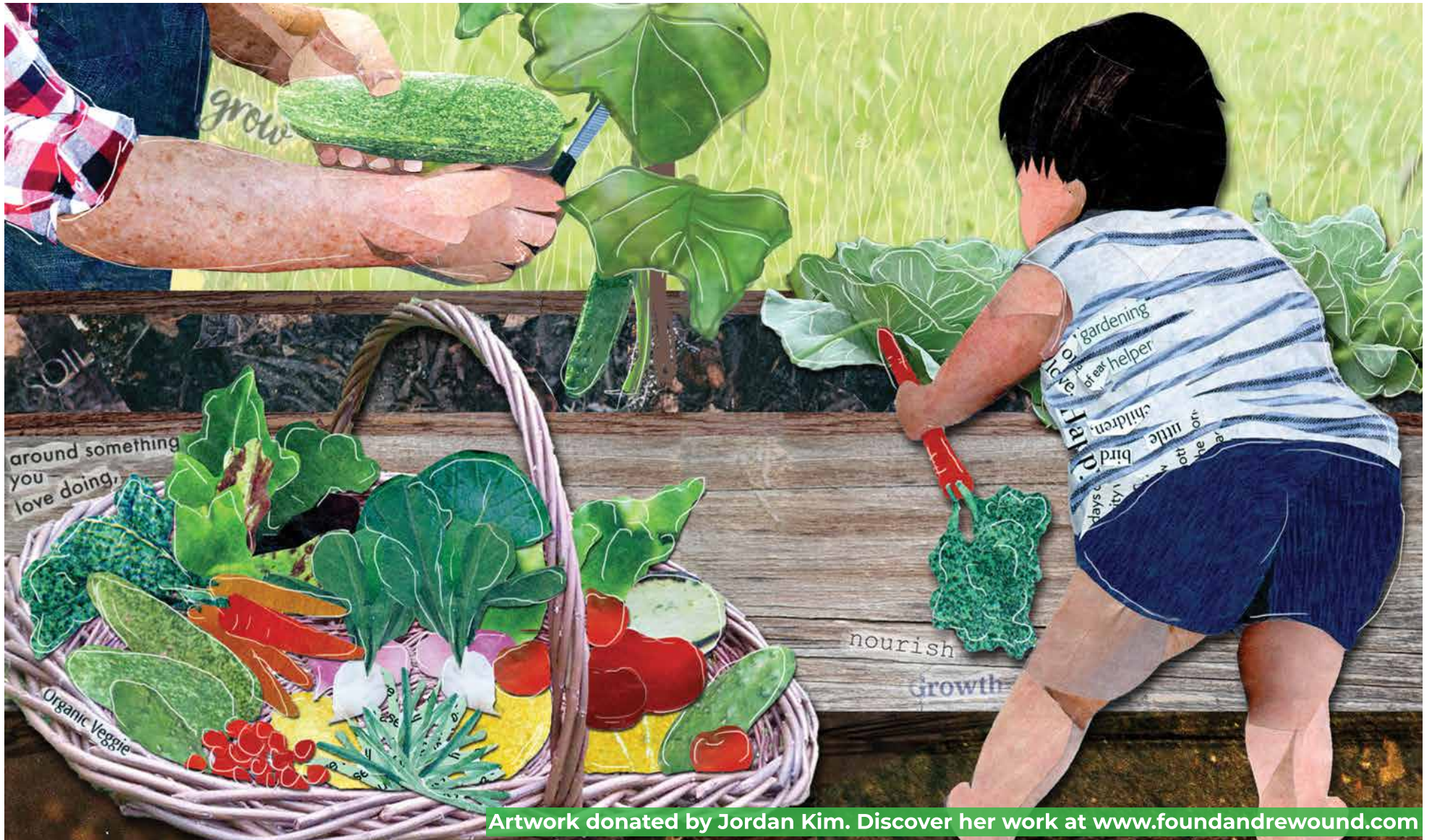


**Food Notes** | The Newsletter of Food for People

# SUMMER ISSUE 2019



Artwork donated by Jordan Kim. Discover her work at [www.foundandrewound.com](http://www.foundandrewound.com)

