Local Food Programs Keep Community, Spirits Afloat

Just beyond the southern tip of Dabob Bay, astride the beautiful Hood Canal, sits the small village of Brinnon. The town is known, among other things, as the home of Camp Parsons, the oldest Boy Scout camp west of the Mississippi River.

The Brinnon Food Bank finds a home a short distance from the Dosewallips River and just off Highway 101. In 2014, Northwest Harvest provided more than 30,000 pounds of food to the food bank. It is a small, but important, part of the over 370 hunger relief programs Northwest Harvest supports, distributing over 32 million pounds of food in 2014 alone.

Without a supermarket or grocery store within 20 miles, Brinnon fits the Department of Agriculture definition of a food desert. The high cost of driving often makes it too expensive to get to a store and buy food. Retirees, those working part time, and families are among the most challenged. Lacking easy access to affordable and nutritious food, it is difficult for many to maintain a healthy diet, increasing their risk of obesity, diabetes, and heart disease.

Eloise and Mike Langenbach moved to Brinnon from Olympia in 2005. They started volunteering with the food bank in 2007, seeking to become more active members of their new community.

“I did not want to go to one or two meetings each month. I wanted to do something,” said Eloise. “It makes you feel good when you do something for people who need help.”

Today, the Langenbachs manage the Brinnon Food Bank.

Since she started volunteering, Eloise has observed that the number of clients served has doubled. On a typical Tuesday, over 200 people (or about a quarter of Brinnon’s population) are served between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m.

Brinnon Food Bank is staffed entirely with a team of 29 volunteers. In addition to helping with the operation of the food bank, the volunteers drive more than 3,000 miles each month to deliver food.

The impact of the Brinnon Food Bank extends well beyond Tuesdays. It supports the Quilcene/Brinnon Backpack program, which supplies backpacks of food to school children in the area who might otherwise have nothing to eat on weekends. The food bank also supports the twice-weekly Senior Dinner program at the Brinnon Community Center. This popular event serves about 25 people each night and reflects the spirit of Brinnon.

“It’s a small community,” said Eloise. “Everyone tries to take care of everyone else.”

Super-size your gift!

For every $1 you give during the CenturyLink Food Drive, CenturyLink will provide a match for up to one million dollars.

To qualify, your gift must be marked “CenturyLink Food Drive” and be made between June 1 and June 12. Visit northwestharvest.org/centurylink-food-drive for details or to donate online, or call 206.923.7441.

Your $1 has an even bigger impact during the CenturyLink Food Drive. Make your donation today!

How many meals did Northwest Harvest distribute to the community every month last year? Answer: 2 million

“We have had a client come forward with an offer to provide seedlings for other clients so that they can grow their own fresh produce. We are very excited about this.”

—Othello Food Bank, Adams County
As we approach another beautiful summer here in Washington, my mind turns to childhood. Summer is a time for vacations, for swimming and climbing and reading and dreaming. Summer should be a time free from worries.

We are fortunate to live in a state of such summer beauty and bounty. The season brings fresh apples, carrots, corn, lettuce, and beets. At Northwest Harvest, the generosity of our many donors is on full display as truckloads of fresh produce arrive at our warehouses.

Yet summer also makes clear the devastating impact of hunger around our state. Many children eligible for free and reduced meals during the school year go without during summer break. In fact, Washington is 22nd in hunger in the nation, but even more astounding is the fact that we are 39th out of 50 states in reaching kids with summer nutrition. The summer food programs that do exist may not be easy to access in all communities. Many parents are unaware of the availability or are already working multiple jobs. As a result, summer can be particularly challenging.

With your help, Northwest Harvest works hard all summer to address that need, as you’ll read in these pages. In addition to distributing food, we help our partners educate parents and schools about ways to address the need in their community. We are here for our kids in the summer—just as we are here, year-round, for all of our neighbors in need.

None of this would be possible without the aid of our partners, of course. Many stood with us in Olympia and in Washington, DC earlier this year as we fought dangerous cuts to SNAP (food stamps) and other social services. Bolstered by our statewide partners and friends, we are a strong voice in the fight against hunger.

When seasons change, stock markets swing, or the job market shifts, we are called upon to do even more. We are proud that, in these events, our community comes together to support those in need. Everything we have accomplished on behalf of those in need has been possible only because of supporters and partners like you. It is your involvement and commitment to our work that moves us to action every day.

