

# Food Notes | The Newsletter of Food for People

## SUMMER ISSUE 2021

The Food Bank for Humboldt County



The Arcata Food Pantry has moved to 501 9th St. (Arcata House Partnership Annex). Huge Thanks to the Trinity Baptist Church for hosting the pantry for the past 5 years!

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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.

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The Food Bank for Humboldt County

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# Reflections on the Role of Safety Net Programs

## Notes from the ED

As the pandemic has unfolded, I've been asked numerous times how the need for food assistance has changed. There was definitely a sense of panic in the early weeks and months following shelter-in-place orders that left many businesses shuttered and people out of work. Supply chains were disrupted, which led to empty store shelves and uncertainty about when and how we would regain access to critical food resources. None of us knew what to expect or how we were going to survive such an enormous challenge. But now that we are one year into Covid-19 response, I'd like to take this opportunity to reflect on what has worked.

As a food bank, we are fortunate to be part of several networks that help support our efforts. Some are government sponsored and others are run by member organizations like the California Association of Food Banks (CAFB) or nationwide nonprofits like Feeding America.

Food for People is one of 43 food banks in California that receive commodity foods through USDA, and in late 2018 we started receiving additional foods through the Trade Tariff Mitigation Program. The trade tariffs imposed by the last administration disrupted large orders to China and other countries, leaving food producers with large quantities of food with no buyers and potentially devastating loss of income. Many of these foods (including LOTS of pork) were purchased by USDA as part of its price supports program to keep market prices stable. It provided food banks across the country with some high-value protein items that most of us still had on hand when the pandemic hit. The TTMP has since run its course but the USDA has continued to keep their warehouses well stocked and the California Department of Social Services, which administers the program for the state, has made sure we are getting the deliveries needed to keep us well supplied.

One of USDA's less successful efforts was the Farmers to Families food box program, under which USDA contracted with a variety of businesses nationwide to source meat, produce, and dairy items that were boxed and intended for delivery directly to hungry households. Unfortunately, the location of many of the chosen distribution hubs left large swaths of the country without access, including those of us here on the north coast. The closest distributor was in Portland, Oregon and we had to commit to a full truckload of 26 pallets of food (all of which had to be refrigerated) to participate, which was impossible with our limited refrigeration options. And, more troubling, there was no funding for storage and distribution of the food; it all went to the contracted distributors who in most cases just dropped the boxes off at food banks, leaving food banks like ourselves scrambling with insufficient infrastructure to take advantage of vital foods.

At the state level, the California Association of Food Banks (CAFB) played a leadership role and leapt into action with its own purchasing program. They created meal relief kits, funded with state dollars, which were shipped to food banks across the state to supplement other food supplies, and they also expanded their own purchasing program, which made



This April Food for People celebrated Anne Holcomb's 20th anniversary as our Executive Director!

additional food available to member food banks at cost. Their purchasing power is enormous and was critical at a time when other supply chains were drying up. We were able to access these foods through Redwood Empire Food Bank in Santa Rosa, which receives direct shipments from CAFB producers. This allowed us to stock up on essentials like canned chicken and tuna, soups, stews, beans, rice, and other staples.

We were also able to access food acquired through Feeding America, thanks to local store donations and large shipments received by Redwood Empire Food Bank, which is a Feeding America affiliate. This helped expand the variety of foods available and supplement other sources.

The bottom line for Food for People is that we were able to piece together the food resources necessary to meet local needs during a critical time. In many cases, we had to shift operations away from local sourcing to regional, state, and nationwide partners, but we couldn't have been more grateful that they were able to help. And the financial support provided by our community during this time gave us the resources necessary to jump on these opportunities as they arose, which was also important given high levels of demand for limited supply.

But there are also several other interesting developments that we need to acknowledge for the important role they played in our collective hunger relief efforts. One of the most amazing is that the pandemic-related modifications to federally funded social safety net food programs really worked! The increase of CalFresh (SNAP/food stamps) benefits, which gave most households the maximum allowable monthly benefit, made a huge difference for food-insecure households and made it possible for them to purchase the foods they needed without having to rely so heavily on the food bank for help. This, in turn, was a boon for the local grocery stores where those benefits were spent. Pandemic-EBT benefits targeting families with school-age children helped them purchase the food they needed to replace the school meals that many children were no longer receiving, and the stimulus checks also took some of the pressure off low-income households struggling to pay rent, utilities, and other basic costs. We saw a modest dip in requests for food assistance as those benefits became available and people were able to purchase the food they needed without coming to the food bank.

## Notes from the ED Continued...

The additional funding for these programs provided relief and dignity for low-income households during a scary time and we're pleased to see that some of these initiatives will be extended over the next few months. It's a boon for grocery stores because CalFresh, WIC, and P-EBT benefits are spent at our local stores, which translates into local jobs. It also demonstrated how effective it can be to offer benefits at a meaningful level that don't leave a household constantly teetering on the financial cliff and reliant on local charities to get by. As we've often said, we can't food bank our way out of hunger. We can't expect nonprofits to single-handedly lead the charge in fixing a problem that leaves 1 out of 4 children nationwide at risk for hunger every single day.

