The mission of Northwest Harvest is to provide nutritious food to hungry people statewide in a manner that respects their dignity, while fighting to eliminate hunger.

**Drought Adds to Strain on Washington Farmers, Families**

We’re hot. And we’re dry. And things aren’t looking up any time soon.

Currently, 98.6 percent of Washington State is experiencing a severe drought. A confluence of factors, ranging from the nonexistent mountain snowpack to the unseasonably warm temperatures, has placed a significant strain on water resources.

With limited water access hitting farmers across the state, Washingtonians experiencing food insecurity face potentially devastating consequences.

Robert Adams is a Yakima-based agricultural relations specialist at Northwest Harvest. Adams plays a vital role, working with local farmers to secure donations of produce from cucumbers to squash, watermelon, and beyond.

“We get a lot of free vegetables that are not quite fit for the supermarket but are perfectly fine to eat,” notes Adams. “They will have a scar or something on them.” These “sort outs” or “seconds” are vital elements in the distribution of fresh produce to our neighbors in need.

Sunburned by scorching temperatures and clear skies, produce rejected by supermarkets lives a second life in local food banks. If drought conditions fail to improve, however, the situation quickly grows dire.

“The value of produce goes with supply. As supply goes down, that value starts to creep up incrementally, meaning there becomes a point where those seconds become sellable,” warned Adams. “And that’s where we don’t get those free donations any more.”

The stress on farmers, already stretched thin by water shortage, also grows with each additional season of drought. Donated or reduced-price seconds, while great for food banks, are not economically sustainable in the long term. And in a state as agriculturally rich as Washington, struggling farmers mean struggling communities.

In addition to a potential decrease in the volume of donations, a reduced food supply could drive up the cost of produce, meat, and dairy products. For those teetering on the edge, this can prove unsustainable. The average monthly SNAP benefit per person in Washington State in 2014 was a mere $117.71. Any increase in food prices makes that amount even more precious.

Is this drought a glimpse into future climate of the Pacific Northwest? In his popular weather blog, University of Washington meteorologist Cliff Mass discussed how the warm, dry winter of 2014 might become the norm by the year 2070.

Adams, 60, is worried. “I’ve lived here my entire life, and these are the two hottest years in a row I’ve ever experienced. I don’t know if it’s a temporary change, but there’s something going on with the weather.” As an agency, Northwest Harvest is watching and planning carefully to ensure that the full weight of drought is not unfairly placed upon those least able to cope.

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**Advocating for our Kids**

Each year, Congress adjourns for the month of August. Members of Congress are back at home in their districts, meeting with constituents to learn about the issues in the communities they serve.

At Northwest Harvest, we are not taking any time off from advocating for our children, seniors, and others in need. Our representatives are often in our communities, hoping to learn about constituent needs. So we use this unique opportunity to get their attention focused on the needs of hungry children and families.

On September 17, the Senate Agriculture Committee plans to review legislation that reauthorizes child nutrition programs (including summer meals, after school meals, the school breakfast and lunch programs, and WIC).

Take a moment today and urge your representatives to support and strengthen the programs that help low-income kids eat healthy meals where they live, go to school, and play.

Learn more at northwestharvest.org/legislative-updates.

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“We have a large population of elderly, and disabled people. Our young families are large. Several grandparents raising grandchildren.”

—Cusick Food Bank, Pend Oreille County
Endless blue skies and hot summer days have started their inevitable transition as kids begin to sense the steady approach of a new school year. Around our state, the creaking sigh of overheated trees is steadily replaced with late summer frogs and back to school sales. Autumn has landed.

The impact of summer heat is not yet over, though. In this newsletter, you’ll find a piece on the drought in our state. As the article reminds us, drought isn’t just an abstract for those in need: it threatens reduced supplies of critical, nutritious produce for food banks around the state.

