

Food Notes | The Newsletter of Food for People

WINTER ISSUE 2020

The Food Bank for Humboldt County



November's Drive-thru food distribution helped 1,300 people stock their selves with high-quality foods before the holidays. More on pg. 2.

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We feel it's important to keep you updated on our programs, policy work, and the progress we are making at the food bank. If you do not wish to receive a newsletter, please don't hesitate to contact us and have your name removed from our newsletter mailing list.

Food for People
The Food Bank for Humboldt County

PO Box 4922, Eureka, CA 95502
www.foodforpeople.org
707-445-3166





Building Progress

Demolition of Food for People's old site began in November, and new construction is slated to begin in early 2021. The first of which will allow for increased warehousing as is currently necessary to address the needs of the COVID-19 pandemic and the second of which will build out the expanded Choice Pantry once services are again allowed indoors. The construction phase is estimated to take six to nine months which would allow us to move into the new facility in the Fall of 2021.

You can help us rebuild! To make a donation or learn more about our plans visit www.rebuildfoodforpeople.org or contact Food for People's Development Director Carly Robbins at (707) 445-3166 ext. 306 or crobbsins@foodforpeople.org.

Drive-thru Food Distribution

By Allison Kolb, Development & Communications Assistant

This winter we had an opportunity to access a large quantity of high quality frozen foods just before the holiday. On November, 23rd we held a special Drive-thru Food Distribution to quickly serve a large number of people. Papa & Barkley generously agreed to let us use their parking lot so we could distribute these items directly into folk's cars.

The turnout was huge and completely unprecedented. Before the distribution was even scheduled to begin, cars lining up to receive a food box were backed up onto Broadway – at one point even reaching all the way to 14th street. Our amazing volunteers, staff, the Eureka Police, Uplift Eureka, and Papa & Barkley all came together going above and beyond to make sure everyone received food.

Thanks to the help of all we distributed more than 400 food boxes reaching more than 1,300 individuals in our community. Everyone received six frozen meats, frozen eggs, mozzarella cheese plus fresh potatoes and apples, as well as non-perishable pantry items. There were people in tears at receiving the food, so grateful and relieved. The expressions of gratitude from the people we served helped reinforce our focus on why we do this, and the numbers of people who turned out speaks to the profound need for food assistance in our community as low-income children, seniors, and families continue to grapple with the challenges caused by the COVID.



Food for People team member Billy loads trunks with food boxes during our drive-thru distribution.

Setting the stage for the next chapter

Notes from the Executive Director

By Anne Holcomb

It's hard to believe, but Food for People's facility at 307 W. 14th St. is gone! Demo started several weeks ago, beginning with the interior and then moving on to the metal frame and exterior walls. Alves & Co., under contract with Pacific Builders, has been leading the effort and it was exciting to learn that they've been able to recycle every part of the building except the drywall. So, as surreal as it has felt to drive by and see huge chunks of the building we've called home for the past 22 years slowly disappear, it is also reassuring to know that the majority of its "bones" will be repurposed. The next phase of the project will be to excavate and bring in new fill so that we can create a foundation that will be seismically stable and make it possible for us to increase our vertical warehouse storage capacity. Once that part is done, we'll be able to proceed with the actual rebuilding, moving us closer to our dream.

Although this wasn't exactly the timeline we had in mind, the lessons from this pandemic have shown us just how limiting our old facility was in terms of our ability to respond to sharp increases in need during a disaster or emergency. In the initial weeks of the shelter-in-place orders, many households suddenly and unexpectedly found themselves without any income and no solid indication of when things might return to "normal." Offers of state and federal food assistance started rolling in just as supply chains were breaking down, so we scrambled to order as much food as possible to meet the needs of our community. The California Legislature approved \$50 million in funding for emergency food, which was shared with us in the form of preassembled food boxes that we've used for the drive-through distributions we've held since the start of the pandemic, and Congress approved CARES Act funds for food purchases. Most of it has been rolled out on a very tight timeline, requiring us to act quickly or risk losing the food and funds. The lack of space to store incoming shipments has proven to be our biggest obstacle, especially since all this unfolded on the heels of the February 28th sewer inundation that rendered our building inoperable, forcing a move into leased spaces at four spread out locations. We scrambled to identify storage options, and took in as much food we could pack into each site, but it has been frustrating not to be able to plan ahead and take it all as it becomes available.