I know I am feeling encouraged that the latest stimulus package acknowledges the important role these safety net programs play in the health of our citizens and provides continued support for households still struggling with the economic impact of the pandemic. Food for People will continue to do all we can to provide food assistance for our friends and neighbors but it's good to know that the solution doesn't rest on our shoulders alone. If we want to build strong, resilient communities in which everyone has an opportunity to thrive, we need meaningful, long-term strategies that address the true costs of poverty and hunger in a cohesive way.

*Anne Holcomb*  
Anne Holcomb,  
Executive Director

# Making Connections with the People We Serve

By Allison Kolb, Development & Communications Assistant

How exciting is it to see plants growing and flowers blooming? There is something about this year that makes it feel especially hopeful.

At Food for People, it means it's time to gear up for our Free Produce Markets - a special time when local harvests are ready, and we can distribute an abundance of beautiful produce. This year the Produce Markets will begin in June, schedule updates and locations can be found at [foodforpeople.org](http://foodforpeople.org).

Distributing fresh produce is important to us year-round, whether it be at our Mobile Produce Pantry or our network of 17 countywide food pantries. But with our Free Produce Markets, we have the opportunity to expand upon this reaping the benefits of the season and using a larger free farmers market-style model. These monthly events are held in Eureka, Fortuna, Garberville, and Redway in the summer to ensure that all of our neighbors have equitable access to the nutritious, seasonal fresh produce we all need for good health.

Fresh produce is not the only thing we offer at our Free Produce Markets and Mobile Produce Pantries. We take advantage of these special moments out in the community to connect with people and talk about additional resources that can help address the root causes of hunger and poverty.

Our Bilingual CalFresh Outreach

Specialist, Karina Vazquez, goes out to our Mobile Produce Pantry distributions and our Free Produce Markets to facilitate conversations about CalFresh and assist eligible households with applying. CalFresh is a nutrition assistance program that helps income-eligible households afford healthy foods at local stores and farmers' markets.

Through her conversations with each person, Karina is not only able to provide information and help them to apply for benefits, she also learns about each client's situation allowing us to get an understanding of how community resources like our food distributions and CalFresh benefits impact each household. It also gives Food for People and our community partners a sense of what needs exist in our community and what is working.

Karina spoke with me about why she does this work. "I have always been passionate about being a pathway of information between community members and community resources, so the work I do for Food for people with outreach is really important to me. While attending HSU, I spent a lot of time focusing on food deserts and how to help communities dealing with food insecurity, so my transition to this role felt meant to be. The work that I do allows me to help my community directly, especially helping Spanish-speaking clients who don't typically have many resources through which to get information.

Providing information about CalFresh and

Bilingual CalFresh Outreach Specialist  
Karina at a Mobile Produce Distribution.



helping step by step through CalFresh applications is super important for our community. It not only reassures people that there is someone there to help, but it makes everything easier. Having that space for our conversations at distributions gets rid of misconceptions about CalFresh, which in turn helps ease households' anxiety about applying. Those who are eligible are able to get help with monthly grocery expenses, which can also directly help local farmers when using CalFresh benefits at farmers' markets. Overall it helps our community in multiple ways."

At Food for People, we feel fortunate to have Karina as a part of our team. She plays a valuable role in helping us reach out to all communities in our beautiful county, making sure that everyone we interact with has the information and technical support they need to access a variety of food resources.



Construction has been delayed due to widespread supply shortages of building supplies.

## The Best Laid Plans...

### Supply Shortages Impacts Food for People's Rebuild Efforts

By Carly Robbins, Development Director

The last year has certainly thrown us our fair share of challenges - from the increased need for food assistance amid the pandemic and current economic downturn, to redesigning all our food distribution models to help people safely - our stellar team has redoubled our efforts to make sure we can help all those experiencing hunger and food insecurity while simultaneously working to recover from the sewer disaster of 2020 and rebuild our facility. Unfortunately, our challenges are not over.

If you've driven by our old 14th street location in the past several months you will have seen piles of dirt in an empty lot. We had hoped to begin construction of the new building this May. However, we are not immune to the international shortages of key construction supplies like steel and lumber. Commodity shortages continue to ripple across the US economy as growing demand for materials like steel and lumber run up against supply chain congestion and high tariffs. According to a recent New York Times article the shortages can largely be attributed to "factories being unable to keep up with pent-up demand that was being unleashed as consumers emerged from the pandemic ready to spend." Intensifying the supply chain problems are hefty tariffs that the former administration imposed on international imports from areas like China, where the majority of steel manufacturing is done. The New York Times advises that going forward we can expect "things as diverse as lumber, drywall, aluminum and steel are going to cost 10 to 20 percent more."

