Safety Net, Food Programs Brace to Rise or Fall Together

On September 30, Congress passed a clean continuing resolution on a federal spending package. The result? Current spending levels on all government programs remain in effect with no changes until December 11. Many pundits breathed a sigh of relief: no changes are better, they argued, than negative changes.

We are not so optimistic. Though Congress may have avoided a federal government shutdown in the short term, a December shutdown would devastate low-income families that rely on public assistance to help them meet their basic needs. Without assistance to help pay the rent, utilities, or child care, families will have to find the money to pay for these necessities by cutting back on what they spend on food. This means a deeper need for emergency food services at the worst possible time for food banks: November and December are often challenges as food banks see skyrocketing demand.

In the event of a government shutdown, Northwest Harvest works to provide resources to partners and clients to keep them informed. Flyers, emails, and other information designed to calm client fears is distributed promptly. We also work ardently to prevent a shutdown with calls to action, and urge Congress to pass a fair spending package that invests in low-income families and prevents further harm to our safety net.

As of late October, there has been talk of avoiding a shutdown with a long-term agreement to keep spending at current levels for two years. This could still be dangerous for low-income families; however, as it would lock in current spending at levels already well below what is needed to adequately fund programs like Head Start and child care subsidies, and would further slow down efforts to expand technology that can make it easier for pregnant women and families with young children to use WIC benefits.

If Congress can’t pass a federal spending package by December 11, then we can expect a shutdown of federal programs and services on December 12. A shutdown seems likely: there remains a deep divide amongst members over how to fund our spending. Should we raise taxes to generate revenue to avoid cuts to important basic needs services? Congress passed a budget blueprint that cuts trillions for safety net programs, including child nutrition programs, while raising military spending. Complicating matters is that we will be running up against the debt ceiling limit, the cap on how much the government can spend on credit. Partisan disagreement on whether we should raise the debt limit has led us to the brink of shutdown in recent years.

Northwest Harvest stands with those in need in advocating for needed change and greater, long-term funding for our nation’s safety net.

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. These compelling, personal stories are compiled into our report on the state of hunger in Washington, Focus on Food Security. Look for our complete report in January. Previous reports are available at northwestharvest.org.

“I fell, tore my shoulder, had surgery, have been out [of work] for 3-4 months. My retirement check is only $300-$400 a month. The food bank has gotten me out of a jam. I just don’t have it. I’ve always worked. I’ve never been on this end of it until my injury…”

—Rhonda, Leavenworth

“I’m at poverty level, I go to food banks—all 3 of them. I’m on the SNAP program, and I have a garden, and sometimes I don’t have food. It’s scary. If I don’t have gas to go to Longview to get decent prices or something, we have to buy here. It’s just really difficult. I’m lucky I’m on housing from the housing authority. Thank god, otherwise I’d be homeless.”

—Heidi, Wahkiakum

“Sometimes we have to make a meal that lasts a few days even in the summer because that’s all we got. Something nutritional that will last the day. We don’t eat nutritional like we’re supposed to do because we don’t have the means to do it.”

—Bob, Lummi

“One family I was waiting on who moved to (Kettle Falls) from another nearby town kept oohing and aahing as I was handing item after item, in multiples across the table to them. I’m glad we were able to make them happy and just a little less intimidated about using a food bank.”

—Kettle Falls Community Chest, Stevens County
Some of the most inspiring work at Northwest Harvest takes place at our annual focus groups. These meetings between our staff and the clients we serve help to identify where we are succeeding and the areas where our distribution system needs work.

For me, each meeting is also an opportunity to listen and to lift up the voice of our clients—too often overlooked in the news about how well our economy is doing.

On site at our partner programs, we find out what life is like on the ground in Republic, in Asotin, in Twisp or in Lebam. We learn about how fresh apples from the food bank become an intergenerational lesson in pie baking, or how the loss of a local grocery store suddenly means a 40-mile drive each way for groceries. We hear how veteran’s benefits have been slashed, or how a five-minute conversation with a local IRS officer meant a substantial reduction in taxes. We revel in news of new grandchildren and cry over the death of dear pets. We listen, and it makes all the difference.

