

The Care They Deserve

A MESSAGE FROM CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, THOMAS REYNOLDS

Every generation inherits its legacy from the past. We draw lessons, challenge norms, and build upon their foundations—shaping and changing societies and cultures to reflect where we are and want to go. But we must not forget those who have paved the way as we journey toward what's next.



I have the sense that low-income seniors feel left behind by society. The fear and burden of depleted savings are palpable among our elders, with fewer avenues available for them to secure new resources. In our state, more than 100,000 people over the age of 65 live in poverty. Many of Washington's seniors miss meals or can only afford low variety diets. They often must make the impossible choice between basic necessities like housing, utilities, and purchasing food. Meredith Simonson, who you will get to know later in this newsletter, shares her experiences to highlight the stark reality of hunger across the state.

How we treat our elders says a lot about the health of our communities. It is a direct reflection of our values and priorities. We cannot be truly well if we do not ensure the well-being of all our people. Through collective action and support, we can create a healthier community for everyone at every stage of life—from birth through the golden years. This means providing seniors with the support they need to live comfortably and without fear.

Writer Edith Pearlman, who became a literary star at the age of 74, once said, "The ordinary experiences of aging alter and clarify your view of past, present, and future." The ordinary experiences of our elders are often overshadowed by extraordinary challenges like hunger and poverty. We can help seniors living on fixed incomes view their futures more clearly and optimistically by providing them with the resources they need to live healthy and whole lives right now.

It's time to ensure that those who have come before us receive the care they deserve. They have built the foundation; it's up to us to make it stronger.

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Ways to Give

The remarkable difference made by Northwest Harvest is made achievable thanks to individuals like yourself. Your financial contributions play a crucial role in furthering our mission. Please mail back the enclosed donation envelope, visit northwestharvest.org/donate, or scan the QR to donate to Northwest Harvest today.



Ensuring Full Plates for Washington's Seniors

It's a Wednesday morning at SODO Community Market in Seattle, where a line of shoppers has already formed at the free grocery store. As volunteers welcome each shopper, a pressing reality comes into greater focus: Washington's seniors continue to face alarmingly high rates of food insecurity.



Over the last few years, millions of Washington seniors have faced food insecurity—a number that continues to grow. But what is causing this increase?

Our population is aging. According to census data, Washington residents are getting older. Projections indicate that by 2030, one in five Americans will be of retirement age. The number of residents over 60 has increased 63% since 2010.

- **Health:** Seniors are more likely to have chronic health conditions, which can hinder their ability to cook nutritious meals and grocery shop.
- **Mobility Issues:** Limited access to transportation complicates travel to grocery stores and food programs for many seniors.
- **Isolation:** Seniors who live alone may not have family or caregivers to support them with daily tasks like grocery shopping and cooking.
- **Limited Income:** Seniors often have limited income, making it a struggle to cover essential costs for food, housing, and healthcare.

As our partners poignantly note:

"Many seniors cannot afford fuel to get to stores or the high cost of their medications. It breaks our hearts that a country as rich as ours has written off the senior population. What can be done?"

—Brinnon Food Bank, Jefferson County

At Northwest Harvest, we are committed to supporting our senior population through low-barrier initiatives. We supply food to senior food programs across the state, support home delivery services for those unable to visit grocery stores or food pantries, and advocate for access to SNAP benefits for seniors. With your contributions, we can extend our support to more seniors across the state.

Will you join us by making a donation to Northwest Harvest today? Your donation will ensure that seniors receive the nutritious food they need to lead healthy lives. Your generosity makes a meaningful difference. It also allows us to provide fresh and loved food but also dignity and respect throughout the process. Together, we can ensure that our seniors at the SODO Community Market, Brinnon Food Bank, and beyond are appreciated, loved, and nourished.

How is This the Best We Can Do? Senior Hunger and Access in Washington



You live in a small rural town in eastern Washington, with just under 250 residents. You have a car, and the closest grocery store is a Dollar General. There is no reliable or accessible public transportation. Once a month, your friend drives you 80 miles to Spokane and back so that you can grocery shop in stores with sale items. You survive on a fixed income and despite living in poverty, you only receive \$32 from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) each month. This amount covers less than a single bag of the most basic groceries. You are expected to make the impossible happen.

This is a reality for Meredith Simonson. She is attempting to make the impossible happen. “I plan out everything,” Simonson says.

“With my income, I only plan for two meals a day. After the middle of the month, I don’t have any fresh produce. I mostly eat canned soup and cook frozen food in my air fryer. These aren’t necessarily foods I enjoy, and I know they aren’t the foods my doctor recommends that I eat, but it’s what I can afford.”

Simonson is experiencing adrenal insufficiency, which causes her pain if she stands or walks for too long. Her doctor wants her to get a bone density scan to monitor her osteoporosis, but she often has to choose between paying for health necessities or buying groceries. “I can’t afford dental care or glasses or diagnostic

tests. If I do this, something else goes—tell me what to go without for that month and I’ll do it,” Simonson explains. “Rent and utilities accounts for more than half of my monthly income.”