Locally, this means that the construction start date for Food for People's new facility has been delayed by potentially as long as 20-22 weeks; while some foundation work can be done prior to installation

of the metal building frame the bulk of the building construction will likely not begin until late fall of 2021. It has also impacted our construction budget which has seen an increase of more than 10%.

However, things are not without their silver linings. With the help of Greenway Partners and Pacific Builders, we have a comprehensive design that will result in a food bank facility that takes advantage of every square inch to increase our storage capacity to build in disaster resiliency for our region, more cold storage so we will be able to expand our healthy food offerings and a larger on-site pantry that will emphasize dignity and choice and allow people to connect with services to address the root causes of hunger and poverty. Thanks to the generous support of lead donors and our community we have already raised 83% of the \$5 Million needed to rebuild the food bank for Humboldt County. You can support this effort - make a donation to Food for People's Rebuild Campaign today at [rebuildfoodforpeople.org](https://rebuildfoodforpeople.org) or contact our Development Director Carly Robbins at (707)445-3166 ext. 306 or [crobbsin@foodforpeople.org](mailto:crobbsin@foodforpeople.org).

#### Layout of the New Food for People Building



# Senior Nutrition

By Carrie Smith, Child & Senior Program Coordinator

It is vital to us here at Food for People that we continue to work closely with senior housing, Community Resource Centers, Area 1 Agency on Aging, and the Humboldt Senior Resource Center to reach the seniors that are not only struggling with food insecurity but also chronic health conditions. We continue to receive many inquiries from seniors struggling with hunger. With so many unknowns about what to expect in the long term, as people try to navigate the ongoing realities of COVID-19, many are afraid to relax. **“Will there be continued financial help? Will I run out of food? Will I be able to get vaccinated?”**

To meet these needs, we continue to provide three specialized programs for qualifying seniors and folks with disabilities. The Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) provides a 30-40 pound box of nutritious food monthly for more than 400 income-eligible seniors (age 60 and older). All boxes come with the addition of bread, up to 10 lbs of fresh produce, and additional fresh protein and dairy items. We serve more than 400 seniors through this program at six distribution sites throughout Humboldt County. Due to strict COVID-19 safety requirements, we have temporarily switched over our choice-style senior pick-up distributions, in which everyone gathered and could sort through some food items to take, to pre-bagging all items and either delivering to program participants' doorsteps, or hosting drive-thru distributions at senior pick-up sites. This way we limit potentially unsafe, crowded events for a high-risk population.

Donate online | [www.foodforpeople.org](http://www.foodforpeople.org)

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Food for People's Senior & Homebound Programs serve 800+ people each month.

Additionally, the Senior Brown Bag Program (SBB) provides a monthly bag of groceries for 400 low-income seniors age 60 and older at locations throughout Humboldt County. The SBB program helps cover senior needs in communities that are farther from our Eureka headquarters, including rural, outlying areas of Humboldt County. This includes Willow Creek, Hoopa, Weitchpec, Orleans, Rio Dell, Garberville, Blue Lake. Centrally, this program also reaches individuals who need food delivered due to disability, both through the SBB Program and our Homebound Delivery Program. Volunteer drivers deliver bags that contain a variety of USDA, purchased, and locally donated foods, bread, up to 10 lbs of fresh produce, and other fresh proteins.

Food for People believes that providing nutritious foods for local seniors and homebound individuals helps them maintain their health and independence. It is our first line of defense against chronic and age-related conditions, which is especially important now as our community grapples with pandemic. All told, these three programs serve more than 800 seniors and persons with disabilities throughout the community.

## Tribute & Memorial Contributions

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

April Conant  
Carol Davis-Conlin  
Cheryl Ash  
Don & Betty Hosterman  
Dottie Lewis  
Earl Moranda  
Fay  
Gary Paoli  
Hal Campbell  
Holly Frame  
Jeremy Driscoll  
Jerry Nichols  
Jerry's Day of Kindness  
Jim Anderson  
Johanna McSmith

Judy McLeod-Meadors-  
Michelet  
Kyle Sullivan  
Laurey & Jay Sullivan  
Lis & Robert Wells  
Lynette Meyers  
Matthew Burwell  
Michael Robershotte  
Mike Robershott  
Patricia Ann Greb  
Davis  
Pete Wilson  
Rev. H. Hugh Stewart  
Rex Bardin  
Richard Hunt  
Dr. Scott Sattler  
Scott Kender

Thompson Family  
Tiara Ann Gibson-  
Whitaker  
Walt & Marie Gale  
Yvonne Morrison

### In Honor Of

Ann King  
Annie Todd-Keyser  
Arlene Hoopes  
Barbara Braak  
Bernadette DeLaurie  
Carol Conlin  
Cena Marino  
Dell' Arte  
Dante

Donna Hauser, AAUW  
2021 Woman of the year  
Dr. Fauci  
Edie Jessup  
Elena's 73rd Birthday  
Elizabeth Katz  
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North Coast Co-op  
Rachel Tomini  
Ruth Linden  
Ruth Sturtevant  
Sheryl Talberth  
Stephanie Perrett  
Steven R. Payer  
Terry



The Veggie Crew - Lynne, Corrine, Kathy, Karen, and Pam - pack produce for distribution.

