



Creating a Hunger-Free
Community

Pantry Times

Winter 2023

The Spirit of Human Kindness Stories from the Pantry:

Inspirational stories shared among volunteers and staff convey moments that can only happen because of the generosity of our community. An act of kindness, no matter how small, rarely goes unnoticed. Your support makes a difference in feeding bodies and hearts. Here are a few highlights shared by staff:

■ A man came in who was so ashamed to ask for food support that he wouldn't look me in the eye. I learned his wife died the year before, and he was struggling to make ends meet for his family. He came to the Pantry that day hoping to find some items for his daughter's birthday party. One of our volunteers ran back to the freezer to get ice cream that had come in earlier from grocery rescue to give to him for his daughter's party. When she handed it to him, he broke down in tears.
—Cathy

■ A mother holding a baby stood at the Pantry door crying. She was ashamed to come in. While checking in, she allowed me to help with her baby while she shopped. By the end of her

■ I noticed a young boy, about 11 or 12 years old, checking in at the front desk. I asked if he was shopping by himself, and he cheerfully replied, "Yes, I'm shopping for my mom, who is sick

and at home with my baby brother." The boy was very enthusiastic and proud to be able to shop for his family. I watched as he made his way around the Pantry to ensure he got everything his family might need, and he did a good job. A couple who was shopping behind him was also watching the young boy. They offered him their meat allotment and a few of their items from the "Extras" shelf. As they watched him finish up, they said,

"Good job, young man." Watching him shop confidently and interact with the other customers was so sweet and inspiring. You never know the challenges or strength of those we serve. —Mo



"I budget carefully and with the help of Helena Food Share, I can have a balanced diet."

— Shirley

"I am grateful for your program and will be overjoyed when I can help share." — Betty

"I am thankful for Helena Food Share. Without this, I would go hungry most days." — Mark

time shopping, she smiled and was grateful for the food. From that day forward, the woman gladly came to the Pantry, letting me hold her baby girl while she shopped. —Dave



Building a Hunger-Free Community



You will learn more about a new building for Helena Food Share in the coming weeks.

Capital Campaign committee members have been working to help secure funding for a new Community Food Resource Center. One that will house all programs, food processing, food storage, and space to support staff and volunteers under one roof. Jane and Rick Hays are dedicated committee members.

They recently shared why this project is so important to them and our community.

“There is no getting around the fact that food is the greatest priority in our lives. Before housing or any other need, you’ve got to have food in your stomach to live. Making sure that happens for everyone, young and old, begins at Helena Food Share.

That is why we are honored to be a part of this campaign. A new facility is essential for Helena, and there’s no more important time than now, when an increasing number of our neighbors don’t have enough to eat.

Looking around our community, we see a new airport, state history museum, modern healthcare facilities, and new

schools. We must also treat and care for those in need, with respect and dignity, by making this new facility a reality. Helenans have too much pride to settle for anything less. This is why we hope everyone in our home community will support this vital project.”

—Rick and Jane Hays



**The Campaign for
Helena Food Share**

The new **Community Food Resource Center** will be located at the former Caird Engineering property along Montana Ave, between Lyndale Ave and Boulder Ave. The Center will house all Helena Food Share programs and services under one roof and provide spaces to better meet the community’s needs now and into the future.

🍏 **3X the shopping space** accommodates more shoppers and eliminates wait times outdoors

🍏 **3X the warehouse and project space** to build Kid Packs

🍏 **New food-prep spaces** allow for seamless and expedited food distribution

🍏 **New commercial kitchen**, allows repackaging, processing, and preserving food, expanding delivery options and providing healthy, freshly preserved food all year long

🍏 **Education space** for skills-building classes, providing knowledge that leads to better health

Farewell & Welcome

We bid a fond farewell to two dedicated Board Directors this year. David Shanight served for six years with two as Board Chair and is currently Vice President at CDM Smith. Also leaving after six years of service is Mike Holland, a Financial Advisor at DA Davidson & Co. David and Mike’s professional engineering and financial expertise were instrumental in our work to lay the groundwork for a new building. Their service will continue to make a lasting impression on Helena Food Share and we thank them for their dedication.

Brenda Carney, Executive Director of the Jeremy Bullock Memorial Trust, and Thomas McArdle, Associate Director for Business Insurance at PayneWest Insurance, are joining the Helena Food Share Board this year. Welcome, and thank you both for your willingness to serve.