Our work can be challenging. Yet I am amazed by the optimism in every focus group. Things are bad—but they’ll get better. The benefits were cut, but my representative is fighting for me. The fires were tough, but we’re tougher.

And we see how our statewide partners—more than 380 this year—are making a difference in their communities. Our poverty numbers are not improving in Washington: for another year, they have remained stubbornly flat. But these selfless individuals are out there every day, often rising at dawn to prepare sandwiches, call lawmakers, pick leftover apples in the fields, or repair ancient refrigerators.

At the end of the day, our partner programs and their clients tell us how thankful they are when the Northwest Harvest truck pulls up with fresh produce, or protein, or oats. They tell us what it means to have an apple in a lunchbox or a healthy meal on the table after a long day at work.

It is one of the best parts of my job to share this message with you, our community. Working together, all of us make this a better, more hopeful state for all. For that, I am tremendously grateful.

Resilience of Communities Keeps Fight to End Hunger Alive

A message from Chief Executive Officer Shelley Rotondo

Create your own fundraiser online

Food drives are a great way to bring together a community, school, business or other group. Often competitive, these drives are a reliable source of variety for Northwest Harvest.

With Crowdrise, food drives can now also be fund drives—making a real difference at Northwest Harvest almost immediately without requiring drivers to pick up or drop off food bins at your location.

We’ve launched an exciting new way for you to create your own fundraisers, set your own goals and track your success. When you visit crowdrise.com/northwestharvest, you can see which fundraisers and events are currently happening and donate or start your own.

Each event can be customized with pictures or video to make sure that the event fits your style and message. Our Crowdrise profile makes it easy to share your fundraiser on social media to help get the word out.

For more information or if you have questions contact us at fooddrives@northwestharvest.org.

“We currently only have one grocery store we receive most of our food from and it is currently undergoing bankruptcy. We are concerned that they are not able to reorganize, they will close and then we will only have Northwest Harvest and TEFAP to depend on. Our goal of trying to give out food for a more balanced diet will be harder to achieve.”

—Granite Falls Food Bank, Snohomish County

Northwest Harvest
Board of Directors 2015-16

Irene Ward, Chair
Catholic Community Services
of Western WA
Diana Axness, Treasurer
Community Volunteer
Naomi Lule, Secretary
First Fruits Marketing of Washington
Kathy Brown, Immediate Past Chair
Umpqua Bank
Kay Bassett
Heritage University
Joyce Cameron
Providence Health Care Foundation
Dick Grader
National Frozen Foods
Dan Harkins
Triple H Development LLC
SaSa Kirkpatrick
Community Volunteer
Mindy Kornberg
University of Washington
Scott McQuilkin
Whitworth University
Brandon Pedersen
Alaska Air Group
Eileen Takeuchi
Community Volunteer
Dan Thomas
Port of Seattle
Craig Wilson
Costco Wholesale Corporation
Notes from the Field: Tierra Garden Organics

Notes from the Field is an occasional series on our blog, targeting food bank partners looking to develop relationships with local farmers.

Tierra Garden Organics is a five acre certified organic farm located just north of Leavenworth. Farmers Eron Drew and her husband Willy Stockman grow over 200 varieties of organic vegetables, but their main crops are greens, carrots, and potatoes. Tierra Garden Organics has worked for about seven years with the Community Cupboard in Leavenworth and the Pantry at Plain Community Church. Despite the busy summer farming season, Eron took some time to answer questions from Northwest Harvest team member Beth Baker about the farm’s involvement with farm to food banking.

NWH: Could you tell me why, as a grower, you decided to get involved in farm-to-food banking?