## Volunteer Spotlight: the Monday Veggie Crew!

By Julie Ryan, Volunteer & Direct Services Manager

Volunteers have been essential to the continued operation of Food for People during the last year as we have worked to meet the increased need for food assistance caused by the pandemic. There is one bright side to a pandemic - it brings together people who want to help the community. Every Monday, a dedicated group of volunteers gather to turn hundreds (sometimes thousands!) of pounds of loose produce into bags ready for distribution through several of our programs: Corrine Black, Karen Kenfield, Kathy Stamatis, Lynn Wright, and Pam Martin. We call them the Veggie Crew and wanted to share some of their insights about volunteering with us!

### How did you begin volunteering with Food for People?

**Corrine:** "I felt like it was something I could do that would be helpful and I'd be happy doing – bringing nutrition to people. FFP is a standout nonprofit that is present in the community. I was blown away seeing how the need increased the first summer of the pandemic."

**Lynn:** "I've donated in the past and started volunteering in 2020. Why? I think food banks are a vital community resource. No one in this society should have to go hungry, and food banks are key to alleviating the problem by securing the food"

### How has a year of COVID-19 impacted your experience?

**Lynn:** "It's brought into focus for me just how many people and families in the community have been impacted over this last year and a half by COVID-19 and all the collateral damage."

**Karen:** "A lot of what is safe [volunteering at FFP] is that the warehouse is a more open environment and it's the same group of people ... it feels like everyone is respectful and responsible. Julie [Food for People's Volunteer & Direct Services Manager] monitors the situation and raises awareness."

**Kathy:** "I used to volunteer in the [Choice] pantry before COVID-19, and I miss interacting with the people who are shopping when I was out front. You get to know people and say 'hi' to each other out in the community. COVID changed things."

**Pam:** "At first, there was the impact of not being able to do anything while being able and willing. This is what I want to do because people need help. I'm strong and able to help. I see

what Food for People does and how much food goes out, how well organized it is. The staff is cool with us being part of the group. It's a well-run machine. I have seen the generosity of the community... Seeing behind the scenes at Food for People is great. I like the Veggie Crew. I love the people, and energy, and learning about fellow volunteers. It's teamwork, comradery, and all the things I miss from basketball. I also didn't realize how much fresh food was involved – fresh fruit, veggies and dairy. That's the expensive stuff with good nutritional value, and it is nice to see the local farmers dropping off food too. It's expensive to eat healthy, so it's great to see that access."

### Is there something you want to share with the community?

**Kathy:** "The staff and other volunteers care about what they do. It's a kind and compassionate place. It feels good to be helping. It's a good thing if we can all do a little bit to help out."

**Pam:** "I want to encourage people to get involved with FFP or any community project. There is room for people to volunteer, and our community needs help."

**Corrine:** "In my 10 months of volunteering at Food for People, I am really impressed and awed at the staff and what you do on a weekly basis, especially with losing the 14th Street. warehouse. I don't know how many places would keep going with no break in service. I would encourage everyone to donate their time and money to a worthwhile cause."

**Karen** sums it up with the shared sentiment, "I like that I am part of a team on Monday mornings, and that's really cool."

The Veggie Crew, along with the more than 600 additional volunteers, have contributed nearly 16,000 hours in the last year to fight hunger. Volunteers work alongside staff to distribute food through our network of countywide food pantries, deliver groceries to homebound seniors, help with drive-thru distributions, and pack bags with non-perishable pantry staples and produce. To learn more about volunteering at Food for People, contact Volunteer & Direct Services Manager Julie Ryan (707) 445-3166 ext. 310, [volunteer@foodforpeople.org](mailto:volunteer@foodforpeople.org), or visit [www.foodforpeople.org/volunteering](http://www.foodforpeople.org/volunteering).

Cauliflower being gleaned at Neukom Family Farms for the Food Bank.

## Farmer Spotlight: Neukom Family Farm

By Allison Kenney, Local Food Resources Coordinator

Food for People puts a high priority on working with local farmers to promote equitable access to fresh fruits and vegetables, which are crucial for good health. We have worked with Neukom Family Farm for many years, through both our Gleaning Program and Locally Delicious project. Neukom Family Farm was started in 1996 and is owned by Jacques and Amy Neukom. Their idyllic orchard and farm is set in the valley of Willow Creek on the Trinity River, just west of the Trinity Alps Wilderness. They are currently farming 18 acres, 10 of which are dedicated to their orchards, while the other 7 are used for growing a wide variety of other annual and perennial fruits and vegetables. The orchards are completely dry-farmed, meaning their fruit trees are never watered using any type of irrigation and rely solely on natural rainfall and cover crop for moisture and nutrients. Not only does dry farming often result in fruit that is exceptionally flavorful due to the highly concentrated sugars, its largest impact is reducing water use, which is an imperative consideration given the current California drought conditions.