**In this Issue** | Summer Lunch Pg. 3  
Cleaning 101 Pg. 9

**Food for People**  
*The Food Bank for Humboldt County*



www.foodforpeople.org  
707-445-3166  
Eureka CA 95501  
307 West 14th Street

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 don't wish to receive a newsletter, please don't hesitate to contact us and have your name removed from our newsletter mailing list.

Non-Profit.org  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Eureka CA 95501  
Permit No 159



# Notes From the Director

## Celebrating Advocacy Successes & Local Solutions

By Anne Holcomb

I'd like to thank one of our outgoing Board members, Edie Jessup, for inspiring this column. We've spent so much time over the years advocating for changes in policies and programs to improve food security that we rarely take a moment to step back and reflect on our successes. The good news is that there are quite a few advocacy victories and creative local solutions to celebrate, and I'd like to take this opportunity to highlight some of them for you.

**SSI and CalFresh:** In June of this year, seniors and people with disabilities who receive SSI benefits will finally become eligible to apply for CalFresh benefits (see Heidi McHugh's article on page 10). California is currently the only state that prohibits SSI recipients, whose maximum monthly benefit ranges from \$700 to \$930/month, from accessing CalFresh. Advocates have been working on this issue for almost two decades and it was finally resolved! This will impact approximately 6,000 individuals in Humboldt County who will soon be able to use their CalFresh benefits to shop for food and save the rest of their meager benefits to cover housing, utilities, and health care costs. Approximately 35-45% of the people who use Food for People's Choice Pantry receive SSI and this will make a big difference in their ability to access healthy foods.

**Market Match:** People can also use their CalFresh benefits at North Coast Growers' Association (NCGA) Farmers' Markets and increase their purchasing power through Market Match. Shoppers can swipe their card at the Market Manager's booth for any amount of wooden dollar tokens and receive a free bonus of up to \$10 in Market Match tokens, once per market day to spend on fresh fruits and vegetables and plant starts that produce food. Market Match is funded through USDA and CDFR grant programs and helped increase the use of CalFresh at our local Farmers' Markets by more than 350% in the first few years after implementation. It's a big win for CalFresh recipients and for local farmers who have seen a steady increase in sales as a result.

**Locally Delicious:** The Heirloom Tomatoes, the ladies who formed Locally Delicious many years ago, created a unique strategy for providing equitable access to locally grown produce through its Food for People Farmer Fund. 2019 marks the 10th year of the Farmer Fund, which makes it possible for us to contract with local farmers at the beginning of the growing season to grow crops specifically for Food for People's programs. We provide the funds in the spring when farmers' resources are typically at their lowest, and we receive the fresh, local, and mostly organic fruits and vegetables throughout the growing season. It's a winning strategy for both the people we serve and the farmers we contract with and represents a great investment in our local food system.

**CalFood:** Despite high rates of poverty and food insecurity, California has lagged far behind many other states that provide

an annual allocation to food banks to purchase food. It took many years of advocacy to secure an \$8 million allocation, despite unanimous bipartisan support from both the Assembly and the Senate. Governor Brown vetoed the allocation twice before finally approving the funding and we've been working diligently ever since to ensure that it becomes a standard line item in the state budget. Many other much smaller states have had emergency food funds of \$10-\$20 million dollars for years; it just took some time for California to catch up. We appreciate CalFood's emphasis on purchasing only California produced foods and we've used our \$60,000 allocation to purchase local fruits and vegetables, cheese, eggs, beef, and other nutritious items.