Most recently, we were told that Humboldt County's allocation of Coronavirus Relief Funds (CRF) would be more than \$321,000 and 85% of it had to be used for food – and we had three weeks to spend it before the funds would be withdrawn. There was no way we could purchase and store that quantity of food in such a short amount of time, so our solution was to work with several local grocery stores to create food-only grocery store gift cards that we could give



Anne Holcomb, Executive Director.

to the households served by Food for People and several of our community partners. In addition our partners at Redwood Empire Food Bank in Santa Rosa offered to help. We have been able to buy food through their purchasing system, and they have agreed to store some of it at their facility. Had this happened during the height of the wildfires that impacted their community, it is unlikely they would have been able to help in this way.

The lesson inherent in all this is that Food for People needs a renovated facility and additional warehouse space in order to be prepared to respond to whatever disaster might hit Humboldt County in the future. We were already providing food assistance to 10% of our county's population, despite the fact that more than 20% live at or below the federal poverty level. Disasters like COVID-19 or a national recession can increase the levels of food security by 40%-70%, and we need to be able to respond as quickly as possible. That's why we hope you will support our "Rebuild Food for People" campaign, and help us set the stage for the next chapter, creating the infrastructure necessary to meet local needs and respond quickly and efficiently in the event of a disaster. Our commitment to eliminating hunger in our community has never been stronger, and we're ready to take it to the next level.

With deepest gratitude to everyone who has supported our efforts this past year, in so many ways.

Anne Holcomb, Executive Director



Left: Choice Pantry team member Veronica pre-bags produce for a drive-thru distribution. Center: Mobile Produce Pantry Coordinator Jessica prepares for a distribution in Redway. Right: Staff and volunteers load food into car trunks at a drive-thru distribution in Eureka.

Keeping Humboldt Strong

Your Health and Wellbeing is our priority

By Allison Kolb, Development and Communications Assistant

You know us as the organization that is always working to improve the health and well-being of this community. You know that we understand the importance of providing healthy and nutritious foods to keep Humboldt strong and resilient and that we believe everyone should have access to good quality food. That is why we have 17 pantries as far north as Orick, south to Garberville, and east to Willow Creek and Dinsmore. Thirty-six percent of the food we distribute is fresh produce. Much of which is grown right here in Humboldt thanks to partnerships with local farmers, ranchers, orchards, and backyard gardeners. You know that the community can count on us to provide the well-rounded food staples folks need to create balanced meals and stay nourished. We have been doing this important work for over 40 years.

But this year and moving forward into next year our commitment to the health and well-being of our community is taking new forms. As we are seeing a rise in both the need for food assistance and COVID-19 cases we are making safety our top priority.

At the core of this is the safety of our staff and volunteers. Masks and 6 feet physical distancing are required. Staff and volunteers sanitizing their hands regularly and gloves are worn while handling food. Staff work from home whenever possible. Packing and sorting products are done outside when weather permits. In indoor environments, we provide healthy airflow with open windows and fans.

Doing our part to stop the spread also means safety at our distributions. For a decade prior to this pandemic, we had been operating using a Choice Pantry model. This meant that people could “shop” through the food selection much like they would in a grocery store allowing them to pick the foods that fit their dietary and cultural needs. To minimize the risk of COVID spread we quickly changed this and are now pre-bagging foods. Many of our distributions have shifted to no contact, drive up distributions allowing us to serve a large number of people quickly and safely, which is especially important as the need for food assistance continues to grow as people in Humboldt County struggle with the economic effects of the pandemic. Folks are instructed to stay in their car and pop their trunks, where we will place their food. When drive up is not possible we distribute outside. At our Eureka Pantry, we now operate out of our window. Six feet social distancing and masks are always required. For many immune-compromised individuals in our community including the elderly and homebound, we have increased delivery right to people’s doors. We are proud to make it more possible for at-risk folks to stay safely at home.

I know we are all making a lot of adjustments and sacrifices. It can all feel very daunting. But I am so happy to be here in Humboldt, a place with such an amazing and strong sense of community. Food for People is proud to be a part of this community and are grateful for all those who have joined us in our fight to eliminate hunger.