Around Humboldt, Neukom Family Farm is most known for their extraordinarily sweet and juicy peaches. In the summer you can easily spot the Neukom Family Farm stall at the Saturday Arcata Plaza farmers' market, distinguished by the longest line of eager customers waiting to get their hands on a few of the highly sought-after fruits. It is not unusual for them to sell out within the first few hours of market.

Food for People has been lucky to collaborate with Amy and Jacques through our Gleaning program for many years. In March and April, we worked alongside Amy Neukom to harvest more than 500 pounds of purple and white cauliflower for our Mobile Produce Pantry. This past winter they donated more than 300 pounds of kiwi, which they hand-harvested and delivered to Eureka themselves. Last summer we arranged weekly pick-ups of excess stone fruit

donations, including pluots and plums, at the Henderson Center farmers' market. In August the Neukoms organized a massive heirloom tomato donation, which they harvested together with the help of neighbors and friends, and it was delivered to Eureka by a dear friend of the farmers. These generous donations have been used in many of our programs, including the Mobile Produce Pantry and Choice Pantry in Eureka, as well as our Senior & Homebound programs. Organic produce of such high quality is often considered a luxury item for families when money is tight, so donations like the stone fruit, tomatoes, kiwis, and cauliflower from Neukom Family Farms makes healthy, locally-grown foods available for those who may not be able to access or afford it otherwise.

Last summer, we focused on using funding through the Locally Delicious Farmer Fund to connect farmers around Humboldt county with food pantries and distributions in their local communities, to provide the freshest quality produce and minimize the farmers' transportation cost and resources. By keeping deliveries as local as possible, we encourage clients to eat seasonally, and we reduce the amount of fossil fuels used to make the deliveries. Neukom Family Farm provided fresh peaches and pluots to Food for People's Summer Lunch site at Dream Quest in Willow Creek. Throughout the summer, we provided this Summer Lunch site with weekly food bags containing nonperishable items for children and their families, and it paired nicely with freshly picked fruit from the farm.

Whether it's providing an educational space for new farmers to gain experience and blossom into starting farms of their own, planting a whole field of overwinter cauliflower with the food bank in mind, or hand harvesting hundreds of pounds of fruit and vegetables to donate, it's abundantly clear that Neukom Family Farm's goal is to feed and grow the community, and Food for People is thankful for their partnership.

## Food for People The Food Bank for Humboldt County

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## Advocacy: Reversal of Public Charge Rule Brings Good News But Damage Will Last Decades

By Heidi McHugh, Community Education & Outreach Coordinator

It can sometimes feel like an uphill battle for advocates and service providers, like Food for People, as we work to ease fears and restore compassion towards the immigrant community in the face of federal policy change threats and proposals aimed at immigrants. One of the unfortunate results is fear of utilizing food and nutrition programs. Some of the families that struggle to feed themselves and their children are afraid to reach out for assistance, for fear of negative impacts on their immigration status or even deportation.

But things are looking up. Public charge is part of federal immigration law, to identify who might depend on the government as their main source of support in the future. If someone is considered a public charge, then the government can deny that person's application for admission into the U.S. or deny an application for lawful permanent resident status (LPR or "green card"). There was a period of time in the previous administration, beginning in February 2020, during which the definition of public charge was expanded to impact more people –specifically people accessing food assistance programs, Medicaid, and public housing.

However, the definition has now returned to what was outlined going back to 1999: Public charge applies only to people who receive public cash assistance for income maintenance and/or who are institutionalized for long-term care at government expense. Examples include Supplemental Security Income (SSI); Temporary Assistance Needy Families (TANF) cash assistance; state and local cash assistance programs such as General Relief, and people who are institutionalized for long-term care at government expense (such as when Medicaid/MediCal pays for long-term care in a nursing home or mental health institution). The public charge test only applies to some programs and some immigrants, such as individuals applying for admission to the United States or for adjustment of status to receive a "green card" when they don't already have one). It does not apply to most people with a green card, or asylees, refugees, people with U visas, T visas, Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), and many others. There are many programs that are safe, and the list is long. It is safe to access food assistance programs such as CalFresh/SNAP, WIC, school meal programs, and food banks.

While public charge only applies to a small subset of people who are immigrants, the "chilling effect" or fear associated with it causes unnecessary suffering for people who believe they could be in jeopardy even if they already have naturalized or received green cards or are covered by other exceptions. For a number of years, many qualified non-citizens and citizens within immigrant families were hesitant to access public benefits

for nutrition, health, and housing due to confusion about who public charge applies to and what benefits are considered public charge. For years, advocates and outreach workers carefully explained that these programs would improve health and were safe to apply for, often to see folks understandably remain hesitant. Since late 2016, service providers saw a drop in immigrant populations accessing local, community benefit programs. State and county agencies reported people disenrolling from government benefit programs. In January 2017, a proposed Executive Order (EO) was leaked, which outlined proposals to substantially alter and expand which public benefits are considered public charge. Fears escalated and lasted for several years before the EO officially went into effect.