ED: Originally, Willy and I started farming because we wanted to make fresh organic food more available in our community. It was important to us that this resource was available to all income levels since organics tend to be seen as a luxury item. We wanted to prove that we could make organics available to everyone and still run a profitable business. We often have an excess of certain crops just because we tend to over-plant. It makes the most sense for us to pass this abundance along to families in our community rather than add it to the compost pile. Not very long ago, we were a family on a very fixed income and so are many of the families who are friends with our children. We want all of our kids’ friends to have access to good food too. This is what keeps us motivated.

NWH: How can we support farmers so they want to be involved in farm-to-food banking?

ED: This goes back to labor and communication. Both food banks that we work with regularly have a gleaner and so are many of the families who are friends with our children. We want all of our kids’ friends to have access to good food too. This is what keeps us motivated.

ED: This goes back to labor and communication. Both food banks that we work with regularly have a gleaner and so are many of the families who are friends with our children. We want all of our kids’ friends to have access to good food too. This is what keeps us motivated.

More Than an Apple for Teacher: Student Volunteers Change Lives

Sarah started volunteering at the Northwest Harvest Kent Distribution center in November of 2013 to fulfill a volunteer requirement for National Honor Society. “Now it’s a regular thing I do,” she notes nearly two years after her first experience. “I don’t even think about it. It’s a great cause—if there’s a way to volunteer here, I’ll do that.” She says she was impressed by the organization at the distribution center and the mutual respect between staff and volunteers. Sarah met her 10 hour requirement, but never stopped volunteering. She and her sister are now regulars.

Never ready to say “enough”, Sarah married her commitment to fighting hunger with her fashion obsession. She had a dream of putting on a fashion show highlighting the fashions of her school, Kentridge High. In 2014, Sarah started the school’s first fashion club. Her fashion show took six months to plan, and over 100 people were involved—mostly students. The club showcased Kentridge fashions, and every shoe, clothing piece, and stroke of eyeliner was placed with purpose and precision.

The club’s members decided to look beyond their club. Their efforts, and proceeds, were dedicated to Northwest Harvest. The fashion show raised $675 to fight hunger in Washington, which will provide more than 3,068 meals for our state. “It’s hard to get that many teenagers in the same room and coordinate that large of an event and raise that much money—and with no budget,” Sarah said. But it was an “easy decision” to choose Northwest Harvest as the beneficiary. Many of her fellow students also volunteer at the distribution center.

One student encourages her peers: “Don’t be afraid to talk to others during your shift at Northwest Harvest. You will be surprised by all of the wonderful people you will meet!”

Every week, high school students join families, youth groups, corporate groups, groups of friends, and other volunteers at the Northwest Harvest distribution centers in Kent, Yakima, and Spokane to volunteer their time for their communities. If you take a moment to chat with these students, you’re likely to be impressed, and perhaps overwhelmed, by the schedules they maintain. In addition to going to school and volunteering, they’re in school clubs, after-school sports, working part-time jobs, and too often mastering some type of musical instrument as well.

They’re busy people. Yet they find time, during their weekends, evenings, and school breaks, to serve, using their precious free time to give back to their community.
In remembrance of a legendary life

Former Northwest Harvest Executive Director Ruth Velozo passed away on October 2 in Seattle. Family and friends were at her bedside constantly in her final days. After 13 years of service in various capacities at the agency, Ruth became Executive Director of Northwest Harvest (then known as Northwest Second Harvest) in 1980. She served in that position until her retirement in 2001, overseeing the substantial growth of the agency across the state and annual food distribution growth from under one million pounds to just shy of 17 million at her retirement. Ruth had a remarkable and impactful life helping those who were less fortunate.

Ruth always implored her staff and friends to be a voice for those who were without in the community. Noted Shelley Rotondo, current CEO of Northwest Harvest, “I have lost a longtime friend and mentor. Ruth was a positive force and guiding light for so many. She embodied NWH’s commitment to dignity and respect and was fiercely committed to giving voice to those who are often not heard.”

All of us at Northwest Harvest are thankful for Ruth’s leadership and guidance. She will be missed. Our thoughts go out to her family.