How to Help Food Banks in a Pandemic

How you can make the biggest impact this holiday season

By Allison Kenney, Local Food Resources Coordinator

Like most of the world, Food for People has found itself in entirely new territory for many reasons related to COVID-19, but also for reasons unrelated to the pandemic. The flagship building which was home to our staff offices, dynamic warehouse operations, and Eureka Choice Pantry suffered major water damage as a result of a sewer inundation in late February. Shortly after the disastrous damage to our building, COVID-19 found its way to Humboldt, and quickly got a foothold in our community, forcing many residents out of work and into quarantine.

With these major disruptions, Food for People had to swiftly pivot to respond to the increasing need for assistance as more people lost their jobs and closed businesses, as well as develop new ways to operate and distribute food safely and efficiently in a growing pandemic, all while being displaced from our main facility. Luckily, we have been able to find temporary locations for our Eureka Pantry, offices, and warehouse, but being spread out across four different locations is less than ideal and can be challenging at times. The storage capacity at our interim warehouse is a fraction of what we are used to working with. As we continue to adapt our operations to maximize safety and efficiency, storage space constraints present another difficult piece of the puzzle.

With the holidays fast approaching, and COVID-19 cases rising rapidly in Humboldt, we restructured our food drives for the holiday season with the health of our staff, donors, and volunteers as a top priority. As Humboldt has entered the “purple tier” category, it is absolutely crucial that we rethink our approach to food drives this year, in order to limit potential exposure for all involved, while still offering options to donors who want to give. We are encouraging our donors to find safe ways to support us, with the universal understanding that 2020 is a year unlike any other, and that we all need to be flexible and work together to keep one another safe.

Even in normal times, monetary donations are the most impactful and efficient way to support food banks. With our wholesale buying power, Food for People can utilize the money you would use to buy one bag of groceries to instead buy three. With the COVID-19 virus circulating in our community, funds are also the safest option for giving. Funds can be donated with one simple click online, making it a completely contactless transaction, unlike food donations which need to be delivered by the donor, picked up by staff from the donation barrel location, sorted by groups of volunteers, stored, and then later unpacked for use in food boxes. Many of Food for People’s new pandemic safety protocols and procedures are more labor-intensive, leaving our staff stretched thin as is. In addition, with our storage capacity at all-time low, we can use financial donations to purchase the items most needed in our network of food pantries and hunger relief programs on a rolling basis as space allows. It also gives us the flexibility to purchase highly requested items such as milk, eggs, and cheese, which do not get donated through the food drives due to their perishable nature.

We realize that not everyone can or wishes to make a financial contribution. With this in mind, we decided it was important to continue to offer our community a few ways to make food donations. We have a few food donation barrels in the community and organized holiday food drives based on the same outdoor drive-through model that has been so successful for our pandemic food distributions. Keeping these events outdoors allows staff and volunteers to abide by social distancing guidelines and other safety protocols to limit the spread of COVID-19.

We are immensely grateful for the flexibility and understanding of our supporters during these challenging times. If you would like to make a donation visit www.foodforpeople.org; send your gift to Food for People at PO Box 4922, Eureka CA 95502; or call our Development Director Carly Robbins at (707) 445-3166 ext. 306



Food for People can take the money you would use to buy ONE bag of groceries and buy THREE!

Our 28th Annual Holiday Fund & Food Drive

Kicked off in true cowboy fashion!!

On November 21st the Redwood Unit of the Backcountry Horsemen of California paraded through Old Town before returning to unload their haul to Food for People staff and volunteers.

Thank You Senator McGuire and KHUM radio!



Senator McGuire and KHUM radio joined with local student leaders to host a Humboldt Holiday Food Drive with dropoff locations at the North Coast Co-op, Wildberries Marketplace, and Safeway.

We are so grateful for the incredible support we received from the community.

Drum roll, please...

GRAND TOTAL FUNDS – \$43,637.98

GRAND TOTAL FOOD - 10,472 lbs of food!



Members of the Redwood Unit of the Backcountry Horsemen deliver food donations to Food for People staff.



"Santa" Rex, Senator Mike McGuire, Volunteers, and local students celebrate a successful 2020 Holiday Food Drive.



State Senator Mike McGuire unloads nonperishable food donations during the drive-up and donate event.



Volunteers pack bags of produce for one of Food for People's drive-thru distribution.