The public health and community-wide impacts of these rumors and the eventual final publication of the rule in February of 2020 were immense. The Migration Policy Institute reports that "Between 2016 and 2019, the number of low-income noncitizens participating in SNAP fell by 37 percent, as did the number using TANF or similar cash assistance programs. At the same time, Medicaid participation for low-income noncitizens fell by 20 percent. Across all the programs, the decline in participation for U.S. –born citizens was far smaller.

In March of 2021, the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research published a brief assessing the harm caused. Findings include:

- Across our state, one in four immigrant adults with low income avoided public programs, such as CalFresh and MediCal, out of fear that receiving these health and nutrition benefits would negatively impact their immigration status or the status of a family member.
- More than half of those who avoided public programs in the past year were food insecure (54%).
- More than one-third (37%) of immigrants who reported avoiding public programs in the past year were uninsured.
- Even groups not subject to the public charge rule reported avoiding public programs: More than one-quarter (27%) of lawful permanent residents reported avoiding public programs even though the public charge rule does not apply to their applications for citizenship.

Though efforts to expand public charge were ultimately reversed, it caused immeasurable harm to those too fearful to seek help with food and healthcare. A long, uphill climb lays ahead for outreach workers, community providers, and government agencies to ease worries about the use of these programs. The hesitancy and subsequent harm will linger for decades.



Left: Jazmin, Erika, Paul, Francisco, Chey, Marcelina, Haydee, Michele, & Jennifer at the Loleta food pantry. Middle: fresh produce destined for Loleta families. Right: Jazmin, Marcelina, Erika, & Michele prep for a Loleta Drive-thru distribution.

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## Food Pantry Highlight Marcelina in Loleta

By Allison Kolb, Development & Communications Assistant

At the core of what we do at Food for People is a commitment to making healthy, nutritious food accessible to all by building community. We create partnerships and bring together a network of caring people so that people in need countywide can get help from our Pantry Network, which consists of 17 pantries and 3 congregate meal programs (soup kitchens) located throughout Humboldt County.

I had the privilege to visit the Loleta Pantry and talk to some of the amazing people that make it all possible. Marcelina, the pantry's wonderful coordinator, and Maite, a CalFresh assistant at the Loleta Community Resource Center, explained how they have been working to expand food access and bring people together with dignity and respect.

### Can you tell me about the Loleta Food Pantry?

“The Loleta food pantry is a place that provides the opportunity for many to feel safe and empowered. Whether people go to the pantry because they identify it as a place that contributes to their food security, or they are a volunteer or a worker who is there to serve their community, people feel comfortable here. We strive to make the pantry food distribution day a place where everyone feels comfortable, welcome, and safe, although we understand and are aware that there is always room for improvement, and it is important to unlearn and learn things that aren't working well and can be better.

Our community pantry is currently a drive-thru that allows easy access for local households and a smooth flow for all volunteers too. The volunteer team consists of high school students, retired individuals, organizers, and other devoted community members willing to provide for others, including both pastors from the Loleta Community Church. This day-long effort is mobilized by a group of passionate volunteers willing to serve others in all possible ways even through the pandemic and social hardships.”

### What changes have been made since the pandemic began?

“Prior to the pandemic, clients were able to go inside the building to partake in the gathering of their “choice pantry” items.

However, due to the pandemic, our team has had to alter the entire structure in order to follow the restrictions in place to minimize viral transmission. This new process has been very successful with clients and has provided many with better access. Mothers with multiple children and individuals with disabilities find it easier to participate since they do not need to leave their cars in order to obtain their pantry food. The drive-thru model has also helped destigmatize the notion of being in need of help—a feeling many clients in our community have expressed. The drive-thru gives them the liberty to seek assistance without being labeled or judged by others in the community.

In addition to food, the Loleta pantry also provides clients with toiletries, PPE, laundry and meal coupons as available, baby wipes, diapers, socks, and additional outreach information.

**At every distribution, we do our best to provide clients with information about other community agencies such as Centro del Pueblo, First 5, the Redwood Coast Regional Center, Smile Humboldt, and many other local organizations. Our intention is to provide more than just food, so our community understands that they can seek all kinds of assistance with us. We seek to build a robust relationship so they trust that we can provide them with what they need without judgment. Our clients know that they can sign up for CalFresh, Medi-Cal, and CalWORKS with our assistance or directly at these programs' offices.”**

### Do you partner with any other organizations?

“Due to our large numbers of clients every month, we collaborate with other agencies such as the Loleta Community Resource Center-Providence St. Joseph/Redwood Memorial Hospitals which oversees the pantry, Paso a Paso (volunteers), Safeway (bread donations), the Loleta Elementary school (vegetable donations from the community garden), the Bear River and Wiyot tribes, and the Loleta Community Church (venue) to provide our clients with the best assistance possible.

