

## WE KEEP GOING, NO MATTER WHAT

A message from Chief Executive Officer, Thomas Reynolds



This has been a year like no other. In January, which seems like a decade ago, I was plotting out steps for increasing our distribution capabilities in the Yakima Valley, working through an assessment of potential communities for expansion, and reflecting on the positive contributions the SODO Community Market has made as a free grocery store for those who struggle to afford food.

Then everything changed with the catastrophic emergence of COVID-19. Our lives were filled with illness, economic woes, social distancing measures, and recognition of the disparate impact on communities of color. Suddenly, our plans for 2020 shifted to managing a crisis the magnitude of which we have not seen in this country for over a century.

For so many of us, the rapid onset of the virus caused a series of personal changes in how life was lived. For me, I had to adjust to compensate for kids learning from home. I chose to do all errand running and grocery shopping for my mother who is within a particularly vulnerable age group. I issued advice for staff who could work from home that they should do so and established an emergency stipend for drivers and forklift operators and everyone who was asked to continue their work from a Northwest Harvest worksite.

Like most of us, it has been a challenge for me to toggle between ever-evolving responsibilities. Yet my challenges pale in comparison to the millions of Washingtonians who lost jobs, businesses, and even family members.

As an organization, Northwest Harvest has also faced unprecedented challenges. In the first few months, our leadership team met almost daily to assess the hunger levels throughout the state, and we identified fundamental changes to be made in the way we operate. We moved quickly and ramped up production of emergency food boxes, added new partners, and converted the SODO Community Market from a free grocery to a take-away distribution site.

While these challenges have been difficult and, at times, seemed insurmountable, they've also helped us grow as an organization and focus on what truly matters. We have been bolder at pointing out the injustices faced by people of color. We have been far more nimble at how we receive, process, and distribute the essential foods that keep families fed. We have gathered voices to advocate for policies that will keep more families from the painful experience of empty kitchen cupboards.

The future is very uncertain. Yet, as we head into the fall, I can promise you this: no matter what happens next or how it happens, we will work harder than ever before to keep food on the tables of all Washingtonians—regardless of income, race, age, or where you live.

We are in this with you, and we will get through it together.

Best regards,

## SEED THE FUTURE RECURRING GIFTS GROW EQUITY

The changes we have made in the last few months are unprecedented. Careers and entire futures that felt secure are now precarious. Our daily routines and finely tuned ways of balancing responsibilities are shattered. The pressure and strain of children's educations now fall on the shoulders of struggling parents who are just trying to make ends meet.

These unprecedented times call for an unprecedented response.

Since the start of the pandemic in our state, Northwest Harvest has delivered nearly **500,000 boxes** of emergency food to partners scrambling to meet the needs of people in their communities. We've completely shifted the operations of our SODO Community Market to operate safely with social distancing measures. We've increased our advocacy for policies that keep people from going hungry in the first place.

But we know that we can—and must—do more. This crisis is not over.

As we commit to facing our state's challenges head-on, it helps to know that you are behind us. Recurring donations allow us to consistently dedicate resources to where they're needed most. This helps us better manage food purchasing, plan distribution and advocacy activities, and maintain staff to best serve our communities.

We're living in uncertain times. Can Northwest Harvest rely on you to provide steady support to Washingtonians in need? When you commit to donating monthly, you commit to ensuring we can meet the unprecedented need we are facing and grow food justice in Washington.

*"The longer quarantine continues, the more families—especially new families—are coming to get food."*

—North County Community Food Bank, Clark County

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*“We have noticed a large trend of having well balanced sack meals that have greatly helped social distancing at 1811 during the COVID outbreak. Being able to have a larger surplus of meals to hand out to folks without income has really changed/ improved behaviors as they are not having to try and figure out where their next meal is coming from and having comfort in having a well-stocked fridge.”*

—1811 Eastlake, King County

## CELEBRATING A LEGACY OF PASSION FOR FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

We knew Natalie Gendler not only for her support of Northwest Harvest but also for her involvement in the community. She left a legacy gift to Northwest Harvest, and we continue to be grateful. We recently spoke with her two daughters, and through this conversation it became clear that this passion for community was instilled early in her life.

She grew up in New York, the child of a lawyer and a social worker. Her father was a judge who often expressed concern for young people who were not being cared for, and her mother’s concerns matched his. Their values were reflected in how they lived. For example, instead of celebrating her brother’s bar mitzvah in a traditional way, they brought people together to make sandwiches for those waiting to go off to the war.