In honor of Ruth’s commitment to our community, please consider a donation to Northwest Harvest.

Advisory Committee Engages Eastern Washington

A key part of continuing to grow and strengthen the Northwest Harvest mission has been the addition of Advisory Committees based at our facilities in Spokane and Yakima. These committees are comprised of local community leaders who have a heart for giving back and a passion for the work that Northwest Harvest is doing in their communities. These committees work with local Northwest Harvest staff and board members on community engagement activities and donor and fundraising strategies, as well as rolling up their sleeves in volunteer projects. We are proud of the work these committees are doing, and are pleased to spotlight Yvonne Smith, a member of the Spokane Committee.

Yvonne Smith is in her second year on the committee. Yvonne works as the Spa Director for Northern Quest Resort & Casino, which is owned by the Kalispel Tribe. She also serves as a liaison to the community for the Kalispel Tribe of Indians. Yvonne has been serving the community in her current position for the past five years. Prior to that, she worked as a PR, Marketing and Business Development executive, and she leverages that knowledge and experience as she works with Northwest Harvest. Her insights have been hugely valuable to our efforts in Spokane and the surrounding areas. Thank you, Yvonne for giving of your time and talents!

Ways to Give

DONATE
Whether your gift is cash, stock or loose change, your generous support makes a big difference. With our purchasing power, a gift of just 67 cents can provide a nutritious meal for a family of three!

HOST A FOOD DRIVE
Hold a food drive at your work, place of worship or community group meeting! The variety of items gathered in community food drives supplement staples like rice, beans and produce, and allow our partner programs to offer a balanced menu. Learn more at northwestharvest.org/food-drives.

GIVE A LITTLE EVERY MONTH
Donating monthly or quarterly is easier on your budget and provides sustained support for Northwest Harvest. Just $10 a month buys a meal a day for a full year! Our website makes it easy to give online at northwestharvest.org, or call Donor Relations at 206.923.7437.

Inaba Produce Farms Recognized for Food Program Partnerships

At the annual meeting of the Washington Food Coalition, the Inaba family received the Farmer Appreciation award, given by the Washington State Department of Agriculture. Northwest Harvest is thrilled that our long-time friends at Inaba Produce Farms were so recognized. This award was created to recognize farmers’ contributions in providing fresh, wholesome, and locally grown produce to the emergency food system in Washington. Inaba has been a steady ally of Washington’s food bank network.

Congratulations to Lon Inaba and everyone at Inaba Produce Farms, and thank you for your ongoing partnership and strong support of those in need in our community.

In remembrance of a legendary life

Former Northwest Harvest Executive Director Ruth Velozo passed away on October 2 in Seattle. Family and friends were at her bedside constantly in her final days. After 13 years of service in various capacities at the agency, Ruth became Executive Director of Northwest Harvest (then known as Northwest Second Harvest) in 1980. She served in that position until her retirement in 2001, overseeing the substantial growth of the agency across the state and annual food distribution growth from under one million pounds to just shy of 17 million at her retirement. Ruth had a remarkable and impactful life helping those who were less fortunate.

Ruth always implored her staff and friends to be a voice for those who were without in the community. Noted Shelley Rotondo, current CEO of Northwest Harvest, “I have lost a longtime friend and mentor. Ruth was a positive force and guiding light for so many. She embodied NWH’s commitment to dignity and respect and was fiercely committed to giving voice to those who are often not heard.”

All of us at Northwest Harvest are thankful for Ruth’s leadership and guidance. She will be missed. Our thoughts go out to her family.

In honor of Ruth’s commitment to our community, please consider a donation to Northwest Harvest.