Continued on page 10

## Marcelina in Loleta continued...

### Why do you do this work, and why do you think it is important for the community?

”Providing for others is a passion all of our volunteers share. They understand the challenges Loleta families face, being located in a food desert, and that the last year has been especially challenging with many families unemployed and in need of assistance. The pandemic greatly affected families financially, socially, and emotionally. Being able to provide families with a monthly package of food has been of significant help. A lot of our clients also have trouble with transportation, and thus we deliver to their homes. During this process, there is no person left without service. We are all aware of the hardships families experience. Witnessing how alleviated families feel when they have food makes the volunteers feel like pantry day is a celebration day. It is

a day where we all put our assets on the table and utilize them to the best of our ability to help those in need.

The pantry distribution also allows us to get a pulse of the needs of our community. When talking to families, many share their other struggles, such as unemployment, lack of toiletries, legal worries, and housing problems. Last summer's fires brought many displaced families to our site seeking food assistance. Other families have shared their need for income or help paying their bills. Ultimately, our volunteers take this opportunity as a chance to connect with the community, feel for what they need, and identify resources for them. This is an opportunity we do not get often since the pandemic has prohibited group gatherings. Thus the monthly pantry is truly a moment of gratitude and community healing.”

## Children's Summer Nutrition

By Carrie Smith, Child & Senior Program Coordinator

Approximately 22.5% of Humboldt County children live below the federal poverty threshold, and the pandemic has highlighted just how vulnerable they are. The summer months can be especially hard for children and families, when the safety net of free and reduced cost meals are not readily available from school. For more than 20 years, Food for People has worked to fill this gap and ensure local children have access to food during the summer months. As with many things, the pandemic has necessitated that we shift our approach.

Last summer, in response to the unprecedented challenges presented by COVID-19, Food for People got creative and worked with local partners to reach children at risk of hunger and food insecurity in the summer months. Our friends at Eureka City Schools and the Northern Humboldt Unified School District stepped in to offer summer lunch service in the Humboldt Bay area, including McKinleyville, Arcata, Eureka, and the Eel River Valley, while Food for People stepped in to serve children in the rural eastern areas including Willow Creek and Hoopa.

This year **we are expanding on this model to reach even more children** in rural areas of the county. We will be providing children a box of food, similar to the Backpacks for Kids program but with more food, to help cover lunches for the entire week. In addition to these kid-friendly, shelf stable foods we are working to increase access to healthy fresh foods. We will provide milk, thanks to funds from Humboldt Sponsors, and we are partnering with local farmers to supply fresh produce to participating sites weekly, using funds provided by the Locally Delicious Farmers Fund. In addition to Hoopa and Willow Creek, this year we are expanding this program to Redway, Loleta, and Manila, and we may add sites as funding allows. We work with partners at local resource centers and youth programs to distribute these Summer Food Boxes to qualifying families.

**With parents continuing to care for and educate their children during the COVID-19 pandemic, sometimes at the expense of their jobs, Food for People is determined to support families and children, and it has been made clear by the support of our community that we will not forget our children during such unpredictable times.**

Violet from Dream Quest in Willow Creek helps pick tomatoes at the Neukom Farm for Children's Summer Food Boxes.



# COOKING WITH COLBY

## Tools for Healthy Eating

You may have noticed the change in the air; the warmer temperatures, the ocean breezes, the sweeter smells of life doused in sunshine. All of these changes mean one thing: summer is just around the corner. Gone are the winter dinners of potatoes and parsnips because fresh, colorful, summer produce is on its way!

As the new CalFresh Nutrition Education Coordinator, I love the endless recipes that summer produce has to offer and am excited to share them with the food bank community. From bursting berries and sweet summer squashes, to crisp corn and succulent snap peas, there seems to be a recipe for every day. With warming weather, I find my palate craving lighter, cooler dishes, which is why I have chosen this crunchy, refreshing bok choy and cabbage slaw recipe to share with program participants accessing these ingredients at Food for People's countywide distributions. According to California Center for Rural Policy's 2018 Humboldt Food Access & Pantry Service Report, those coming to Food for People report high rates of diet-related health issues - 13% of those we serve suffer from diabetes, which is significantly higher than the county average of 6.3% or the state average of 9.3%. This is why Food for People makes it a priority to provide a variety of fresh fruits and veggies and nutrition education to promote healthy diets to help alleviate the impacts of poor nutrition.

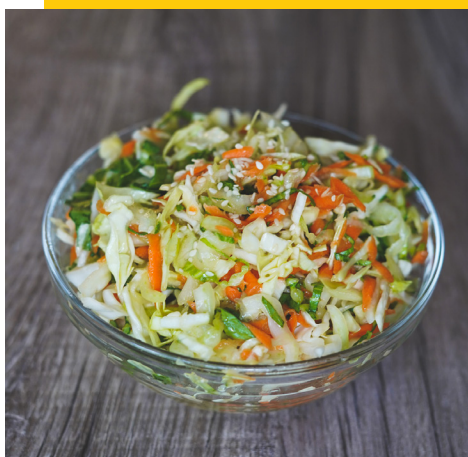
Many of us are familiar with cabbage, but have you met its Asian cousin, bok choy? Bok choy, also known as pak

choi or Chinese white cabbage, is native to China and is a common vegetable in Asian cuisine. While bok choy may seem unfamiliar, it is full of nutrients and can be prepared in a variety of ways (raw, roasted, steamed, sauteed, or grilled). When in doubt, prepare it like cabbage!