Natalie felt that no one should go hungry, especially young students. After gaining her Doctorate in Psychology at the University of Omaha, she saw firsthand how hunger impacted students’ ability to learn in her career as a school psychologist.

Where many couples with children want their estate plans to solely benefit their children, Natalie understood that raising children to become healthy adults requires a strong community. Her estate plan, while centering around her two daughters, also expressed her appreciation for the organizations dear to her, including Northwest Harvest.

We hope you share Natalie’s understanding of the importance of community, especially at this difficult time.

If you are interested in planning your legacy and including a gift to Northwest Harvest, please contact Anne S. Knapp, Northwest Harvest’s Senior Planned Giving Officer at [annek@northwestharvest.org](mailto:annek@northwestharvest.org).

*“Our community is still being amazing in the amount of food it is bringing in to support us during this time. Our clients needs are being met, with both community food and Northwest Harvest food.”*

—Plateau Outreach Ministry, King County

## CONTINUING RESPONSE TO COVID-19

As the health and economic effects of COVID-19 hit communities across Washington, Northwest Harvest is responding to the evolving crisis. We are harnessing our resources—healthy food and statewide partnerships—to take action as schools close, businesses are shuttered, and working families are burdened with impossible demands.

Sadly, this pandemic disproportionately impacts people who struggle with hunger and poverty. Under normal circumstances, many in our communities cannot meet basic needs. This struggle is exacerbated in times of crisis.

See the latest updates on our response here: [northwestharvest.org/covid-19-response](https://northwestharvest.org/covid-19-response).



*With additional safety measures in place, volunteers and staff of Northwest Harvest’s SODO Community Market continue distributing nutritious food to serve customers.*



## DEEP DIVE: CONGRESS AND COVID RELIEF

Northwest Harvest is urging Congress for economic relief for the millions of people in our state and our country who are at deeper risk of hunger, homelessness, and poverty during the pandemic.

A recent report from the Coalition on Human Needs states that 51% of people in the United States lives in a home where at least one person has lost income from a job. Enhanced unemployment benefits has helped these households pay the bills and buy food, such that, according to another national study, our poverty rate has mostly been kept in check.

But on July 31, those unemployment benefits lapsed without action from Congress (at the time of this printing.) Food banks are bracing themselves for even deeper need and longer lines when people feel they have no choice but to go to the food bank when they can't afford food and other necessities.

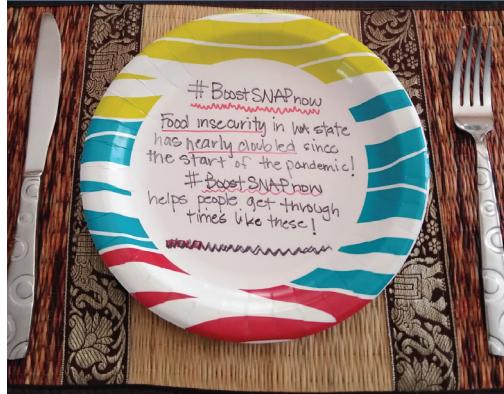
Northwest Harvest has been mobilizing our network of advocates and has been in close conversations with our Congressional delegation, about a comprehensive relief package that includes raising the maximum SNAP benefit by 15%. This boost to SNAP will help all SNAP households afford basic nutrition during a time when food prices have increased by over 5.6%. This boost would also provide much needed relief to those households that were already struggling so badly before the pandemic such that they have not seen any change to their SNAP benefits—this is the case for 40% of Washington's SNAP caseload.

We also need this relief package to extend the Pandemic EBT program which helps families with kids that normally rely on free or reduced-price school meals with added money to buy groceries. Extension of this program will be essential to helping families have better access to food to help keep kids healthy and better equipped to focus on learning when school meal distribution will be complicated due to school closures and hybrid schedules.

Our other priorities for relief include extension of the nationwide eviction



*Advocates urge Congress to provide relief for millions of Americans and highlight the importance of SNAP with an "empty plate campaign" during August's Day of Action.*



moratorium and rental/mortgage assistance as well as funding for emergency shelter programs. We also support extensions of enhanced unemployment benefits and the stimulus payment checks program with an expansion to include mixed immigration status households with immigrants who work and pay taxes. Last but not least, there must be increased funding for state and local governments, including raising the federal match for Medicaid funds, or else state budget cuts to essential needs programs that will be made necessary to balance the budget without any new revenue or resources will undo any help provided by a federal relief bill.