Advisory Committee Engages Eastern Washington

A key part of continuing to grow and strengthen the Northwest Harvest mission has been the addition of Advisory Committees based at our facilities in Spokane and Yakima. These committees are comprised of local community leaders who have a heart for giving back and a passion for the work that Northwest Harvest is doing in their communities. These committees work with local Northwest Harvest staff and board members on community engagement activities and donor and fundraising strategies, as well as rolling up their sleeves in volunteer projects. We are proud of the work these committees are doing, and are pleased to spotlight Yvonne Smith, a member of the Spokane Committee.

Yvonne Smith is in her second year on the committee. Yvonne works as the Spa Director for Northern Quest Resort & Casino, which is owned by the Kalispel Tribe. She also serves as a liaison to the community for the Kalispel Tribe of Indians. Yvonne has been serving the community in her current position for the past five years. Prior to that, she worked as a PR, Marketing and Business Development executive, and she leverages that knowledge and experience as she works with Northwest Harvest. Her insights have been hugely valuable to our efforts in Spokane and the surrounding areas. Thank you, Yvonne for giving of your time and talents!

[Regarding obstacles that clients face:] “It is so difficult for a single mother to get here with her children, and to get home with her food order... If she is to buy a bus pass it is $45. For her children the expense of $1.50 for a two hour pass and $3.50 for an all-day pass is just too much.”

—Our Place Community Ministries, Spokane County
WINTER 2015:
EVENTS
WASHINGTON
Western | Central | Eastern
More events and up-to-the-minute details at: northwestharvest.org

ALASKA HOMETOWN HANGAR
ALL SUNDAY HOME GAMES, OPEN AT 10 A.M.
Alaska Airlines, CBS Seattle, 102.5 KKOK 94.1 KMPS, 96.5 JACK FM and 1090 THE FAN present a new way to enjoy the pregame, postgame and during-the-game fun all while fighting hunger—a fun filled tailgate party before each of the Sunday home games! Located across the street from the south entrance to the stadium, there will be music, games broadcast on giant TV screens and a beer garden. All proceeds will benefit Northwest Harvest.

KIMA KIDS FOR CANS - YAKIMA
NOVEMBER THROUGH JANUARY
Central Washington schools compete in a food drive challenge to benefit Northwest Harvest. For more information, email Community Engagement Specialist Sheri Bissell at SheriB@northwestharvest.org.

THANKSGIVING IN WINE COUNTRY
“TASTE TO FIGHT HUNGER”
NOV. 27-29
Enjoy wine from 40+ of the best wineries WA has to offer for this holiday weekend of fun! All participating Yakima Valley wineries collect funds to benefit Northwest Harvest. For more information, visit northwestharvest.org.

THE KHQ HOMETOWN HARVEST FOOD DRIVE
FRIDAY, DEC. 4, 5 A.M. - 6:30 P.M.
We are excited to partner with Safeway for this year’s event! KHQ will broadcast live from four Spokane Albertson/Safeway locations; however, the food drive will take place at all Spokane Albertson & Safeway locations all day Friday. For more information and locations, visit northwestharvest.org.

NBC RIGHT NOW HOMETOWN HARVEST FOOD DRIVE
FRIDAY, DEC. 4, 5 A.M. - 6:30 P.M.
Albertsons and Safeway stores in Central Washington will be selling pre-packed bags of food and collecting cash from shoppers. Your favorite NBC RIGHT NOW personalities will broadcast live from three select Albertsons and Safeway locations in Yakima and Tri-Cities all day Friday. For more information and locations, visit northwestharvest.org.

KING 5 HOME TEAM HARVEST
SATURDAY, DEC. 5, 7 A.M. - 3 P.M.
Your favorite KING 5 TV personalities broadcast live from Puget Sound locations as the community comes out to donate food and funds to Northwest Harvest. Thank you to our sponsors U.S. Bank and Safeway. For more information and locations, visit northwestharvest.org.

THANKS, EVENT SUPPORTERS!

Thank You For Carving Out Hunger In Yakima!
A lot of sips, carves and bites happened out at the Selah Civic Center on October 17th. This event raised enough to provide more than 69,000 meals! Congratulations to our Carving Contest Champions, the team from KNDV-TV! Special thanks to this year’s presenting sponsor, First Fruits Marketing of Washington.