For many people, this situation is not uncommon. Often, seniors and people with disabilities live off incredibly lean benefits and routinely are not able to access basic necessities. Age, mobility, where a person lives, and access to reliable transportation can exacerbate these difficulties, making everyday tasks and essential healthcare services out of reach. No matter how expertly and carefully people budget, there is simply not enough leftover and additional resources must be acquired to fill the gaps. Many turn to food banks and food pantries.

The local food bank in Meredith’s town is open once a month for two hours. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the food pantry allowed shoppers to select their own items. Now, the model has shifted to accommodate a limited capacity: prepacked boxes are provided to food pantry visitors. So, despite having a local food pantry, Meredith does not go because she does not always get items she can routinely use and does not like to waste resources that others may need. Food pantries play a crucial role in addressing emergency needs, yet they fall short of being the comprehensive stopgap solution many perceive them to be.

Simonson expresses her exasperation and defeat trying to navigate survival with such limited access to life-saving and life-giving resources. “I don’t have enough money to feed myself three square meals a day, but no one wants to hire a 62-year-old woman who can’t get anywhere and hasn’t worked in 20 years. What is someone in my situation supposed to do? People don’t have any idea what it’s like. When the lines for the food banks are around the corner and down the block, we have a big problem here.” She also shares that while people who have low incomes are at higher risk for food insecurity, they are rarely given a voice or invited to provide feedback on policy solutions that might impact them.

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EVENTS

WASHINGTON
WESTERN | CENTRAL | EASTERN

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



SAVE THE DATE: 27TH ANNUAL ROCK THE HARVEST WITH KZOK – October 23, 7am-7pm | We invite you to be a part of this extraordinary event hosted by KZOK, powered by our community partners Evergreen Home Loans and Alaska Airlines. Together, let’s create an unforgettable day filled with great music, camaraderie, and the shared goal of ending hunger in Washington. From sunup to sundown Northwest Harvest volunteers will be answering calls where you can pledge \$102.50 in support of a hunger free Washington.

Stay tuned for further details and exciting announcements as we get closer to the date. Mark your calendars and be prepared to rock for a great cause! Tune in to 102.5 to learn more about how to participate and win prizes by the hour!

Northwest Harvest believes that the health of our society can be measured by the health of those furthest from justice. We live in a state with abundant natural resources and massive swaths of agricultural land. We live in a state with immense wealth and industry. Yet, we also live in a state with persisting hunger.

Despite the daily challenges Meredith faces, she considers the long-term impact food insecurity will have on our collective community.

“How are we even pretending we are doing right by our future generations? How is this the best we can do, as a society?” Meredith asks. We believe we can do better—together. Hunger is a solvable problem. Our seniors deserve dignity, care, and the right to live healthy lives. They should never have to choose between medical care and affording basic necessities. That’s why we work to expand access—both economically and physically—to nutritious and nourishing food for communities most impacted by poverty.



IMAGE CREDIT: GOOGLE MAPS



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Interested in learning more about working for Northwest Harvest? Check out our job openings at northwestharvest.org/careers.

QUALIFIED CHARITABLE DISTRIBUTIONS

Donors who are 70½ years old and have Traditional IRAs can take advantage of the annual Qualified Charitable Deduction (QCD) as a tax-wise way of giving to their favorite causes. Did you know that Once donors reach the age of 72, they have to take a taxable Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) annually from their Traditional IRA? Donors can reduce the amount of their taxable RMD by offsetting it through QCD gifts. Using this tax saving feature provides you with a tax benefit while still taking advantage of the recently increased standard deduction.

One of our donors is 73-years-old and was recently informed by her IRA Administrator that her Required Minimum Distribution for this year is \$30,000. As a philanthropist, she makes \$20,000 in charitable donations using the Qualified Charitable Distribution option of her Traditional IRA and applies it against her Required Minimum Distribution. This reduces her tax obligation to \$10,000.

\$30,000 required RMD - **\$20,000** in QCD gifts =
\$10,000 tax obligation and significant tax savings!

There are important steps that you should follow to ensure you are taking full advantage of the Qualified Charitable Distribution by December 31, 2024. Please contact your IRA Administrator for the appropriate forms and instructions on how you can save.

For more information on planned and estate giving please contact:

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Community Fundraising: 3 Easy Steps!

Imagine sparking change with just a few clicks! In less than two minutes, you can launch your own community fundraiser using our dedicated online platform. It's as simple as creating, sharing, and celebrating!

- **Create:** Set up your fundraiser with ease and set your own goal.
- **Share:** Send your unique link to friends, family, and colleagues.
- **Celebrate:** Watch in real-time as donations pour in! Cheer on every contribution as you track progress toward—and beyond—your goal.

It's simple to organize. There's no cash to handle and no hassle. Every donation flows directly to Northwest Harvest. It's perfect for any event, from office parties and wine tastings to bake sales—there's no limit to how you can FUNdraise!

Setup is easy. Simply go to our website at northwestharvest.org and select "Ways to Give." From there you can register an individual fundraiser or create one for your workplace!



For more information, reach out to:

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