



Creating a Hunger-Free
Community

Pantry Times

Summer 2023



We believe access to food is a basic human right.

Senior Farmers Market Coupons: Feeding Mind, Body & Spirit

Many older adults face food insecurity. In Helena, that's one in five of our neighbors who are 60 or older. Most seniors live on fixed incomes, so when food, housing, and health care increase, nutritional needs often take a backseat on a limited budget. It is also a time in life when it is critical to have access to enough food that meets their nutritional needs. Healthy physical and mental conditions require a complete and balanced diet as we age. It is also a vital component of our emotional health.

Food programs for seniors at Helena Food Share focus on meeting these needs. In addition to weekly and monthly shopping in the Pantry, qualified seniors can participate in the Senior Commodities and Senior Farmers Market Coupon programs, providing extra nutrition for older customers.

Julie, a customer who has relied on farmers market coupons for several years, picked up coupons for herself and a homebound friend in June. Julie shared with us on a recent visit to the Pantry,

"I get them every summer. It means we get to go to the market and buy wonderful, local fresh produce." Julie takes her friend to the market in either downtown Helena or East Helena. "It's also a social event for us," she added. "Besides the food, we get out in our community and have fun together."

While seniors who shop in the Pantry can access fresh produce, the coupons provide additional variety and allow them to participate in the Farmers Market experience and support local producers. Last month, \$48 in federally funded Farmers Market coupons were distributed to 270 customers age 60 or older and whose monthly income is \$2,248 or less for a household size of one or \$3,041 or less for a household of two. Farmers Market Coupons and Senior Commodities are the only Helena Food Share programs with income requirements because they are federally funded.

Participating vendors at farmers markets in Helena and East Helena and Johnson's Gardens & Nursery in the Helena Valley



Senior coupons being used at the Helena Farmers Market.

accept coupons, allowing seniors to shop for locally grown, fresh fruits, vegetables, honey, and herbs. Vendors turn in coupons at the end of the market and are reimbursed.

Senior Commodities are distributed every other month for qualifying seniors. They provide a staple of nutritious, USDA-supplied food items that supplement other food sources for seniors over two months. While these programs are partially federally funded, your support of Helena Food Share ensures they are made available and distributed to our older neighbors needing food support.



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Jim & Suzi Stanger: Hope through Faith and Love



Jim and Suzi Stanger have been enthusiastic supporters of Helena Food Share since they moved to Helena in 2001 as the new owners of the Helena Motors Ford Toyota Honda dealership. Through the years, they built up the dealership and have recently sold it. They have also been active members of their church and have supported several community organizations.

food programs and the building campaign. We asked Jim and Suzi to share some thoughts about the importance of Helena Food Share in their lives.

“We are so excited about the campaign. We wanted to support the building campaign because we don’t know how you do what you do out of such a small building, so we know it is really needed.

“We know that Helena Food Share is hope. Hope given to people when they are in need. It helps them to know there is another, brighter day ahead.”

The larger building will allow Helena Food Share to better serve those

That support has included Helena Food Share and has taken on many forms – volunteering to build Kid Packs, hosting food drives at church, helping the community to understand the impact of food insecurity, and providing financial support for

in need – more efficiently and in an environment that provides care and support.

We are people of faith – with hope and love central to that. We know that Helena Food Share is hope. Hope given to people when they are in need. It helps them to

know there is another, brighter day ahead. The hope that Helena Food Share gives to people is so meaningful.

The opportunity to serve is as important as the need to help. Coming to volunteer, your mind and heart are changed. You change when you help others. Being there for customers who, in our experience, are the salt of the earth is an expression of our faith.

We know that those who have been helped often go on to help others and serve again. Our city reflects the people in it, and Helena is known for helping others. We have been a part of many Helena organizations, and their collective work makes this community a special place.

One of the greatest blessings for us is to be able to help youth and families and the new building is an expression of that. One addition we are very excited about is the commercial kitchen. It is going to enable Helena Food Share to access and use more food, reducing food waste in our community. Food banks across Montana are leaders in using food resources efficiently. Helena Food Share is a great example of that – meeting our community’s needs while exemplifying the best food distribution and donation practices. We are so happy to be a part of it.”

—Jim & Suzi Stanger



Gifts designated “Building Campaign” will help build the new Community Food Resource Center.

See it in 3D!



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Food Drives: A mainstay for food distribution

No matter which Helena supermarket you frequent, you have likely encountered one of your neighbors handing you a shopping list and asking you to shop for others in need of food. It could be Scouts participating in a service activity,



Photo credit:
Van's Thriftway

Students from the Helena Public Schools PEAK Program hosting a food drive at Van's Thriftway this spring.

local church members living their faith, employees from a local business who are inspired to give back to their community, AmeriCorps volunteers involved in community service activities, students wanting to learn more about the needs in their community, or an outdoor performance venue asking you to feed families while holding down blankets.

Albertson's, Heritage IGA, Natural Grocers, Real Food Market & Deli, Super 1 Foods,

Safeway, and Van's Thriftway managers are always ready to host food drives for Helena Food Share. Did you know that 180,056 pounds of food were donated by community members last year through food drives and donations brought to the Pantry?

Most volunteer activities at Helena Food Share are limited to those over 16, but many younger kids really want to be involved in getting food to those in need. *"Food Drives are a great way to involve young family members in Helena Food Share activities,"* said Cathy Ransier, Volunteer Coordinator at Helena Food Share. *"They are joined by family, group leaders, or teachers at the stores or in neighborhoods collecting food."*

Ten to 15 food drives are held yearly at grocery stores in town, and another 40 by groups collecting food at doorsteps, mailboxes, and offices. The largest food drive of the year just took place at the Symphony Under the Stars concert on



Blankets and cans at Symphony Under the Stars.

July 15. Concert-goers place canned goods on blankets they set out, and Helena Food Share volunteers collected cans throughout the evening. This year's goal of collecting 23,000 lbs of food in 2023 was exceeded by 999, bringing in a total of 23,999 pounds.

In addition to collecting food at stores, homes, schools, offices, and events, donated food is often brought to the Pantry side door every week – from people's homes and gardens. Cathy added, *"The food people donate brings a lot of variety in food types and brands to our Pantry shelves which are always appreciated by our customers. Food from drives and donations is critical for meeting the need in our community."*

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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. 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



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Kids need you. Join the Challenge!

Last year we delivered over 46,000 Kid Packs to local schools, so kids in our community have enough food over the weekend. Community partners joined the challenge and helped make this happen.

Will you help this year? Talk to your employer, church, or civic group today about becoming a ***Kid Pack Challenger!***

It's a fun way to engage staff, colleagues, and customers in raising money to help kids in the Helena area.

To join the challenge, call **Maddie at 406-443-3663, ext 150**, or email, **Maddie@HelenaFoodShare.org**

Your support helps ensure kids have enough to eat every weekend.