Trivia Gains Impact

In late March, a team from Microsoft volunteered at the Northwest Harvest Kent warehouse. To build excitement for the event, Microsoft staff prepared a series of trivia questions. They were too good to pass up, and many are reprinted throughout this newsletter.

Corporate groups and teams are always welcome at Northwest Harvest. Many find that the volunteer experience builds a strong bond between team members.

There are fewer volunteers during the summer and weekdays, when many people are at work or out of town. Yet the need is no less present during these months, and our work is especially vital as children are home from school, childcare costs grow, and many children are unable to receive free and reduced school lunches.

Those interested in volunteering can visit northwestharvest.org/volunteer for more information.
The Importance of Saving SNAP

It has been a difficult few years in America. Few know that better than our struggling friends and neighbors. Some lost jobs, while others lost businesses. Some retired and saw their savings depleted when the stock market declined precipitously. Through it all, Northwest Harvest and our friends and partners worked tirelessly to grow our capacity and meet the need.

As the recession has receded, we have not seen the need diminish. In the first few months of 2015, we have heard stories of deeper need for services at food banks and meal programs as clients must make more than one trip to the food bank because their income earned from jobs and other support services is still insufficient to meet their basic needs. Many clients now work multiple part-time jobs to make ends meet, struggling to stay afloat. Others are still struggling with their depleted retirement accounts, or the needs of children in college. The services our partners provide—from job training to basic nutrition—help keep countless Washingtonians afloat during tough times in their lives.

Though we have grown our capacity substantially to meet the need, it is important to note that the government also plays a role. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly food stamps) keeps children fed and focused on learning at school, and keeps adults healthy and able to find work or keep their jobs. In fact, Congresswoman Suzan DelBene secured funding in the Farm Bill for job training programs to help SNAP recipients find work. Washington received $22 million to pilot job training programs in Seattle, Tacoma, Yakima and Spokane Counties. Because assistance is used to purchase food by those with the highest need, every $5 spent on SNAP generates $9 of economic activity.

Despite its proven effectiveness, sustained need, and a high return on investment, Congress has proposed deep cuts to SNAP. These cuts are on top of the $5 billion cut from SNAP in 2013, and the cuts made in last year’s Farm Bill that are disproportionately felt in states like Washington.

Supporters are increasingly concerned that additional cuts to SNAP may be proposed later this year to offset costs for child nutrition programs or as part of negotiations over the debt ceiling limit. For Northwest Harvest and our friends and partners, cuts to SNAP mean one thing: meals will be missed. “I only get a small amount in food stamps, and lately getting food is hard with prices at the store. I come to the food bank in order to survive weekly,” noted a Washington client. The 2013 cuts to SNAP have resulted in an estimated loss of 130,000 meals each day, throwing those in need into dire straits and increasing the existing burden on food banks and meal programs.

Our donors, volunteers, and supporters work hard to feed hungry families in Washington. The cuts proposed in the House budget alone would mean that Northwest Harvest would have to more than quadruple our efforts to make up for the loss of support that comes from SNAP for families in need.

Want to learn more? Visit northwestharvest.org/take-action to get involved or learn more.

Hunger Doesn’t Take Summer Break

Fruits, vegetables, and well-rounded meals are crucial to helping our kids grow big and strong through the summer months. Without the meals provided throughout the school year, families are left picking up the pieces. Summer meal programs are here to help.

Summer meal programs throughout the state provide nutritious meals to kids ages 18 and younger. Northwest Harvest works with partners around the state to help families locate the nearest summer meal site. These sites, usually in park settings, provide areas for kids to congregate and eat a healthy meal together.

Unfortunately, there are many communities without these summer meal sites. To combat this problem, Northwest Harvest started the Kids Summer Food Club. Working with hunger relief partners located in areas with no summer meal sites, Kids Summer Food Club provides kid-friendly food bags in those areas. This summer, 18 programs around the state will provide summer meals through this program, ensuring that health and hunger are a part of summer break.

KIDS EAT FREE THIS SUMMER!

Kids ages 18 and under can get free meals at schools, parks, community centers and more.

TO FIND SUMMER MEAL SITES NEAR YOU,
• Call 1-866-3-HUNGRY (1-866-346-8479)
• Text “Food” to 877-877
• Visit fns.usda.gov/summerfoodrocks

“We have noticed a turn-around in a student who used to chronically miss on purpose who has been much more consistent about coming so that is a positive.”