Photo courtesy KNDO.

THANKSGIVING IN WINE COUNTRY
“TASTE TO FIGHT HUNGER”
NOV. 27-29
Enjoy wine from 40+ of the best wineries WA has to offer for this holiday weekend of fun! All participating Yakima Valley wineries collect funds to benefit Northwest Harvest. For more information, visit northwestharvest.org.

Alaska Airlines, CBS Seattle, 102.5 KKOK 94.1 KMPS, 96.5 JACK FM and 1090 THE FAN present a new way to enjoy the pregame, postgame and during-the-game fun all while fighting hunger—a fun filled tailgate party before each of the Sunday home games! Located across the street from the south entrance to the stadium, there will be music, games broadcast on giant TV screens and a beer garden. All proceeds will benefit Northwest Harvest.

KIMA KIDS FOR CANS - YAKIMA
NOVEMBER THROUGH JANUARY
Central Washington schools compete in a food drive challenge to benefit Northwest Harvest. For more information, email Community Engagement Specialist Sheri Bissell at SheriB@northwestharvest.org.

KING 5 HOME TEAM HARVEST
SATURDAY, DEC. 5, 7 A.M. - 3 P.M.
Your favorite KING 5 TV personalities broadcast live from Puget Sound locations as the community comes out to donate food and funds to Northwest Harvest. Thank you to our sponsors U.S. Bank and Safeway. For more information and locations, visit northwestharvest.org.

Thank You For Carving Out Hunger In Yakima!
A lot of sips, carves and bites happened out at the Selah Civic Center on October 17th. This event raised enough to provide more than 69,000 meals! Congratulations to our Carving Contest Champions, the team from KNDV-TV! Special thanks to this year’s presenting sponsor, First Fruits Marketing of Washington.

Photo courtesy KNDO.

THANKS, EVENT SUPPORTERS!

TACKLE HUNGER
With your help, this event raised enough to provide nearly 119,000 meals! Thanks to Delta Air Lines and the Seattle Seahawks for their sponsorship of Tackle Hunger 2015.

KZOK ROCK THE HARVEST
Thanks to Alaska Airlines, KZOK, Beacon Plumbing, Taco Time Northwest, Tacoma Dodge and everyone who helped make this year’s KZOK Rock the Harvest Radiothon such a success!
Stories of Everyday Struggles
(continued from page 1)

“I am a beneficiary of the Washington state EBT SNAP program, so I utilize those benefits that I get from the state and then I also utilize the three local food banks... I was on a strict income that was a lot less than what I’m getting now. I had to utilize all the resources. I’m thankful for Helping Hand and Northwest Harvest. It helps a lot of people.”
—Derek, Wahkiakum

“I stretch it out over the month. Sometimes someone at the senior center hands me a zucchini. I make zucchini relish and zucchini bread. When I cook a chicken, I make broth. I don’t throw anything away.”
—Evie, Wahkiakum

“I have no elders now. My entire life I’ve always had someone I could walk up the hill and say, ‘I have an emergency. I need to borrow $20, $40.’ It’s really scary now.”
—Linda, Lummi

“Today we were visited by a young boy and his mom who we knew pretty well. The boy just got out of the hospital after open-heart surgery and was doing well. The mom has been able to save a little on groceries and provide more nutrition in their meals through help from our food assistance. It was a pleasure to see the twinkle in his eyes and smile on his face. Sometimes the family isn’t destitute, they just need to get through a crisis to keep going.”
—Bremerton Foodline, Kitsap County

Send Seasons Greetings to Brighten the Holidays for Those in Need

When you donate and send our beautiful holiday greeting cards to honor your loved ones, you help put nutritious meals on the table for our neighbors in need. It’s as simple, real and positive as that.
To learn more and place your holiday greeting card order today, go to: northwestharvest.org/greeting-cards or call Anne Salter at 206.923.7437.