**Infrastructure Funding for Food Banks:** Whenever there is a downturn in the economy, a natural disaster or a reduction in funding for basic safety net programs, food banks step up to make sure people still have the food they need to maintain good health. Most food banks receive some government funding, but we are also very dependent on grants and local fundraising to help us keep the doors open and operations functioning efficiently. When a major piece of equipment suddenly breaks down or needs to be replaced, it can be tough to come up with the funds necessary to cover those costs. After many years of advocacy work, we were thrilled when the CA Legislature provided \$5 million in infrastructure funds for food banks in our state. Our share is \$101,490 and is being used to install reefer (refrigeration) units in a van and a truck, purchase reach forks for a forklift, install racking for more efficient use of space in our offsite warehouse, and replace a 20 year old freezer that is so old we can no longer get parts for it. The original request was for \$25 million in infrastructure funding and our lists are long, so we will be returning to the Legislature to seek additional funds.

As you can see, the driving theme with each of these victories is persistence. It can sometimes take decades to effect real change, and we have to seize every opportunity to educate our communities and our policymakers. But we must never give up. It is our job to lift up the voices of the people we serve to create stronger, healthier communities for all. There are still many challenges to address, but thanks to the hard work of anti-hunger advocates and people like you who support our efforts, we continue to make progress. We hope you will join us!

With gratitude  
and best wishes to all,

*Anne Holcomb*

**Anne Holcomb,**  
Executive Director



**Please donate this summer!**  
**Visit [www.foodforpeople.org](http://www.foodforpeople.org)**





Local children enjoying a free lunch at a Children's Summer Lunch site in Eureka.

# Summer Lunch

## Food for Kids

By **Carrie Smith**, Child Nutrition Programs Coordinator

**A**fter a long wet winter, I think we all can agree that we are looking forward to summertime and a little bit of sunshine! With the school year coming to an end, it also means we, here at Food for People, are busy getting ready for our Children's Summer Lunch Program. We anticipate another great summer, marking our 22nd year as a sponsor of this federally funded food assistance program. This program aligns perfectly with Food for People's mission, offering free, nutritious lunches in order to improve the health and wellbeing of more than 300 children every weekday, all summer long.

Even though statistics have shown that unemployment is down, the reality is that a lot of families are still struggling to make ends meet. Summer is an especially challenging time. Thousands of children eat meals at school each day throughout Humboldt County. When school is out, parents and caregivers are left to fill that void. For many, there simply isn't money to pay for those extra meals. Some face extremely difficult decisions like either paying for a utility bill or buying groceries. Many parents go without eating to make sure their children get enough. The needs of these families are critical, and we do what we can to alleviate children's hunger and parents' stress.

We will have nearly 20 sites across the county, from Hoopa down to Rio Dell, where young people age 18 and under can come to receive a free lunch every Monday through Friday during the summer break. Boys and Girls Clubs, Resource Centers, Day Camps, and Recreation Programs that provide supervision and kid-friendly activities help this program thrive. Last year, we distributed thousands of lunches county-wide, and we anticipate similar numbers this year. As we prepare for the fast-paced weeks ahead, we are grateful for all of our partners and supporters, especially Humboldt Transit Authority and UPS, who help deliver to communities outside of Eureka. We are also thankful that there are other organizations that are sponsoring sites in the Eureka area to accommodate the growing need in this community. Eureka City Schools will have some of their campuses open throughout the summer break that will offer free lunches, as well as the Jefferson Project located on B Street in Eureka.

This year, Food for People's Children's Summer Lunch Program will run from June 17th to August 23rd. Please look for our fliers in your community and visit our website for a list of sites in early June. If you have questions, would like to volunteer, or would like to make a donation to the program, please contact Carrie at (707) 445-3166 ext. 309 or [csmith@foodforpeople.org](mailto:csmith@foodforpeople.org).