Did You Know?

Local Food Benefitting All Our Montana Neighbors

Many of us think of the food donated at the Pantry or through stores and food drives as the primary source of food offered to customers in the Pantry, and it is. However, did you know that local food purchased from Montana growers and producers is becoming an important and increasing source of nutrition in the Pantry for Grocery Share and for Kid Packs?

In recent years, we have been working to increase the locally grown or produced food we share. This year, local producers supplied beef jerky from Hi-Country Snack Foods in Lincoln and Kracklin' Kamut snacks from Big Sandy Organics for the Kid Pack program. Chickens from Elk Creek Colony in Augusta became part of holiday meals for those unable to cook turkeys. Closer to home, Johnson's Nursery and Gardens in the Helena valley provided a variety of non-GMO and pesticide-free produce throughout the growing season for our Grocery Share program. Processed beef came from cattle in White Sulphur Springs, and barley and other grains from Timeless Seeds in Ulm are available on Pantry shelves.



"As a family farm dedicated to quality products, we are pleased that our produce is shared with local families, especially those in need of food support." —Terry Johnson

Nutrition is key to creating a hunger-free, healthy, and thriving community, so offering quality food to those we serve has become central to our programs. We also know that some of the highest quality foods we can offer come from right here in Montana, making the decision to incorporate local products easy.

Community partners like St. Peter's Health, Lewis and Clark Kid's Nutrition Coalition, The Helena School District Wellness Committee, Head Start, and Helena Community Gardens share this goal. They are teaming up with us to increase the nutritional value of food in our joint food share programs. Our goals also focus on partnerships beyond our Helena community, including food pantries across the state. Purchasing local food in

larger quantities at a lower cost benefits both the producer and the pantries.

The Covid pandemic showed us just how fragile our food system can become. Sourcing food was more challenging due to shortages and transportation difficulties. Building solid relationships with Montana producers means we have much closer and more reliable access to food for our community if hardships come again.

This year's Legislature is likely to consider a bill to establish a Montana Farm to Food Bank program. The program, funded through grants, would help create a new market for local producers, support local economies, feed friends and neighbors, and get fresh products to communities.

Pantry Times | Winter 2023

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)

42,047

Kid Packs

For Kids at Risk of Hunger

8,308

Neighbors

Received Food

1,836,373

Lbs. of Food

Shared Through All Services

14,898

Volunteer Hours

By 742 Volunteers



Helena Food Share donors, volunteers, and staff are essential. SoFi employees building Kid Packs; Driver Joe Wodnik bringing donating food collected for Turkey Challenge.

2022 By the Numbers

Food Assistance *(number of services provided)*

- 29,724 Grocery Share services
- 42,047 Kid Packs
- 4,934 Emergency Food Packs
- 1,481 Senior Commodity boxes
- 2,224 Holiday Meal Share
- 80,410 Total Assistance *(all food programs)*

People Served

- 8,308 Unique individuals
- 3,937 Unique households
- 270 Seniors served by Farmers Market program

Amount of Food *(in lbs.)*

- 893,565 Food rescued/donated by grocery stores
- 42,132 Fresh produce donated by local gardeners
- 180,056 Other donated food*
- 417,063 Food purchased by Helena Food Share
- 280,877 Food provided by federal food programs
- 1,836,373 Food distributed through all services

*food drives & individual donations

Volunteer Support

- 742 Unique volunteers
- 14,898 Volunteer hours

2023 Report to

The challenges that any year brings always seem to affect those in need the most. 2022 was no exception. After returning to a near-normal post-pandemic routine, rising food, gas, and housing costs brought more of our neighbors to Helena Food Share for assistance.

This Fall, we provided an average of **1,200 Kid Packs each week**—a 10% increase—to Helena-area school kids at risk of hunger.

Weekly **Grocery Share** visits have risen by 75% this fall since earlier this spring, with a current weekly average of **110 shoppers per day**.