Before I came to Northwest Harvest, I worked at one of our strong partners, Rotary First Harvest. At both organizations, relationships with Washington producers and packers are critical. We depend on our agricultural partners to keep more than two-thirds of our food distribution nutritious fruits and vegetables—a critical infusion of healthy food into the state food bank system.

We have seen what happens when agriculture struggles. When farmers hurt, communities hurt. Northwest Harvest is working with our partners to identify potential supply problems now and into the future, and looking to identify solutions that will benefit our partners and our neighbors in need.

As the weather cools each fall, I always take the time to walk through our Cherry Street Food Bank in Seattle. The fresh produce often towers in boxes behind our dedicated volunteers, and the smell of bread at the end of the day often wafts up to my office over the food bank. Our friends and neighbors in need line up outside the food bank every morning, eager to get the help they need. I am thankful that I have the opportunity, with our staff, partners, donors, and volunteers, to do this work every day.

A friend recently mentioned a concept I’ve come to embrace. He calls it “get to.” I don’t just “do” this work each day: I “get to do” this work. I am proud of this community’s support for those in need. I am proud that my team at Northwest Harvest is so committed to our tagline, “Hunger Stops Here.” And I am proud of our agricultural community here in Washington as they look to a potentially hotter, drier future and consider, as part of their calculations, how to continue to support those in need as we support them.
Produce Makes a Healthy Community

Sharon Mobley admits that she will talk your ear off about the Othello Food Bank if you let her. The Director and Facilities Manager at the food bank, Mobley has found that personal connections are essential. A resident of Othello for 33 years, many of the Othello Food Bank's successes can be attributed to Sharon's indefatigable enthusiasm and strong local network.

Othello is home to about 7,600 people, making it easily the largest city in Adams County. Despite the small, largely rural population, Mobley’s food bank offered a remarkable 23,754 services in 2014. To respond to the need, Mobley is always looking for ways to grow the food available, focusing especially on fresh, local produce.

Northwest Harvest is proud to provide much of the produce and other nutritious food that the Othello Food Bank then distributes to the community. Many local donors have also stepped up to aid their neighbors in need.

In 2014, Mobley sent a letter to an international juicing company with operations in Othello. For months, there was no reply. When a community-minded employee found the letter and passed it around, the company saw an opportunity to help its Othello neighbors. The food bank now enjoys consistent donations of fresh produce from the company, including a recent donation of almost 1,000 pounds of organic apples, butternut squash and carrots.

Growers and producers of all sizes contribute. A local church member regularly brings in 50 pound bags of onions, noting that he loves to see food he grows go directly to feed hungry people in the region. No donation is too small or large. The community support in Othello is impossible to underestimate. Mobley likes to mention two food bank clients: "Families (young & old) are really appreciative of the chicken that was received as the protein. Chicken drummies are something that everyone can make a meal out of and they have gone over great!"

—Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe Food Bank, Kitsap County

Stories of Everyday Struggles

Each year we cross the state, visiting hunger relief programs to hear directly from people who are struggling to feed themselves and their families.

This year, we held a focus group at a tribal program for the first time, as well as returning to one of the programs we first visited in 2007 to hear if or how things have changed.

We heard reports from several people on the challenges of making ends meet with reduced food stamp benefits, as well as the frustration of being just a few dollars over the maximum income cap, resulting in ineligibility for assistance.

We learned that many people struggle with dietary restrictions and food allergies that put even more strain on limited budgets, as specialty and alternative-ingredient foods are typically much more expensive, as well as less readily available.

Along with quantitative data on cost of living expenses, obstacles to food security and the impact of food programs in each community, these compelling, personal stories are compiled into a Focus on Food Security report on the state of hunger in Washington. Legislators, donors and advocates refer to our reports to learn about food insecurity, hear from constituents and weigh the impact of policies that affect families living on the economic edge.

Look for our complete report in January. Previous reports are available at northwestharvest.org.

“Do not cut food programs. Kids need them going through schools and seniors need them. You need to beef up, not cut back on food programs for seniors and children.”