**“I feel sad when I'm hungry.”**





Congressman Jared Huffman at Redwood Roots Farm with Food for People and the organizers of Locally Delicious

## Locally Delicious Farmer Fund

### 10 Year Anniversary

By **Allison Kenney**, Local Food Resources Coordinator

**H**umboldt County is home to a uniquely dynamic and relatively vast organic farming community and local food scene. We are lucky to have a dedicated group of advocates who believe that healthy, nutritious food should be accessible to all and who are actively engaged in bridging the gap between food insecurity and our region's abundant food resources. Locally Delicious is a nonprofit that was spearheaded by an ambitious group of Humboldt women who are passionate about improving our local food system to be stronger and more sustainable - they are known as the "Heirloom Tomatoes."

The organization was born from its humble beginnings as the Locavores Potluck group. Discussion of the local food system was common at these potlucks, and the six women soon joined forces to create 'Locally Delicious: Recipes and Resources for Eating on the North Coast,' which highlights regional abundance and offers recipes to utilize this area's many agricultural delights. The Tomatoes have since sold thousands of copies of their cookbook. A few years later they developed their second book: 'Lunch Box Envy: An Adventure in Eating for Kids and Families', which is a cookbook aimed at encouraging families to adopt nutritious eating habits and foster an early understanding of diet-related health in young children through an education-focused cookbook.

Writing the cookbooks was fun and had success, but the Tomatoes decided that they wanted to refocus their mission to make a bigger impact - they decided to use the "Three E's" as a framework for the organization's future objectives. The three E's stand for Economy, Equity, and Environment, and the Tomatoes believe that these three elements are the integral pillars of a healthy food system.

In 2010, with the three E's in mind, it was decided that sales from the cookbook would be used to start the first official "Food

for People Farmer Fund." The fund is a unique collaboration between Locally Delicious, Food for People, local farmers, and the community. The farmers receive an economic stimulus upfront through a contract with Food for People at the beginning of the season when input costs are high and profits are low (**economy**). Food for People is then able to provide fresh, healthy food for our clients. Produce contracted through the Farmer Fund is used almost exclusively in our Senior & Homebound Programs - one of the largest, most vulnerable populations we serve. In turn, low-income residents have access to locally-grown, sustainable, nutritious produce they may otherwise be unable to afford (**equity**).

The fund is well known throughout the farming community, and encourages and supports local, small-scale food production by offering a monetary incentive. Food for People balances the variety of contracts from long-time, established farmers to small, upcoming farmers who are just beginning to get their foothold in the Humboldt agricultural scene, and can use the funds to expand their level of production. The only criteria necessary to be considered for the Locally Delicious Fund is that the farm must be operating under organic practices. This helps to ensure that our local agriculture is helping to enrich our region by ensuring clean air, water, and healthy soil for generations to come (**environment**).

For the first Farmer Fund, the Heirloom Tomatoes sought out partners in the community to match their initial contribution of \$3,000. St. Joseph Health was the first partner. Many other organizations have donated to the fund since, including: The McLean Foundation, Coast Central Credit Union, and Redwood Capital Bank, among many generous individuals. Since its inception, over \$100,000.00 has been raised for the Farmer Fund, and nearly 115,000 pounds of produce has been purchased for Food for People's programs. We want to thank Locally Delicious and the Heirloom Tomatoes for their ongoing commitment and support, as well as the many partners and donors who make this possible.



# Matt's Meals

## A Salad for the Summer

By **Matt Drummond**, Nutrition Education Coordinator

### The Dish Three Sisters Salad

**S**ummer is here! Birds are chirping, flowers are blooming, bees are buzzing and fresh produce is pouring through our doors. This time of year, crisp greens, various roots, multi-colored squash, and plump berries are plentiful. This dramatic bump in abundance adds color, flavor, and variety to the recipes and samples available for the children, seniors, and families we serve through our nutrition education program.

The summer months are an exciting time here at Food for People. We see firsthand the dramatic impact that a community's food system can have. We receive **thousands of pounds of produce** from local farmers, gardeners, florists, arborists and other green-thumbed givers. As Food for People's Nutrition Education Coordinator, I am lucky enough to create recipes, using what is provided by our amazing community.