—Whitman Elementary, Spokane School District
Your Summer Garden: What does “legacy” mean to you?

As the spectacular Northwest spring turns to summer, many are reminded of a famous question posed to St. Francis of Assisi as he worked his garden. “What would you do if you learned that you would die at sunset?”

Simple or profound events—an earthquake, the death of a friend, a close call in the car, or even a question like that posed to St. Francis—can drive us to consider our mortality and make great changes. We might make amends, draw up estate plans, or consider our relationships and values. Many will take a moment to consider how their life’s work might make a difference in the lives of those whom they care most about.

Of course, no one knows how long they will be on earth. Financial advisors remind us that a good estate plan should function whether life is foreshortened, or we live until we are 110. A well-conceived plan, for instance, includes contingencies for a family’s circumstances at the end of one’s life.

Beyond the financial advisor’s reminders, it is important that the estate plan also affirms the meaning of one’s life. The passions, values, and affections of your life have made a difference: they should continue.

We recognize that a legacy gift that continues the work of Northwest Harvest may only be part of a comprehensive legacy plan, but we would be pleased to discuss ways you can ensure the greatest impact on the lives of those we serve. If you are starting to think about legacy giving, contact Donor Relations Manager, Todd Girouard at 206.923.7441 or toddg@northwestharvest.org.

St. Francis replied to his questioner, “I would continue hoeing my garden.” Though he would never benefit from the current harvest, his labor would one day benefit those who came after.

On April 23 and 24, Northwest Harvest partners from around the state joined us on Mercer Island to discuss A Fresh Approach to Ending Hunger, our theme for 2015. This free conference includes classes, roundtable discussions, networking, a vendor area, and two dynamic keynote addresses.

The 2015 conference included a full array of classes and five specialized tracks, focusing on creative and collaborative solutions for energizing programs, sharing stories, strengthening nonprofits, nutrition, and taking action. Many partners also took advantage of a full day of training and certification opportunities at our Kent warehouse, including food handling and forklift operations. These trainings help build capacity around the state, ensuring that Northwest Harvest partners are ever better equipped to handle the growing need in our communities.

Partnerships of Shared Efforts, Stories

On April 23 and 24, Northwest Harvest partners from around the state joined us on Mercer Island to discuss A Fresh Approach to Ending Hunger, our theme for 2015. This free conference includes classes, roundtable discussions, networking, a vendor area, and two dynamic keynote addresses.

The 2015 conference included a full array of classes and five specialized tracks, focusing on creative and collaborative solutions for energizing programs, sharing stories, strengthening nonprofits, nutrition, and taking action. Many partners also took advantage of a full day of training and certification opportunities at our Kent warehouse, including food handling and forklift operations. These trainings help build capacity around the state, ensuring that Northwest Harvest partners are ever better equipped to handle the growing need in our communities.

Ways to Give

Create a Legacy to End Hunger
You can name Northwest Harvest in your will, life insurance, living trust or IRA. You can also make a difference with a gift of stocks and bonds, or even property. Harvest of Hope, Northwest Harvest’s Planned Giving Program, is a powerful way to ensure food security for the next generation.

Schedule a Gift and Forget It
Make giving easy. Decide your annual contribution in advance and set up a recurring gift. Donating monthly or quarterly is easier on your budget and provides sustained support for Northwest Harvest. Just $15 a month buys two meals a day for a full year! Our website makes it easy to give online at northwestharvest.org, or call Donor Relations at 206.923.7441.

Donate a Vehicle
Have a boat, car, or motorcycle you no longer want picked up free of charge—whether running or not. Your vehicle will be sold at auction and the proceeds will benefit Northwest Harvest. Call Donate for Charity toll-free at 866.392.4483 or visit: donateforcharity.com and select Northwest Harvest.

“We have an elderly couple both in their 90’s who live around the corner from the food bank. He hasn’t failed to come to the food bank in over two years until last week. I was concerned and called, just before closing, and asked if we could bring them some food. The wife, who is shut in said, ‘Yes, that would be very nice!’ We took their box of food to them, and a few minutes later, he showed up just to thank us. He was so appreciative, because he had forgotten it was food bank day! He is 91 and she is 96!”