Senior Programs

A positive word can go a long way

By Carrie Smith, Child & Senior Programs Coordinator

We continue to get a record number of inquiries from seniors living with food insecurity. With so many unknowns about what to expect in the long term as people try to navigate the new realities of COVID-19, many are afraid to let their guard down. Will there be continued financial help?

Sometimes a positive word can go a long way. With

everything going on this year, people who are contacting the food bank are feeling the stress of the pandemic and resulting financial crunch. The struggles of our community members weigh heavily in the hearts of front line staff and volunteers distributing food to households in need. This is why I thought I'd share a few of the thank you's I've received in the past couple of months.

"SO NICE TO MEET YOU TODAY. WELL, YOU SAID THE DISTRIBUTION BOX WOULD BE CONSIDERABLE. I THOUGHT I'D PREPARED MYSELF FOR WHAT I WOULD LIKELY RECEIVE BUT WAS VERY PLEASANTLY SURPRISED. CHEESE, EGGS, AND CANNED SALMON ON TOP OF EVERYTHING ELSE; WOW, WOW, WOW! I'LL BE ABLE TO MAKE THIS LAST QUITE A WHILE. THANKS SO VERY MUCH. LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU NEXT MONTH."

"THANKS SO MUCH FOR YOUR CALL. BEING ABLE TO SIGN UP IS A HUGE RELIEF AND VERY MUCH APPRECIATED."

"THANKS SO MUCH, AS USUAL. PORK CHOPS WERE A VERY NICE SURPRISE. BUTTER TOO!"

"MUCH BLESSING TO YOU. THE VOLUNTEER DELIVERY DRIVER CAME BY TODAY. I HAVE ENOUGH [FOOD] FOR 9 DAYS."

"THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR THE FOOD AND DELIVERY! HOPE EVERYONE THERE IS STAYING WELL..."



November's Drive-thru food distribution saw nearly 400 cars line up for food boxes.

Advocacy Corner

Increased CalFresh Benefits Bring Hope

By Heidi McHugh, Community Education & Outreach Coordinator

This Thanksgiving I find myself thinking about Abraham Lincoln convening his cabinet in October of 1863 to issue an executive order that declared Thanksgiving as a national holiday. The country was in a dark place, mired in Civil War. In the wake of the Battle of Gettysburg the President wanted to offer the nation a glimmer of hope and a day of rest. This year our country has found itself in a collective darkness again as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to take its toll on our health and economic security.

Thankfully the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) launched into action on behalf of low-income Californians when the pandemic became serious enough to warrant closures of schools and businesses in March of 2020. As people began to lose work, or the ability to work, applications for CalFresh increased. Leaders at CDSS advocated on the state's behalf to request an increase in CalFresh (known as SNAP at the federal level) benefits from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). These Emergency Allotments were first approved for March of 2020 and have been approved again each month through [DWI] December 2020. The need is reevaluated monthly.

The Emergency Allotment raises CalFresh benefits to the maximum benefit amount possible for a household, which depends on the number of people receiving CalFresh within the household. This has been a welcome relief for the parents with children who are now home for every meal and snack of the day, seniors and persons with disabilities living on fixed incomes, and people faced with the chilling reality of unemployment.

Part of my work as a CalFresh outreach specialist is making certain that people know about Emergency Allotments. Food for People has been amplifying this message through social media, fliers in our food bags, and through our network of partners. We remind people at our Mobile Produce Pantry as they grab a bag of fresh vegetables. Many people did not know and had been budgeting for

their customary benefit amount. The people we have seen express the most excitement are seniors and persons with disabilities who depend on Social Security for retirement and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Many of these folks receive \$16/month in CalFresh benefits. With the Emergency Allotments, they receive \$194/month. This is a big deal for their health and peace of mind. A woman in Fortuna who learned about the increased benefits from me last July was so pleased that she could afford to buy more of the vegetables and fruits that she needs to limit the severity of her chronic illness. And while I was happy for her in that moment, the reality of this being a temporary increase dampened my cheer.