One of my favorite summer recipes is the three sisters salad. The three sisters are: corn, beans, and squash. Indigenous tribes planted all three in the same plot, creating the agricultural revolution known as companion planting. The sisters benefit from one another and produce nutrient dense, storable food. I love this dish; it is delicious and has roots in Native American agricultural history.



Matt happily enjoying the three sisters salad.

### The Ingredients

- 2 Tbsp. olive oil
- 1 can of black or white beans (15-ounce)
- 1 can or 3 ears of corn (15-ounce)
- 1 small zucchini, chopped
- 1 tablespoon fresh cilantro, chopped
- 1 tablespoon lime juice (about ½ a lime)
- 1 jalapeño, seeds removed and finely chopped (optional)
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed or minced
- 1 tsp. cumin, paprika, and chili powder
- Salt and pepper to taste

#### Optional ingredients

- Red pepper flakes, green onions, cayenne pepper, butternut squash

### The Recipe

**Step One:** **Drain and rinse the beans** and corn with colander and place in a medium bowl

**Step Two:** Add diced cilantro and cubed squash to the bowl

**Step Three:** **Make a dressing** with olive oil, lime or lemon juice, garlic, salt and pepper

**Step Four:** Add dressing to the bowl and **mix gently**

**Step Five:** Enjoy! Please follow us on social media for more cooking tips [@foodforpeopleinc](https://www.instagram.com/foodforpeopleinc)



# The 27th Annual Letter Carriers' "Stamp Out Hunger" Food Drive



By **Allison Kenny**, Local Food Resources Coordinator

**E**ach year on the second Saturday in May, the National Association of Letter Carriers hosts a nationwide food drive to “Stamp out Hunger,” in partnership with local pantries and food banks. Saturday, May 11th marked the 27th annual Letter Carriers Food Drive - the largest single-day food drive in the nation, in which all residents of Humboldt County are asked to participate locally by leaving donations of nonperishable food items by their mailboxes. Our amazing local Letter Carriers Union partners closely with Food for People and our network of pantries to coordinate the pick-up and delivery of nonperishable food donations throughout the county. Carriers work on the front lines in our communities and get to know the people on their routes. They often witness first-hand the struggle of low income families. Thanks to the hard work of our local Letter Carriers Union, and the generosity of our community, this year over 30,000 pounds of food were collected throughout Humboldt County during the food drive.

The food received through this annual food drive helps Food for People replenish the shelves of our local food pantries, many of which have already distributed the donations gathered over the holidays. The food collected during the Letter Carriers Food Drive is therefore critical in our efforts to provide for low-income residents during the summer months, when school children are without the meal assistance provided during the school year and struggling families are in need of help. We used the blue, pre-printed donation bags in our outreach efforts, and worked with letter carriers to have them distributed to mailboxes throughout the county during the week leading up to the drive, to make it easier for folks to donate.



This was Fred's 27th year helping for the food drive.



Hardworking letter carriers' pick up and deliver thousands of pounds of donations countywide.



# THANK YOU!

Food for People would not be able to coordinate such a large-scale effort successfully without all of the people and organizations who contribute to our efforts year after year. We would like to acknowledge and thank Coast Central Credit Union for sponsoring our pre-printed bags and t-shirts for the event. We also want to thank Ming Tree Realtors, Ray's Food Place and Wildberries Marketplace for their sponsorship of the pre-printed donation bags. We would also like to thank Murphy's Cutten, Murphy's Sunnybrae, John's Cigars, and Country Club Market for providing their facilities for use as remote drop sites for letter carriers; and Eureka Natural Foods, Rainbow Storage, Pierson's, RMI Outdoors, Mad River Radio, 94.1 The Lounge, and KHUM for their help in promoting the event.