—Shepherd’s Heart Care Center, Skagit County
SUMMER 2015:
EVENTS
WASHINGTON
Western | Central | Eastern
More events and up-to-the-minute details at: northwestharvest.org

CENTURYLINK FOOD DRIVE
JUNE 1 - 12
For every $1 you give during the CenturyLink Food Drive, CenturyLink will provide a match for up to $1 million. Visit northwestharvest.org/centurylink-food-drive for details or to donate online, or call 206.923.7441.

TOP POT NATIONAL DOUGHNUT DAY
FRIDAY, JUNE 5
Join us as we celebrate National Doughnut Day! Top Pot cafes across the Puget Sound will be collecting food and cash donations for Northwest Harvest and selling raffle tickets for a Hawaiian vacation. To find your closest Top Pot location, visit toppotdoughnuts.com.

FORD KNOWS: KIDS LOVE PEANUT BUTTER
Ford auto dealers throughout Washington are participating in the Ford Peanut Butter Drive June 5-13 in partnership with Northwest Harvest and your local food bank.

SEATTLE MARINERS FIGHT HUNGER
SATURDAY, JULY 25
For more than 25 years, the Mariners have hosted the Fight Hunger event prior to an M’s game. Volunteers and staff collect food and funds from fans as they enter the stadium. This year the Toronto Blue Jays come to town for the 1:10 p.m. game. We are still looking for a few good volunteers! Sign up at northwestharvest.org/volunteer.

WHAT IS THE AVERAGE MONTHLY COST TO FEED AN AMERICAN FAMILY OF FOUR (TWO ADULTS AND TWO CHILDREN AGE 6-11) IN JANUARY 2015?
Answer: $318.50

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST NORTHWEST HARVEST TO FEED A FAMILY OF THREE A NUTRITIOUS MEAL (AS OF 2014)?
Answer: 67 cents

“While many in our region now enjoy the fruits of economic recovery, as you know, there remain many thousands for whom things have only changed for the worse. In fact, [our program] now serves more than twice the number of families we fed in 2009, and saw a staggering 32% increase in demand in 2014 alone.”
—Rainier Valley Food Bank, King County

THANK YOU, EVENT SUPPORTERS!
To everyone who contributed in any way, thank you for making a difference!

BANKERS CARE FOOD DRIVE
More than 500 branches participated from across the Puget Sound in this event hosted by the Washington Bankers Association. The third annual drive raised enough food and funds to provide more than 261,380 meals to people in need.
giveBIG
During The Seattle Foundation’s one-day, online fundraising event, hundreds of supporters donated for Northwest Harvest, including a challenge match from Wyncote Foundation NW.

TO ALL WHO GAVEBIG, THANK YOU FOR BEING OUR CHAMPION! YOUR SUPPORT WILL ALLOW US TO PROVIDE MILLIONS OF MEALS ACROSS WASHINGTON.

BLUEGRASS & BEER FESTIVAL
Seattle Beer Week celebrated 2015 with Bluegrass & Beer at Hale’s Palladium in Fremont, WA. Attendees enjoyed the three live, local bands while tasting craft beers from more than 10 breweries. Results not reported as of press time.
A Quarter Century of Community Service

Jeri Chonle, the Cherry Street Food Bank Volunteer Coordinator, will retire this year after 25 years of service. “Jeri’s commitment to volunteer service and to the fight against hunger helped make Cherry Street Food Bank the strong, vital connection to our community that it is today,” noted Shelley Rotondo, Northwest Harvest CEO.

“It has been my great privilege to work for this wonderful organization, and I will miss all the very special staff and volunteers who have made my work here so rewarding and so much fun,” Jeri commented. “The mission of Northwest Harvest will always be important to me, and I will continue to be mindful of the people we serve and support this effort in other ways. I also look forward to the next chapter in my life with excitement and anticipation.”

Jeri will retire in mid-June. Old friends are invited to stop by her office at Cherry Street Food Bank to say thanks and happy retirement.

From left: Jeri, the “new kid” in 1990, in Cherry Street Food Bank as NWH was marking its 25th year, and today.

“Our clients really appreciated the milk supplied by Northwest Harvest! They were all excited to get it. Thanks!”

—Pasco Community Services Food Bank, Franklin County

Washington is the ___ hungriest state in the nation, ranking 14.3% for food insecurity.

Answer: 22nd