Another person I think about is Robert. Robert lives in Los Angeles but found Food for People's CalFresh outreach webpage online because he did not receive his Emergency Allotment for October. Robert's life has undergone tremendous change since he was hospitalized in 2018. He remained in the hospital for over a year. Upon his release, he found himself unable to work and began receiving SSI. He now lives on less than \$1000/month. He began receiving CalFresh in June of 2020. He was approved for the minimum of \$16/month but has been receiving \$194/month (raised to \$204/month in the new Federal Fiscal Year). He needs that extra money for food. When I spoke with him, he had already tried asking his CalFresh worker in Los Angeles County for help but was told it is a state issue. I reached out to advocates at the California Association of Food Banks who helped me connect Robert to someone who could help him in L.A. County. That person was kind enough to update me that they were able to make sure Robert received his Emergency Allotment and that they discovered a miscalculation of his income had been used to determine his CalFresh benefits amounts. Robert will now receive \$198/month to eat ongoing. I am so happy for him, but his situation was an anomaly. Many will return to the \$16/month when the Emergency Allotments are no longer deemed necessary because we can return to our lives before COVID-19. SSI recipients like

Continued on page 9

Robert are some of the poorest Californians, and returning to “normal” is returning to food insecurity that has been temporarily relieved by “emergency” measures. Food banks remember what happened when the increased SNAP benefits from the 2009 Recovery Act were suspended in 2013: food insecurity among households that consistently participated in SNAP rose by 8 percent — and very low food security rose by 14 percent. (Applied Economic Perspectives and Policy)[CR2]

Advocates who work to reduce poverty and food insecurity have been repeating the message that SNAP benefit amounts are inadequate for meeting nutritional needs for decades. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) wrote in July of 2019 that “millions of Americans, including roughly half of all households participating in SNAP, are still food insecure, meaning they lack consistent access to enough food to support an active, healthy life. Even those who achieve food security often find it hard to stretch their limited resources far enough to purchase and consume a healthy diet. These facts suggest that SNAP’s relatively modest benefits — which average less than \$1.40 per person per meal — may not be enough to meet the needs of America’s poor.” At Food for People, we see this reality play out as nearly half of the households we serve already receive CalFresh yet

still require our services. Studies find that hospital admissions and school disciplinary problems rise, and test scores fall, among SNAP families later in the month when their benefits are exhausted.

Addressing this issue is not a simple task, but it is being taken seriously. A panel of researchers and policy experts commissioned by USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service and convened by the National Academies has drawn attention to the issue. It is my hope that the end of the pandemic will not be a return to the normalcy of hunger for those who have been temporarily relieved of that burden

Backpacks for Kids

With thousands of parents, losing their jobs the number of households with children who aren’t getting enough food has grown drastically.

Food for People’s Backpacks for Kids weekend hunger relief program continues to ensure that the most vulnerable children in our community receive a bag of food each weekend throughout the pandemic.



We could not do this work without the support of our community and our amazing volunteers. Thank you!



Volunteers from the Eureka area Rotary Clubs and Soroptimist of Humoldt Bay pack bags for the Backpacks for Kids Program for school children in Eureka.



Left: volunteers prepare to distribute food during a drive-thru distribution. Right: volunteers pack food bags at our Eureka Pantry.

Volunteer Spotlight

The Our Volunteers are Essential!

By Julie Ryan, Volunteer & Direct Services Manager

While we hear much in the media about essential workers, we need to hear more about essential volunteers: our friends and neighbors who are serving our community because they are compelled to help others. As essential workers, Food for People's staff strives to keep volunteers safe. With services modified to increase safety for clients, volunteers, and staff, we serve the same number of people in the community with fewer volunteers on site. Masks, gloves, social distancing, and frequent hand washing remain routine.

As we move into winter, Humboldt County is currently in the purple tier, so safety precautions are more important than ever. Food for People continues to enforce the COVID-19 policies that everyone on site must wear a mask and gloves, sanitize hands, and maintain physical distance. Anyone who has symptoms, has traveled, hosted travelers, or been exposed to a known COVID-19 case is required to quarantine. We always have extra masks, gloves, and hand sanitizer on hand.

We greatly appreciate our volunteers and it is our goal to respect all comfort levels. Whether someone feels more

comfortable doing no-contact volunteering like senior and homebound program deliveries or packing bags with a small group of volunteers, every effort is appreciated and valued. Many volunteers enjoy interacting with program participants, in alignment with our safety precautions and procedures.