This effort by the National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC), with the help of rural carriers, other postal employees and numerous other volunteers, has resulted in the delivery of well over one million pounds of food in Humboldt since its inception more than twenty years ago. In Humboldt County, the food collected is used to supplement food boxes for low-income families and seniors. Food for People and its network of 17 pantries serve more than 12,000 Humboldt County children, seniors, and other individuals each month. All food collected stays in the community in which it was donated to help local individuals and families in need.



A volunteer helping sort food during the Stamp Out Hunger Event.

**Over 30,000 pounds of food was sorted by almost 100 volunteers!**

**Thank you to our sponsors for making this possible**



A Letter Carrier after a big food drop off.



# Volunteer Chefs

## Cooking for our Community

By **Adam Hayes**, Development & Communications Specialist

**D**eb had always wanted to be a volunteer chef with Food for People, and after retiring from the Humboldt County Office of Education, it felt like the perfect time. While growing up, both of Deb's Grandmothers instilled a love for cooking into her. She has fond memories of passionate afternoons with Nana baking pies and cookies while wearing aprons a little too big for her. Deb is all grown up, and now **she uses cooking as a way to stay in touch with who she is.** Monday through Friday, Food for People has volunteer chefs cook for our volunteers. It is a core component of how Food for People creates community around food.

When Deb first cooked at Food for People, she was nervous. It was a different kitchen, a different oven, and you don't quite have the same comfort you have while cooking at home. When Deb reflected on her first time cooking with Food for People she said: "It felt like I was on the television show Chopped." Our volunteer chefs can choose from the ingredients we have available, which is always nutritious high-quality food, however, if you come in thinking you're going to make lasagna and a salad, you might leave making minestrone soup and rice. All of the pressure Deb felt quickly went away when she came to realize she was cooking for very grateful people who were excited she was there. Deb got comfortable in our kitchen, became excited at the challenge of having an "ingredients first then recipe" mentality, and after a couple of weeks, she was at home.

Now Deb is an integral part of the **Food for People family.** While cooking Deb says hello to volunteers, chats it up with the staff, and she hums joyful tunes as she floats through the kitchen. Deb says that she has become a better cook since she started cooking with Food for People. From her eggplant lasagna to her legendary cashew cheese, all of Deb's plant-based recipes reflect Food for People's mission of increasing access to nutritious foods. Outside of playing with recipes and getting to work with our amazing staff and volunteers, there is one thing that Deb finds more satisfying than anything, and that is...

**“There is nothing better in this world than helping other people.”**

When talking with volunteers, one thing that always comes up is how much they appreciate the lunches. One of my favorite parts of Food for People is when staff and volunteers break bread together and bond over a good meal. Coming together over food is what makes Food for People feel like a family. If you are interested in joining our family, Food for People is always looking for people who want to become a volunteer chef. Please email Paloma Herrera at [pherrera@foodforpeople.org](mailto:pherrera@foodforpeople.org) or call (707) 445-3166 ext. 310 for more information for how to get involved. In the words of Deb's Grandma **“Mangia!”** which is Italian and means “To eat!”



**Deb cooking lunch at our Eureka location.**

## 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:

Alice Hackett  
Beverly Allen  
Don  
Don Wise  
Dr. Richard Wolf  
Dustin Trabue  
Evelyn Biasca Brom  
Fred Jewett  
Fred Oliveria  
Harold & Jean Fisher  
HSU Football  
James Carlco "Bob Coffey"  
Jane Foster  
Jason, John, and Wendi  
Jay & Laurey Sullivan  
Jeannie Stem  
Judy Giannini

Laurey and Jay Sullivan  
Lenny Escarda  
Mary Pedley  
Mary Wade  
Margery Williams  
Olaf W. Roberg  
Patrick Riggs  
Tommie Shivley "RIP"  
Rose Losa  
Sughra Ali

### In Honor Of:

Corey Tipton  
Emily Siegel  
Jason S. Hood  
Jack & Jerry Nachtigal  
Laura Simpson  
Lew Litzky





Allison gleaning cauliflower at Deep Seeded Farm.

