



Community Food Quarterly

SPRING 2025



We believe nutritious food is a building block for healthy communities.

Neighbors Helping Neighbors: Meeting the Growing Need for Food Support

The following email arrived this month: *"I am a single mom with an adult child who has health issues. I recently lost my job and only have my monthly social security check to cover rent and utilities. Can I come by today to shop and learn about other services that might be available?"* The quick response was an encouraging *"Yes! When you come, we'll have you complete a short form, and we can provide a list of other resources in the community that might be able to assist you. We'll see you this afternoon at the Market."*

Over the past few months, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of new households seeking support through the Grocery Share program. Since opening in October, the demand for all food support services has risen by 30%.

With ongoing economic uncertainty and rising food prices, individuals and families with limited resources are feeling the strain more acutely—often unsure whether they'll be able to cover rent and other essential bills. Recent changes to federal food support programs will



A volunteer stocks the rescue and dairy coolers for customers.

further impact the supply of food available to food banks and pantries. While federal support is not a primary source of food for Helena Food Share, the loss is still significant. These cuts will reduce access to fresh dairy, eggs, meat, and produce—all essential for providing nutritious food to those we serve.

As a community resource built and sustained by donors and volunteers, Helena Food Share is here to help anyone in need of food support. Your generosity—with food, funds, and time—ensures that food will always be available for those needing help to get through the month.

If you can grow an extra row of vegetables in your garden for Helena Food Share this summer, you'll provide critical nutrition for your neighbors. If you become a Hunger Hero by setting aside a donation each month—or increasing your current monthly gift—you'll help ensure that fresh produce, dairy, eggs, and meat remain available for our shoppers. And if you have time to share your skills—by preparing food in the kitchen, assisting customers, rescuing groceries, or sorting and stocking food for the Market—you can join the fabulous team of volunteers who make sure everyone who comes to Helena Food Share feels welcome.

The Community Room: *Where Healthy Living Takes Root*



Instructor Margaret Corcoran helps PAL students learn to make fresh pasta.

At the heart of Helena Food Share's new Community Food Resource Center is the vibrant and versatile Community Room. Outfitted with four fully-equipped cooking stations and



flexible seating, this dynamic space is already making a major impact—offering cooking classes, nutrition seminars, health screenings, and much more to our community.

This spring, students from the Project for Alternative Learning (PAL) transformed the Community Room into their classroom

during a special nutrition and healthy cooking block. Guided by Helena Food Share's nutrition coordinator Jonathan Hockett and PAL instructor Brooke Kupucho—with special guest chefs like Margaret Corcoran and Kim Lloyd of St. Peter's Health—students learned practical kitchen skills. Junior Halo Coggins shared, "I usually just cook ramen when I get home from school, and now, I want to learn how to cook real healthy food."

Young families also filled the Community Room during the Early Childhood Collaborative's Tasty Tuesday event, creating fun and nutritious fruit spring rolls for little ones.

Meanwhile, St. Peter's Health's Inch by Inch program provides essential nutrition support for individuals managing diabetes. Through a hands-on cooking demo and food sampling event in the Community Room, participants discovered how meals can be powerful tools for better health.

And there's more ahead! In late June, the Blue Cross Blue Shield Care Van will join Pure View Health to offer free and low-cost health screenings, sports physicals, and immunizations at Helena Food Share, utilizing both the Community Room and on-site vans.

The Community Room is bringing Helena together around food, health, and learning. Visit [HelenaFoodShare.org/events](https://www.helenafoodshare.org/events) to explore upcoming opportunities, including the Care Van health screenings in June!



Blanca from St. Peter's Health shows mom Katie and her little ones how to make fruit spring rolls during the Early Childhood Collaborative's Tasty Tuesday event.

Cooking Up Community: *Volunteers Team Up to Bring Heart to the Kitchen*

The kitchen at Helena Food Share has become a hub of activity — and a destination for community-minded cooks. Every week, dedicated volunteers like Debbie and Carol roll up their sleeves to prepare soups, salads, and ready-to-eat meals for neighbors shopping in the Grocery Share Market.



"I think what's happening here is incredible," says Debbie. "The vulnerable in our community now have the chance to eat nutritious food lovingly prepared by community members."

Carol, her Wednesday morning kitchen partner, couldn't agree more. *"No one should go hungry,"* she says. Volunteering allows her to cook more now that her kids are grown and on their own.



Carol helps prepare ready-to-eat meals.

"On my way here, I always wonder, 'What does Sally have for me today?'" she adds, referring to Kitchen Manager Sally Beck's daily creativity with rescued food.

On Thursday afternoons, Judy O and Lonnie take the baton, sorting produce, repacking staples like rice and oats, and ensuring the kitchen is clean and ready for the next day. Sally calls them her "Cinderella's mice," always behind the scenes, keeping the kitchen running.



Lonnie and Judy O sorting potatoes.

Lonnie, who began volunteering in 2020 during the pandemic, says, *"I like being able to help people."* Judy, who joined in 2022, agrees. *"Customers are so appreciative — they always say*

thank you. And getting to sample some of the delicious food is a nice perk too."



On Friday, Judy G teams up with Nancy, sorting fruits and veggies, ensuring only the freshest make it to the Market. *"Every day is different depending on what comes in,"* Nancy says. *"If the cilantro looks a bit wilted, we perk it up — just let it sit in water for a while, and it comes back like magic. We also look through containers of fruit a grocery store might set aside because of one overripe piece. We repackage all that's fresh, making sure it's available for customers or Sally to prep meals."*

Whether chopping vegetables or repacking grains, Helena Food Share's volunteers are doing more than just kitchen work — they're growing friendships while helping to nourish a community.

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Contact Us:

(406) 443-3663

To Volunteer: ext. 106

To Donate: ext. 103

To Get Help: ext. 110

Grocery Share Market:

1280 Boulder Avenue, Helena

East Helena Mobile Pantry:

50 Prickley Pear, East Helena

Office: 1280 Boulder Avenue, Helena



HelenaFoodShare.org



Creating a Hunger-Free
Community

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Grow-A-Row!



Your Garden Can Be a Lifeline— And So Can Your Pantry

With school out soon, more families will be facing empty cupboards. ***Make a difference by dedicating a garden row to Helena Food Share.*** Fresh, local produce makes a world of difference for families in need, giving them the nutritious food they deserve to thrive.

Don't have a green thumb? You can still help

Shelf-stable goods are just as vital. We are currently in need of:

- Flour
- Sugar
- Canned Soup
- Peanut Butter
- Canned Chicken/Tuna
- Pasta Sauce
- Sliced Bread

Every donation provides food with dignity and care for a neighbor in need.

***Together, we can grow
a stronger, hunger-free
community.***



Creating a Hunger-Free
Community