—Cathie, Republic

“I’m taking care of my 89-year-old mother who wants to die at home. I can’t work—it’s a 24 hour job. I can’t afford to bring in anyone else to help us. I’m not quite old enough to get social security yet. Without the food bank or food stamps, it would be rough living on her social security after insurance and everything. That little bit doesn’t go very far.”

—Bob, Leavenworth
Six Tips For An OUTSTANDING Food Drive

While the logistics of holding a food drive are pretty simple (get a box, advertise the drive, collect food or funds) and each makes a real impact on hunger, we are regularly inspired by the outstanding food drives that stand apart. Whether filled with colorful personalities, intercorporate competition, lemonade stands, marching bands, or a wide variety of other possibilities, these innovative drives help us to think in new ways about how we can make an impact in our state.

At the core, an outstanding drive is all about the passion and enthusiasm that a person or organization brings to a food drive.

A few years ago, a corporate office decided to hold a food drive. A long-time donor, they wanted to find a way to do more to drive their team’s engagement internally and within their broader community. The Northwest Harvest food drive team helped with some initial brainstorming and then waited for the results.

Weeks later, news rolled in that the corporate team had doubled their already-high goal. How? Among other incentives, the male members of the leadership team issued a challenge goal. With the challenge met, they arrived the day after the drive in vintage prom dresses and formal hair.

In addition to a wildly successful drive, it was inspiring to hear the stories related to this food drive. A geographically diverse team was united in friendly competition, engaged in the company’s mission to help end hunger, and given a personal stake in the process.

Six other lessons we’ve learned from outstanding food drives:

1. Friendly competition encourages people to get involved. Break your group into teams and pit them against each other.
2. Themes keep a food drive interesting. You can pick one theme for the whole drive or have certain days that focus on a specific food (Meat Monday, Tuna Tuesday, etc.).
3. Communicating the reality of hunger motivates people. If you send out a daily fact about hunger, it helps to draw a personal connection with those your drive is helping.
4. Be generous in involving other partners! Your neighbors, other companies, or other teams might like to participate, and it opens doors that might previously have been closed. Brainstorming over food drives is a great way to bring diverse teams together.
5. Use multimedia! It’s hard to overstate the impact of a great video on motivation and morale before or after your drive.
6. Hold a food and funds drive. For geographically diverse locations, an online funds drive can often help to drive competition. A mere 67 cents can feed a family of three.

Interested in starting a food drive? Visit northwestharvest.org/food-drives or call us at 206.923.7432 for ideas or to start your drive.

“Our success comes with the fact that we are providing higher nutrition foods to our hungry, needy kids. With the generous help of Northwest and Coastal Harvest, we can use our donated dollars on fresh fruits, vegetables and protein. Every box that is delivered contains milk, eggs, seven to 10 servings of fresh fruit, daily protein and variety. Every box is a beautiful bounty.”

—North Mason CCC, Mason County
**EVENTS**

**WASHINGTON**

**Western | Central | Eastern**

More events and up-to-the-minute details at: northwestharvest.org

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**GOOD KARMA 5K**

**SUNDAY, SEPT. 13, 9 A.M.**

Choose Northwest Harvest at this fun run, where runners can decide which organization their portion of the proceeds will benefit. Choose between a 15k run, 5k run or 4k walk through Seattle’s Seward Park. More information available at northwestharvest.org.

**SEAHAWKS TACKLE HUNGER**

**SUNDAY, OCT. 18**

The Seattle Seahawks host the Carolina Panthers for Tackle Hunger at CenturyLink Field. Staff and volunteers collect cash and nonperishable food items at all gates prior to 1:05 p.m. kickoff. Thanks to Delta Air Lines and the Seattle Seahawks for their sponsorship.