## Gleaning 101

### Local Food Saved

By **Allison Kenney**,  
Local Food Resources Coordinator

**H**ere on the North Coast of California, days are getting longer, the sun is shining more, and the rainfall is finally starting to taper off. Local farmers are beginning to till, amend, and prepare their fields for planting, start seeds in the greenhouse, and plan for the bountiful growing season ahead. As local farm and garden production begins to ramp up, so does Food for People's Gleaning Program.

Every year in the United States, an estimated 52.4 million tons of food goes to the landfill. Another 10.1 million tons of produce remains unharvested, left out in the field. In any farming community, even ours, there is an element of unpredictability that results in excess product. In a country where one in seven Americans is considered food insecure, our Gleaning Program attempts to bridge the gap between hunger and potential excess in our local food system.

Redirecting fresh local produce to those in need rather than the compost pile, is not only a solution to the issues of food waste and hunger; it is a way to build region-

al independence in a broken food system. Providing our program participants with gleaned produce supports the health and wellness of our neighborhoods and communities by increasing access to nutrient-dense, fresh food for those who may not otherwise be able to afford it. Our program also helps to improve understanding and awareness of eating locally and seasonally and ultimately establishes community around food.

We partner with dozens of incredibly generous local farmers, orchards, and ranchers, who donate fresh, local, and usually organic items for our programs. Last fiscal year we collected more than 27,000 pounds of produce from Humboldt County farmers' fields through our gleaning initiative. These donations are obtained in a couple of ways: groups of Food for People employees and volunteers venture out to manually harvest leftover vegetables that would otherwise be tilled in; or unsold produce left over after farmers' markets or CSA pick-ups is collected and transported back to our warehouse for distribution in one or more of our 18 hunger relief programs. Some farmers grow extra with the intention of donating it to Food for People.

Humboldt's generally mild climate makes it an ideal place to garden and grow food; our county is home to a vibrant and

ever-growing society of backyard gardeners and homesteaders. With their generous support, we gleaned an additional 27,000 pounds of produce last fiscal year from more than 100 individual backyard gardeners through our "Plant a Row" program. The success of Plant a Row relies on gardeners who share their excess harvest with Food for People. Some even designate an entire section of their garden to be harvested and donated to Food for People to serve seniors, families, and children in need.

Apple, pear, and plum trees are especially plentiful in our region, and oftentimes these trees produce more fruit than residents can make use of. Do you have excess fruit on your trees? Donating this abundance, rather than letting it go to waste, is a great example of an easy way to contribute to our Gleaning Program and ensure people in need have access to fresh, seasonal fruits. Food for People can provide additional assistance to donors when possible, including volunteers to help harvest the bounty, if the donation is too large or donors are unable to do so themselves.

For more information on our gleaning program, contact Allison Kenney at (707)445-3166 ext. 312 or at [gleaning@foodforpeople.org](mailto:gleaning@foodforpeople.org). Thank you for being part of the solution!



## Board of Directors

Carol Vander Meer, *President*  
 Martha Spencer, *Vice President*  
 Lew Litzky, *Treasurer*  
 Nick Vogel, *Secretary*  
 Amber Madrone  
 Bill Daniel  
 Dean Hart  
 Dorina Espinoza  
 Edie Jessup  
 Marina Cortez-Hash  
 Mark Murgia  
 Jerome J. Simone

