



Creating a Hunger-Free Community

Pantry Times

Summer 2024



We believe in the spirit of human kindness.

When Food is HealthCare



Winnie and Tony are two key members of our **Food is Care** program. They deliver food boxes each month to healthcare patients grappling with food insecurity. This crucial service, a partnership between Helena Food Share and St. Peter's Health, is a lifeline for over 20 households in our community. As Food is Care volunteers from St. Peter's Health, Winnie and Tony witness the profound impact of nutrition on the lives of our neighbors, whose wellbeing is directly linked to having the nutrition necessary to manage complex health conditions. They also know how vital this lifeline is for those who are served.

Food is Care customers are homebound without transportation or the physical capability to visit the Pantry.

Winnie said, "Everyone is supremely grateful for the food. They are always glad to see us and let us know how things are going." Tony added, "We get to know the customers and see the difference the food makes." He shared one story from a senior customer whose monthly income decreased and who could no longer afford groceries. "If it wasn't for this," she told him, "I wouldn't be eating."

These are not just stories; they are the voices of our community. In a recent St. Peter's Health

"If it wasn't for this, I wouldn't be eating."

— Food is Care recipient

survey, one Food is Care recipient shared, "I feel blessed to have this program. I'm not sure what I would do without it." Another, with a heart full of gratitude, said, "These boxes are invaluable. Thank you so much!"

Haylie Wisemiller, Population Health and Community Education Specialist for St. Peter's Health coordinates the volunteer drivers. She also provides Helena Food Share Nutrition Coordinator Jonathan Hockett with each



Jonathan packs boxes every two weeks for Food is Care recipients. The food helps to meet each person's nutritional needs.

patient's recommended nutritional needs. Jonathan builds boxes twice a month for delivery, ensuring

each recipient receives food that meets their dietary needs and preferences, making them feel valued and cared for.

Your support of programs like Food is Care is not just a donation; it's a lifeline that ensures our community can respond with food and human kindness when care is needed. You are an integral part of this lifeline, and your contribution makes a significant difference in the lives of those we serve.



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The Farm Stand: *fresh food and conversation*

Customers have been eagerly waiting for the opening of the Helena Food Share Farm Stand for the season, and at least one individual recently said it is their favorite part of Helena Food Share. The Farm Stand sits between the Pantry and the

and backyard gardens throughout town, and surplus produce from our dedicated vendors at the Helena Farmers Market. These recently harvested items and select items donated through Grocery Rescue from local stores fill the stand every Monday,

baskets to the Helena Food Share Farm Stand. These volunteers' dedication and love for the community make the Farm Stand a truly special place.

Customers do not need to check in as they do inside the Pantry before choosing what they want. We ask customers to only take what they need and will use when they visit the Farm Stand. Providing easy access to locally



Volunteers Jeannie and Beth filled the Farm Stand for the first day of the 2024 season on July 8.

Helena Food Share garden. It provides a welcoming, farmers market-like experience for customers to pick up fresh, locally grown produce. It is open each Monday during our local growing season—usually July through September.

The Farm Stand is a cornucopia of fresh, locally sourced produce. Its offerings are a delightful mix of bounties from the Helena Food Share garden, generous donations from Helena Community Gardens

ensuring a diverse and fresh selection for our customers.

For the past three years, Helena Food Share volunteers Jeannie and Karen have been the heart and soul of the Farm Stand. They set it up with love and care, meticulously filling baskets and crates with fresh, seasonal fruits and vegetables. Jeannie, with her keen eye for market baskets, has sourced many from weekend garage sales, asking the sellers if they would like to donate the

grown fruits and vegetables at the Farm Stand is critical to Helena Food Share's nutrition program. It also brings a meaningful social connection because of the spirit of human kindness shown by volunteers and all the gardeners and growers who make the Farm Stand possible.

Last season, local growers and gardeners donated

**38,864 lbs
of fresh produce.**

Q&A: Building the Community Food Resource Center

The new Helena Food Share Community Food Resource Center, a testament to our community's spirit of human kindness, is rapidly approaching completion. The construction team has been working diligently to get us into the building before November. As the building takes shape, many are wondering about the details of the new building.

Q: The building seems large. How will you use all the space?

A: Compared to the existing Pantry, the new 19,400 sq. ft. facility will house a much larger market so more customers can shop at a time, and it has an indoor lobby so they can wait to shop inside and out of the elements. It also includes dedicated space to accept food donations, sort food, and provide volunteers with a place to hang their coats and take a break. The facility brings areas under one roof that are currently in separate, rented locations, including a much larger warehouse with increased capacity for cold storage, and provides office space for staff. It features two new areas: a commercial production kitchen to process food, expanding our ability to rescue more food that would otherwise go to waste, and a community room to provide space for cooking, nutrition, and health classes. The commercial kitchen and the increased warehouse and cold storage areas



Community Food Resource Center under construction, July 2024.

allow us to prepare and store food that we couldn't accept in the current facility due to limited storage and insufficient food-safe processing areas.

Q: Why is the additional space needed?

A: Since the current Pantry opened in 2000, the number of services provided to the community has increased by 2,600%. With the area's population on the rise, we anticipate a further increase in the need for food support. The new facility, larger and better equipped, is designed to meet these future needs, ensuring our commitment to the community now and for years to come, instilling hope for a better, more food-secure future.

Q: What will you do with the old building?

A: The Pantry at 1616 Lewis Street will soon be up for sale. It includes the building and

the garden. There will be a new garden at the Community Food Resource Center.

Q: When are you opening, and will there be a time for the community to view the new facility?

A: We are excited to start providing services from the Community Food Resource Center in October and can't wait to share them with the community. We have tentatively set an **Open House on October 15**, a great opportunity for the community to see the new facility. Before the opening, we will host this year's **Sun Run on October 5** at the new location. Your participation in the run will help fund the purchase of solar panels for the building, aligning with our goal of running a sustainable, environmentally friendly operation. Stay tuned for more details about the opening and other community events.

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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](https://www.HelenaFoodShare.org)



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*We believe in the spirit
of human kindness.*



Businesses, Civic Organizations, Churches—

Become a Kid Pack Champion and help
Helena's school kids start the year off right!

Every week, over 1,200 area school children at risk of hunger receive weekend kid packs to stay nourished, healthy, and ready to learn. ***We need your help to raise \$63k to ensure they have the support they need over the first 10 weekends of the school year.***

Rally your team, engage your customers, inspire your members, and mobilize your congregation to create a brighter future for Helena's children!

**Ready to make a difference?
Become a Kid Pack Champion today!**

Contact Maddie:

406-443-3663, ext 150, or
Maddie@HelenaFoodShare.org

Learn more at HelenaFoodShare.org/kid-pack-champions/

Every child deserves a hunger-free weekend!