Hunger must be relieved, but charity cannot do this work alone. Supporting efforts to strengthen our public safety net is essential to help families stabilize the impact of this economic crisis and get back on their feet.

## TAKING PEER SUPPORT GROUPS ONLINE

Each year, Northwest Harvest spends a valuable day listening to folks in our Peer Support Groups who access food banks in five different areas of the state. These listening sessions are a large part of our work to address the root causes of hunger. During these listening sessions, participants share stories and information that help to shape our legislative agenda. Our annual Focus Group Report, which is distributed to legislators, anti-hunger/anti-poverty advocates, and other organizations, includes the findings from these conversations.

This year, we are changing things up and meeting online on a Facebook group page. This transition has its challenges. Recruitment has been difficult, because partner food banks and community organizations have changed their distribution and service models to eliminate face-to-face time, which limits their ability to encourage clients to participate. In addition, access to internet and technical support is a privilege that a lot of folks do not enjoy. To address this challenge, Northwest Harvest is involved in a coalition to increase internet access and technical support across the state.

Despite these challenges, we were able to recruit six wonderful participants from Mason County, South King County, Pierce County, and Yakima County. A mixture of projects and group video meetings will all take place on Facebook. Each project will have a topic with a series of prompt questions that the participants are encouraged to answer using photos and creative art. As folks share their projects, interact on Facebook, and participate in group video meetings, we are hoping to build community across these four counties. And as in previous years, this information will be critical in defining our legislative priorities moving forward.

While we look forward to holding these listening sessions together in the future, we are grateful to be together in solidarity to end hunger in our state.



## PARTNERSHIP ENSURES ACCESS TO NUTRITIOUS FOOD FOR ALL

Hunger does not result from a lack of food but a lack of justice. Based on the results of our *Community Perspectives: Improving Food Access* report, we know that providing people with the opportunity to choose high-quality, culturally appropriate food isn't just a nice-to-have; it's essential for food justice. Through partnerships across the state, we are ensuring everyone, no matter their race, age, income, or where they live, get what they need—and want—to eat.

Our partners Bellingham Food Bank and Agape Service Project provide emergency food to the farmworker population of Whatcom County. This community requested specific produce like limes,



### Community Perspectives: Improving Food Access



northwest  
HARVEST  
nwharvest.org



tomatoes, and tomatillos, and staples like Maseca flour and vegetable oil so they can continue to feed their families with meals they know and love.

A partnership in southwest Washington between Lewis County Seniors, Twin Transit Authority, and United Way of Lewis County is getting food to seniors who are home-bound. Transit stepped up to deliver meals cooked by the senior center and funded by the United Way. The group has expanded and is now working as a coalition of 13 organizations consisting of schools that provide storage space, churches that serve meals to people who are homeless, food banks, human and mental health services, and others.

On the east side of the state, the Spokane Food Fighters has partnered with our eastern Washington peer distribution organization, Second Harvest. Together, they are connecting families in need to emergency food and other resources. The group also supports the restaurant industry—employing talent to cook delicious meals and hiring refugee workers through Global Thrift to deliver food to families in need. These efforts have provided 10,000 meals in less than three weeks.

When such unprecedented need exists, it is incredible to be part of communities that act on their values. We are in this crisis together, and we will get through it together.

LEFT: Read *Community Perspectives: Improving Food Access* report online at: [northwestharvest.org/community-perspectives](https://northwestharvest.org/community-perspectives).

RIGHT: Partnerships help power neighbor-to-neighbor support networks in communities across the state.



*“There is a lot of uncertainty and stress our people are experiencing. We have had quite a few of repeat people coming through the month and many people simply stating that they are desperate for food due to having no income. I really appreciate our peoples’ trust in sharing their struggles, and we do as best we can to provide what they need. We still have a sizeable pool of donation funding that we are using to purchase foods and other items that people want in addition to what we receive.”*

—Community Food (CAC),  
Whitman County



## EVENTS

WASHINGTON  
WESTERN | CENTRAL | EASTERN*More events and  
up-to-the-minute details at:  
northwestharvest.org***KZOK**  
102.5 FM**ROCK THE HARVEST, POWERED BY  
EVERGREEN HOME LOANS**

THURSDAY, OCT. 1

The 23rd Annual Rock the Harvest campaign returns this October! Mark your calendars to tune in to KZOK, make a donation, and be a part of this annual tradition. Learn more at [northwestharvest.org/events](http://northwestharvest.org/events).