Most alarming is the need for Emergency Food Packs. These special packs of high-calorie food provide immediate nutrition to those who have gone without food over time and need quick calories. Emergency Food Packs are delivered monthly to

Board of Directors

Steve Fawcett, *Chair*, Dan McCauley, *Vice Chair*, Jon Satre, *Treasurer*, Christopher Cordingley, *Secretary*, Thomas McArdle, Candace Cain, Brett Clark, Andrea Groom, Sara Groves, Trish Klock, David Lechn, Rene Martello, Melanie Reynolds, Karen Smith, Alyssa Sorensen, A



...al to ensuring no one in Helena goes hungry. 2022 Highlights: ...g rescued food into the Pantry; Central School students

Our Community

emergency and social service organizations that distribute packs when required, and the numbers have more than doubled to over **400 per month**.

To address our ability to meet the growing need, we continued our work on plans for a new facility. We are excited to share more with you in the coming months.

The very good news from 2022 is that our community stepped up whenever a need existed and helped to meet the challenge. Food drives have returned, and **222,188 pounds of food** were donated this year. This includes 24,000 pounds donated at Symphony Under the Stars in July – 2,000 more than the 22,000 in 2022 goal. Our community came together to meet this year’s Turkey Challenge so folks in need could have a holiday meal. You continue to offer support whenever we reach out. Thank you!

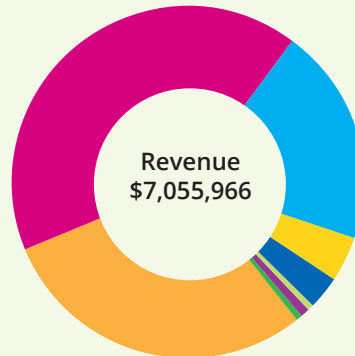
Our Mission

Serving our neighbors in need by providing food in a respectful and dignified way and by working with others to eliminate hunger in the greater Helena area.

er,
Brenda Carney,
er, M.D.,
Angela Terry

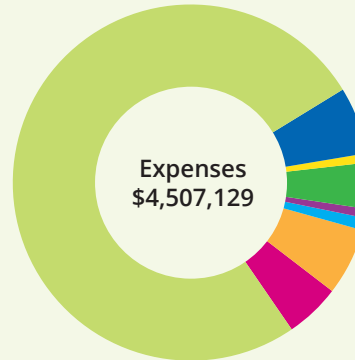
FY 2022 Financials

Revenue by Source



- Food Donations | **41%**
- Individual Contributions | **20%**
- Business Contributions | **4%**
- Foundations & Grants | **3%**
- Federal & State Grants | **.5%**
- Community Group Donations | **1%**
- Other Income | **.5%**
- Building Campaign Donations | **29%**

Expenses by Program



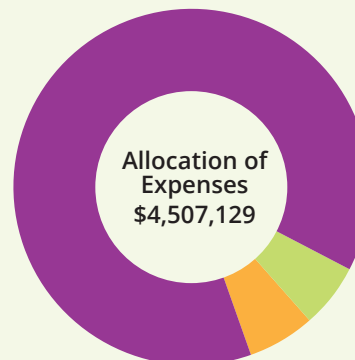
- Grocery Share Food Program | **76%**
- Kid Pack Program | **6%**
- Senior Food Programs | **1%**
- Holiday Share Program | **4%**
- Other Food Assistance | **1%**
- Emergency Food Packs Program | **1%**
- Communications & Fundraising | **6%**
- Administrative Operations | **5%**

Reserved Funds

\$2,109,000 Reserved for Building Construction

\$215,730 Reserved for Kid Packs

Allocation of Expenses



- Program Services | **89%**
- General & Administration | **5%**
- Development | **6%**

"If it weren't for Helena Food Share, the only meal I would eat is from Meals-on-Wheels, once a day."



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Community

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Pantry Times

HelenaFoodShare.org

HUNGER HEROES

Did you know...

It costs just \$2.50 to provide one meal?

As a Hunger Hero,
Your Monthly Gift of:

\$25 helps a senior with dinner for
over a week. (10 meals)

\$100 helps a working mom make
ends meet this month (40 meals)

\$250 feeds a family of 4 for over a week.
(100 meals)

\$1,000 puts a week's worth of food on the
table for 20 families (400 meals)

It's Easy to Become a Hunger Hero

- Sign up at HelenaFoodShare.org/Give
(Be sure to check "Monthly")
- Or return the enclosed envelope
(Be sure to complete the Hunger Hero section)

WHAT'S INSIDE:

- Stories from the Pantry
- Report to the Community
- Local Food Benefitting Montana Neighbors

