



# Community Food Quarterly

FALL 2025



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

## From Kohlrabi to Kindness: a New Customer's Story

*A volunteer recently shared a moving experience of helping a friend shop for the first time at Helena Food Share. We asked if we could share their story, which is a delightful look at what our customers experience every day in the Grocery Share Market.*

I had the opportunity to introduce my friend Ann to Helena Food Share. Ann is a gracious 85-year-old woman who recently became a widow. She's adjusting to half of her regular

From the moment we walked in the door, the smiling volunteers greeted us, making my friend feel at ease. They escorted us to the intake room, where another smiling volunteer took Ann's information and explained weekly shopping, monthly shopping, and the likelihood she would qualify for the senior commodities program. From there, another volunteer made sure Ann had a cart, and then we were off to do her first monthly shop!



*Late summer harvests brought a bountiful and nutritious selection of fresh garden produce to the Market.*

"Kohlrabi!" she exclaimed. "I had those as a child and remember eating them as a snack." In the produce bag it went! We continued and were looking at tomatoes when another helpful volunteer offered a fresh dish of tomatoes, saying, "A local gardener just delivered these." Ann took two. Then, a small packaged salad made that day in the kitchen was the perfect-sized meal for her the following evening. Ann also found a small box of strawberries.

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*Canned goods and other pantry essentials are available during a monthly shop.*

income because of the death of her spouse. She receives meals on wheels and extends that food to more than one meal. I suggested to Ann the benefits of Food Share, and she wondered what it would cost. I told her there was no cost, and we set a date for her first shopping experience.

**First stop** — the potatoes! Ann loves baked potatoes and will sometimes put salsa on them. Then onions. She only needed one small onion, which she found.

**Second stop** — the produce! As we started to walk down the produce line, Ann spied kohlrabi.

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**On to the rescue cooler** — she took four small containers of peach yogurt. She wondered if there was cottage cheese, which there wasn't that day, but I told her you never know what might be available when you shop in the Helena Food Share market.

**At the dairy cooler,** Ann didn't choose milk since she would only need a small container, which wasn't available.

**At the Freezer,** Ann looked through the meat section and chose a package of sausages to cook. We checked out the non-food shelves next—nothing there of interest to her that day.



*Additional frozen meat is available for customers each month*

**Off to the canned food section** — she took sliced peaches, a jar of salsa (for that baked potato and scrambled eggs), and a can of veggies. She asked about expiration dates. I explained that volunteers were always keeping an eye on them, ensuring nothing went on the shelf past the USDA-approved date, which is often beyond the “best by” date. As we continued to shop, another delightful volunteer came up and said,



*Breads and sweets are donated each day from local stores and bakeries.*

“We just got some fresh peaches. Would you like some?” Ann said, “Sure,” and the volunteer was off and returned with a nice bag of peaches.

While adding a jar of peanut butter to the cart, that same lovely volunteer came up again and said, “We have grapes! Would you like some?” Yes please! The volunteer scurried off and returned with a huge smile on her face and a beautiful bag of grapes. The grapes were tasty, by the way.

**Finally — breads and sweets.** Ann wanted a loaf of bread because she sometimes likes to have a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. We found just the kind she likes. Then sweets – Ann has a sweet tooth. After looking at the options, Ann picked a cinnamon roll and a berry scone, both donated by Great Harvest Bakery. Success!

**Then the pièce de résistance — Check Out!** Ann noticed there was no register and asked again what she had to pay. The fabulous volunteers just weighed her cart for inventory purposes

and then helped her load the groceries into the car. Once we got Ann back home, we unloaded her groceries.

The next day, it was marvelous to see the peaches in a bowl on the island, grapes washed and ready for snacking, food in the refrigerator, canned food in her pantry, and Ann at her cutting board, slicing up that kohlrabi.

Not only was this a wonderful experience for Ann, but it was great for me. As a regular volunteer, I have yet to experience the process for our shoppers. I recommend that anyone who has the opportunity to bring someone to the market do so. It is an excellent opportunity to learn more about what Helena Food Share means to our customers.

I now have a much greater appreciation for how friendly the volunteers are, how important Food Share is to the shoppers, and how essential it is for the health of our community. I am incredibly grateful for the work Helena Food Share does to ensure no one in our community goes hungry.



Sam, Clara, and Courtney take a break from stocking food in the Market.

## Volunteering: Connecting Family and Community

Thursday afternoons at the Grocery Share Market have become a special tradition for Clara, her mom Courtney, and her friend Sam.

Clara first started volunteering as a senior at Helena High School, but her connection to Helena Food Share began years earlier when, as a child, she sold handmade bracelets at soccer games and donated the proceeds to Helena Food Share. Even after graduating, Clara returned home from college this summer to volunteer again.

In high school, when Clara joined the wrestling team and couldn't make her Thursday shift, she asked her mom, Courtney, to step in. By the time the season ended and Clara returned to volunteer, Courtney had grown to love the Market herself, and Thursdays became a family affair. This summer, Clara's friend Sam joined them, adding another layer to the Thursday crew.

So, what makes volunteering here so meaningful?

Clara shared, *"I love the people we volunteer with, and I love the people who shop on Thursdays. It's a beautiful place. People work hard to keep the sense of community alive, and being here with my mom and now Sam makes it even better."*

Sam added, *"This is the community we were missing. It feels like a church family—seeing the same wonderful people each week, all of us behind the same mission, making a difference for those we serve."*

Clara reflected further: *"It's so basic—helping people get food—it's pretty rewarding. Some [customers] are super thankful, and some are really sweet and want to talk. But not everybody is having a good day out there. Even being able to work with that, being patient, and as helpful as you can in that situation is a unique experience. It's something I wish more people could experience."*

Sam summed it up: *"It opens your eyes to the fullness of our community. I just met a customer who immediately wanted to volunteer—that's the cycle of giving back."*

Clara and Sam have returned to college. Courtney misses them

and the camaraderie of working together in the Market. Still, she enthusiastically continues the family tradition on Thursday afternoons, carrying forward the spirit of joy and connection that volunteering brings.

## Celebrating *Silver Aprons* and a Year of Gratitude

Our Volunteer Appreciation event, held on October 8, took place in the Community Food Resource Center, marking one year since we opened the new Market. It was the perfect place to express our gratitude to some of the 1,200 incredible volunteers who enable us to serve our community.

During the celebration, we honored volunteers **Jim Hansen, Jane Egan, Deb Larson, Judy Gardner, and Micki Bennett** by presenting them with Silver Aprons, recognizing their dedication of over 1,000 hours of service to Helena Food Share.

## Community Food Quarterly | FALL 2025

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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](http://HelenaFoodShare.org)



Creating a Hunger-Free Community

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2025

TURKEY CHALLENGE

Food & Fund Drive

NOVEMBER 21st

Donate & Learn more at:  
[HelenaFoodShare.org/turkey-challenge/](https://HelenaFoodShare.org/turkey-challenge/)



Will Match  
Up To \$10,000  
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Bring food or funds to the Library on November 21 to provide holiday meals for our neighbors in need.

