so that all of our neighbors get to experience the joy and peace of pulling up a chair next to their loved ones at a table full of holiday favorites. This year is no different. We need you. Simply put, we won't be able to get through this holiday season without your continued support.

The Covid-19 pandemic has forced us to make some tough decisions and significant changes to our operations. Out of safety for our customers, volunteers, donors, and staff, we are discouraging food drives and food donations. Food drives have typically provided 20% of the food we distribute and our community's involvement is essential in getting food to our neighbors in need.

This is why we are asking our supporters to join our virtual food drive and donate



financially. Because we can purchase at wholesale, bulk prices, we can also stretch your dollar further!

Let's keep the tradition going and make sure every household in Helena gets a holiday meal. All you have to do is visit [HelenaFoodShare.org](http://HelenaFoodShare.org) to join the online food drive or to start your own fund drive with your staff, clubs, or churches. Make it fun! Share your virtual fund drive on social media and email! Together we can make sure our neighbors in need have food for the holidays and all year long.

## Fight Hunger and Reduce Your Taxes with a Gift of Stock

Donate your appreciated stock to Helena Food Share and avoid the additional tax burden. It's an easy and effective way to help your neighbor in need. **Visit [HelenaFoodShare.org/donate-stock/](http://HelenaFoodShare.org/donate-stock/) for more information.**

### Your Impact by the Numbers

(MAR.-SEPT. 2020)

**11,113** Grab-and-Go  
Emergency Food Boxes  
Shared with **2,905**  
different households



### Effects of COVID-19

(MAR.-SEPT.)

**In 2019: 115,177**  
Meals per Month

**In 2020: 193,684**  
Meals per Month

**41% Increase in # of  
Meals Provided!**

## Pantry Times

October 2020

*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

### Our Pantries:

1616 Lewis Street, Helena  
50 Prickley Pear, East Helena

**Office:** 1437 Helena Avenue  
[HelenaFoodShare.org](http://HelenaFoodShare.org)



## Now is the Time!

**Make a donation today, and Town Pump Charitable Foundation will match it dollar-for-dollar!**

All donations made directly to Helena Food Share, now through November 30th, will be matched, up to \$40,000.



**A BIG THANKS to Town Pump for their support of a hunger-free community!**

**DOUBLE  
YOUR GIFT!  
Now Through  
November  
30th!**



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**Pantry Times**

HelenaFoodShare.org



## This Year, Give a Virtual Turkey!

On **November 20th** make your annual turkey donation online by visiting:

**[HelenaFoodShare.org/turkey-challenge/](https://HelenaFoodShare.org/turkey-challenge/)**

Don't worry, we will take care of purchasing the real bird this year!



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