Bok choy and cabbage are cruciferous vegetables that are delicious and nutritious. They are both low-calorie, fat-free and cholesterol-free foods. Cabbage contains soluble fiber and plant sterols, which can help reduce cholesterol levels. That soluble fiber is also important for a happy, healthy gut. Studies have shown that eating cruciferous veggies (including broccoli, arugula, and Brussels sprouts) at least once a week can reduce the risk of some cancers.

Both vegetables are high in vitamin C, an antioxidant that plays an important role in our immune health. One cup of red cabbage has almost as much vitamin C as an orange! Bok choy and cabbage both contain potassium, magnesium, and calcium, which can naturally lower high blood pressure. Additionally, these vegetables are a good source of folate, which is an important vitamin for people who are pregnant.

With so many benefits and ways to prepare bok choy and cabbage, it's no wonder that we are celebrating summer with a tangy, crunchy bok choy and cabbage slaw! Check out our step-by-step video showing how to prepare this recipe at [www.foodforpeople.org/programs/nutrition-education](http://www.foodforpeople.org/programs/nutrition-education).



### Salad Ingredients Dressing Ingredients

1 cup Bok Choy	¼ cup Sesame or Olive Oil
1 cup Cabbage	2 tbsp Rice Vinegar
1 Carrot	1 tbsp Lemon Juice
1/4 tsp salt	1 tbsp Honey
Optional add-ins: apple, bell pepper, onions/scallions	

### The Recipe

Cut bok choy lengthwise and rinse under water to remove dirt. Cut crosswise into ¼ inch strips. Toss with salt and place in a large colander. Put a plate that fits in the colander over the bok choy and top with a heavy object (i.e. canned goods or bags of rice/beans). Leave in sink to drain. (This is to keep the abundant water in bok choy from making our slaw soggy.)

Thinly slice or shred cabbage. Shred carrot. Combine in a large bowl. In a bowl or jar, mix together oil, vinegar, lemon juice, honey, and salt.

Add drained bok choy to cabbage and carrot mixture. Pour in dressing and toss until all vegetables are evenly coated.

### Enjoy!

Pro tip: This slaw can be made ahead of time or stored as leftovers and kept in the refrigerator for up to 2 days!

# Protein Partnerships Provide High-quality Foods

By Allison Kolb, Development & Communications Assistant



Pedal for Protein donates \$8,300!

Protein provides fuel to give us energy and is a critical part of a balanced diet. However, items high in protein are often the most expensive part of a food budget and are donated less frequently than other foods, leaving food banks struggling to provide enough of these diet staples. Here in Humboldt, we have been lucky to connect with supporters that strive to help us solve this problem.

The **Presbytery of the Redwoods** has provided annual funding to help provide quality protein items for low-income seniors, children, and families. The funds are used to purchase foods such as nut butters, dairy, legumes, and eggs to help families build nutritionally balanced meals. These funds come from Pedal for Protein, a bike event in which riders from Presbyterian churches across northern California ride hundreds of miles to raise funds for area food banks and pantries.

This year a new partnership with **American AgCredit** will allow Food for People to support local protein producers! American AgCredit is a customer-owned cooperative that provides loans and other financial services to farmers, ranchers, and agribusinesses. Their new effort will provide Food for People \$5,000 quarterly to prepurchase protein items from Humboldt County farmers, ranchers, and producers. The program kicked off in March, with Food for People purchasing 1,116 lbs. of grass-fed ground beef from Eel River Organic Beef, which was distributed through our network of 17 countywide food pantries.



Ops. Manager Jose unboxes beef from Eel River Organics.

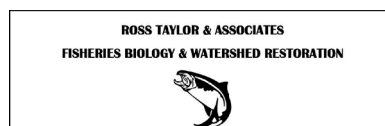
“  
I love when they have local meat. I am a very active person, so I try to eat a lot of protein. I don't have a car right now, so I walk all over town doing errands for my family. It makes me feel good knowing that the meat came from farmers here in Humboldt.”  
- Client visiting our pantry

**Through this partnership we strive to:**

- Improve the quality and quantity of protein items available to people visiting Food for People's hunger relief programs.
- Support the local agricultural food system by purchasing high-quality protein items from producers here in Humboldt County.

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. This includes providing all the ingredients for a balanced diet in monthly food boxes and supporting our local agriculture community whenever possible to meet the needs of those experiencing hunger.

Thank you to our Silver & Gold Sponsors!



**Mission.** Food for People works 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.