Though our staff and volunteers must practice social distancing safety protocols, it doesn't mean we are anti-social. Our staff and volunteers remember program participants and their stories. They remember the regulars from 14th Street. They know that some folks need help carrying their food boxes to their cars. They are animal lovers and glad when we they are able to help with extra cat and dog food. They like hearing updates about one's kids, a favorite way to cook potatoes, or the excitement of finally getting one's own apartment, and they feel for people having a rough time. In this challenging year, it is nice that we can still share a smile, a laugh, and a kind word and remember that we are all part of this community.



We can all show our respect for essential workers and volunteers by continuing to wear masks properly, practicing social distancing, and following recommended Public Health guidance.

For volunteer opportunities, please call our Volunteer & Direct Services Manager Julie Ryan at 707-445-3166 ext.310 or email volunteer@foodforpeople.org

You can honor a friend or family member by making a donation to Food for People. Simply add a notation to your gift. If you include an address, we'll send a card to let that person know about the donation. It is a great way to celebrate and/or honor the memory of someone you love.

In Memory Of

Ann King of Locally Delicious
 April Conant
 Ardell Diver
 Arnold Souza
 Aunt Margie
 Baby girl C
 Bill & Edie Watson
 Bob MacMullan
 Bud Hickman
 Charles L. & Graciela L
 Cynthia Wood
 Danny
 David L. Jackson
 Dell & Milt Diver
 Don Conti Jr.
 Edith Altschuler
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 Robin Vaughan
 Rosalie Mercurio
 Sam Robison
 Sara Kavich
 Steve Swatek
 Thomas H. Cleary
 Those lost to COVID-19
 Tom Mariscal
 Vince Brown
 Werner Ganz

In Honor Of

Auguste Elliott
 Back Country Horsemen
 Berget Jelane
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 Heinz Huebner
 Jason Bray Family
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 Joyce Plath
 Karen Moulton & Bill Cummings
 Karla Jovel
 Kathy Epling
 Ken & Troy Dean
 Kyle Zeck
 Lauren, Jonathan, Owen, Leah, Charlotte, Max, & Elliot
 Leonard & Mary Jane Thompson
 Lily Hansen
 Lonesome Luke, you continue to make me proud!
 Margaret Lang & Steve Railsback
 Mark & Margaret Shaffer
 Mark Vandavelde
 Martha Spencer-Nelson
 Maxwell Jones
 Maya Zwerdling
 Medicine, Food, & Housing are Human Rights
 Michael & Annette Davis
 My 85th birthday. Hooray!! I made it another year!
 Only Skin Deep
 Paolo Bosques-Paulet
 Paul Dolfini & Riley Grim
 Richard Kossow
 Rios Family
 Rita & Sandy Percell
 Ruth Anne & Woody Jones

Team Glen Paul
 Thomas D. Price
 Toshi
 Uzi Selcer & Cindy Anders for fabulous goat cheeses
 Virginia Shockley

All of the people who work to feed our community.

Anne Holcomb and all Food for People staff who have served our neighbors so well amidst hardship and disasters



Food for People

The Food Bank for Humboldt County

Mission. Food for People is working to eliminate hunger and improve the health and well-being of our community through access to healthy and nutritious foods, community education, and advocacy.

Vision. We envision a community where everyone has access to good quality, nutritious food, understands the consequences of hunger and poor nutrition, and is committed to creating a stronger, healthier Humboldt County.

More. For more information on Food for People and our countywide hunger relief programs or for ways you can get involved visit www.foodforpeople.org.



Food for People The Food Bank for Humboldt County

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Still looking for a holiday gift?

We've got you covered. For every \$30 donation you make to Food for People, we will send this beautiful card to someone you designate. Image by local photographer Ginny Dexter.

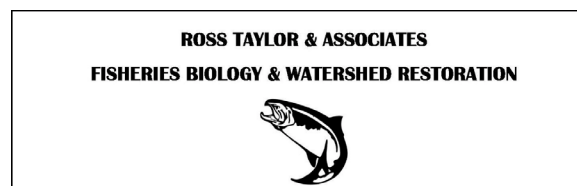
Give at www.foodforpeople.org or send your doantion to Food for People at PO Box 4922, Eureka, CA 95502.

_____ Thank you to our Sponsors! _____

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Times Standard



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