*Eastside Fire & Rescue volunteers at  
KING 5 Home Team Harvest in 2019.*

**K5 HOMETEAM  
HARVEST** 20 YEARS.  
MILLION MEALS.**KING 5 HOME TEAM HARVEST**

SATURDAY, DEC. 5

Tune in to KING 5 and KONG at 10 a.m. on Saturday, December 5 for a broadcast special celebrating 20 years of Home Team Harvest. Learn more about the campaign, its history, how it changes lives in our communities, and how YOU can help us reach our goal to raise 20 million meals to feed our neighbors in need. For more information, go to [king5.com/hometeamharvest](http://king5.com/hometeamharvest).



*"It's been a long couple months but we still have clients that are grateful for us being open."*

—Kettle Falls Community Chest,  
Stevens County

**BILINGUAL VOLUNTEERS NEEDED  
AT SODO COMMUNITY MARKET!**

We're recruiting bilingual volunteers in the Seattle area to help us out on our Monday, Wednesday, and Friday market shifts. We're particularly in need of volunteers who speak Cantonese or Mandarin. Volunteer duties include greeting and checking in guests, restocking shelves, and bagging groceries. Shifts are roughly three hours.

For more information, please contact Ames Hwang, our SODO Volunteer and Outreach Coordinator at [amesh@northwestharvest.org](mailto:amesh@northwestharvest.org).

**THANK YOU, EVENT SUPPORTERS!**

*We could never list them all, but the hundreds of events held each year throughout our state provide tremendous impact across every community we serve. To everyone who contributes in any way, thank you for making a difference!*



*Junior League of Yakima representatives present proceeds of their virtual event to Northwest Harvest Events & Volunteer Specialist Josette Gonzales (left).*

**JUNIOR LEAGUE OF YAKIMA**

We want to thank Junior League of Yakima for hosting their first Virtual 5K Walk/Run/Jog/Bike-A-Thon that raised over \$3,000 for Northwest Harvest—equivalent to well over 13,000 meals!

The Virtual 5K took place through the month of May. Junior League of Yakima sought out pledges from community member participants for each mile walked, jogged, ran, or cycled. Community members were able to participate individually or as a team. Thank you again to Junior League of Yakima and all those that participated!

*"We know the need is great, with Northwest Harvest here in Central Washington we wanted to put together a Virtual Run of sorts where we could raise money as people get out and run, bike, walk. We wanted all the money raised to go directly to Northwest Harvest to help our community."*

—Alexcia Rensch,  
Junior League of Yakima



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*Interested in learning more about working for Northwest Harvest? Check out our job openings at [northwestharvest.org/careers](http://northwestharvest.org/careers).*

**CORPORATE PARTNER HIGHLIGHT: SAFEWAY FOUNDATION**

Northwest Harvest is grateful to our corporate partners, many of whom are facing disruption in their operations and workforce during this pandemic. Despite challenges, they continue to support Northwest Harvest in various ways, from cash contributions to employee giving and volunteering.

For years, Safeway has been a valued partner, supporting Northwest Harvest with food donations and cash contributions through the Safeway Foundation. Safeway's grocery services are critical right now and, like Northwest Harvest, they are challenged

to keep shelves stocked and employees and customers safe. But instead of stepping away, they've stepped up with more than \$1 million in cash support for our COVID-19 Response Fund and are again partnering with us and KING 5 for our annual Home Team Harvest campaign.

Facing this unprecedented challenge is difficult but knowing that partners like Safeway are behind us as we provide equitable access to healthy food for all gives us hope, and the ability to keep going.



*Safeway presents Northwest Harvest with one of many generous donations at KING 5 Home Team Harvest 2019.*

**FOLLOW US ACROSS THE STATE!**

To stay in the know about volunteering and other opportunities in Central and Eastern Washington, "like" our regional Facebook pages—[@NWHarvestYakima](https://www.facebook.com/NWHarvestYakima) and [@NWHSpokane](https://www.facebook.com/NWHSpokane)!

*"Due to COVID infection control procedures we have been providing increased food support for tenants at Evans House to encourage shelter in place. Northwest Harvest support has helped many tenants to remain in their apartments without having to grocery shop. Tenants enjoy the selection and report the meals as easy to prepare."*

—Evan's House, King County