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**CBS RADIO-SEAHAWKS HOMETOWN HANGAR**

**ALL SUNDAY HOME GAMES, OPEN AT 10 A.M.**

CBS Radio hosts a fun-filled tailgate party before each Sunday ‘Hawks home game with all proceeds benefitting Northwest Harvest. Located across from the south entrance to the stadium, Hometown Hangar has music, games broadcast on giant TV screens and a beer garden.

**CARVE OUT HUNGER - YAKIMA**

**SATURDAY, OCT. 17**

A hit in its first year, this popular event returns for a second! Northwest Harvest hosts this western harvest-themed event at the Selah Civic Center in Yakima. It will feature celebrity pumpkin carving, beer and wine tasting and food sampling. Thank you to this year’s Presenting Sponsor, First Fruits Marketing of Washington! Tickets and more information at northwestharvest.org.

**KZOK ROCK THE HARVEST**

**THURSDAY, NOV. 12, 7 A.M. - 7 P.M.**

The Rock the Harvest Radio-Thon returns! KZOK listeners are asked to call the Rock the Harvest phone bank to donate to Northwest Harvest.

**KHQ FOOD DRIVE**

**SATURDAY, DEC. 5**

All Spokane Safeway stores will collect food and cash, and KHQ will broadcast live from select locations around town.

**KING 5 HOME TEAM HARVEST**

**SATURDAY, DEC. 5**

Your favorite KING 5 personalities broadcast live from several Puget Sound locations as Northwest Harvest volunteers and staff spend the day collecting food and funds at our largest one-day benefit of the year! Thank you to our sponsors, US Bank and Safeway.

**KNDO WINTER FAMILY FOOD DRIVE**

**SATURDAY, DEC. 5**

KNDO-TV kicks off the holiday season with their annual holiday food drive to fight hunger in Central Washington. Come donate nonperishable food or funds, enjoy live entertainment and see your favorite on-air personalities broadcast live.

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**THANK YOU FOR FIGHTING HUNGER!**

With your support, the 2015 MARINERS FIGHT HUNGER event raised enough food and funds to provide more than 70,000 meals to people in need.

To everyone who contributed in any way, thank you for making a difference!

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“Since the recession the proportion of single client families has dropped at our location, while children under 5 have become more heavily represented by those accessing our food bank. The food from the Northwest Harvest has been pretty fantastic lately. The raspberries, individually bagged carrots, mushrooms, melons and stone fruit have been particularly great.”

—North Helpline, King County

“I’ve noticed several instances of clients showing kindness and helpfulness to one another this month: Total strangers, helping senior citizens lift their boxes into their carts or out to their cars, offering rides to clients who had to walk or rode a bike therefore couldn’t carry all of their food home with them.”

—ROOF Community Services, Thurston County
More Ways to Volunteer

Is your family, company, or group looking for a way to give back this holiday season? Consider volunteering at a Northwest Harvest distribution center!

Our volunteer shifts are a great way to help fight hunger while having fun and building team spirit.

Volunteers at each warehouse help us sort donated food and repack bulk food into family-sized portions for distribution to our network of more than 370 food banks, meal programs and high-need schools around the state. Volunteers are needed in Kent, Seattle, Yakima and Spokane.

This holiday season, the Kent warehouse has a new schedule, with weekday shifts that are perfect for workplace volunteer groups, Tuesday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. or 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

To learn more or fill out a group application, visit northwestharvest.org or email volunteer@northwestharvest.org.

“A lady came in for a utility appointment. She had been homeless and was now housed for about a year. We were able to help her get her power back on as it had been turned off for two weeks. She had lost her job because she did not have reliable transportation to get to work and could not afford the $45 bus pass. Transportation continues to be the biggest barrier our people have to getting to appointments, food banks, treatment, jobs and job interviews. Our program is expanding but this is really our push... Thank you for all you do for Our Place and working on putting a stop to hunger.”

—Our Place, Spokane County

Volunteers repack bulk rice into family-sized portions at Northwest Harvest’s Kent Warehouse.