## Staff

Adam Hayes  
*Development & Communication Specialist*  
 Anne Holcomb  
*Executive Director*  
 Carly Robbins  
*Development Director*  
 Carrie Smith  
*Child Nutrition Programs Coordinator*  
 Corey Tipton  
*Business Resources Manager*  
 Deborah Waxman  
*Director of Programs*  
 Erin Tharp  
*Choice Pantry Coordinator*  
 Frank DiLorenzo  
*Driver*  
 Heidi McHugh  
*Community Education & Outreach Coordinator*  
 Hailey Mohland  
*Pantry Network Coordinator*  
 José Mendez  
*Warehouse Assistant*  
 Juan Miranda  
*Bilingual CalFresh Outreach Specialist*  
 Judy Langley  
*Fundraising Assistant*  
 Karen Asbury  
*Inventory Database Manager*  
 Lori Rudebock  
*Finance Director*  
 Matt Drummond  
*Nutrition Education Coordinator*  
 Michael Regan  
*Logistics Manager*  
 Michelle Dedekam  
*Warehouse Distribution Specialist*  
 Michael Barnes  
*Senior & Homebound Programs Coordinator*  
 Mikayla Godman  
*Receptionist*  
 Mike Seeber  
*Mobile Produce Pantry Coordinator*  
 Paloma Herrera  
*Direct Services Manager*  
 Tim Crosby  
*Operations Manager*

# A BIG Advocacy win

## SSI & CalFresh

By **Heidi McHugh**,  
 Community Education & Outreach Coordinator

The phone calls to Food for People's CalFresh Outreach team began last September. At first, it was a few each month, by January it was three or four per day. The callers have questions about the upcoming expansion of CalFresh (formerly Food Stamps) benefits to Californians receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI). This change was included in the 2018-2019 state budget and will be implemented on June 1, 2019. The Humboldt County Department of Health & Human Services began accepting applications on May 1, 2019. The callers are all elated, **some in slight disbelief** that they will finally be eligible for the nutrition benefits of CalFresh. For many of them, this extra money for food will be life-changing.

SSI is a program administered by the Social Security Administration that provides a very basic income to older adults and people with disabilities with no or very limited other income or resources. Approximately 8.2 million Americans rely on SSI to pay for their basic needs like food, housing, and medicine. Most SSI recipients either can't work due to a disability, or are seniors receiving very little or no Social Security income due to limited work history in the traditional labor market. Women who never worked outside the home, farm workers, domestic workers, and others who were paid "off the books" are often SSI recipients. More than two-thirds of elderly adults receiving SSI payments are women. There are about 6,000 SSI recipients in Humboldt County; the majority receive the benefit because of a disability.

The maximum federal payment for an individual on SSI is \$771 a month. Some states, like California, kick in a small supplement to make up for the higher cost of living. The maximum federal benefit of \$771 a month is just 74% of today's federal poverty line (FPL). The State Supplemental Payment (SSP) is California's supplemental payment to recipients of SSI. Current levels leave California SSI recipients receiving the maximum combined state and federal benefit living at just 89% of the federal poverty line. A person with earnings at 100% FPL receives \$12,060 annually. According to the California Budget & Policy Center, a single adult in Humboldt County must earn at least \$22,792

annually to meet all basic needs. Those surviving on SSI alone fall far short of meeting their needs. After paying for housing, they often have to choose between medicine, food, and basic hygiene items. On average, 35% to 45% of the households Food for People serves each month contain an SSI recipient. Many live alone and report charitable feeding operations like ours as their only sources of food.

Why are some of the poorest and most vulnerable Californians not already eligible for CalFresh? California's "cash-out" policy started in 1974 when the federal government began the combined federal-state SSI/SSP program. At that time, states were allowed to increase their state supplementary payment instead of administering food stamps to SSI/SSP recipients. California opted for this "cash-out" policy and increased its monthly SSP grant. Over time, the SSI and SSP grants failed to keep up with the rising costs of living, even with annual Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA). From 2009 to 2016 the COLA was suspended for SSP as a means to address the Great Recession. Even today SSI/SSP recipients whose sole source of income is SSI/SSP are living at 90% of the federal poverty line.

The policy began failing to meet the food needs of these Californians in the 1990s when costs of housing and healthcare began to skyrocket. Advocates like Edie Jessup, a member of Food for People's Board of Directors, have been working for decades to reverse this policy. "This major change in state law to allow elders and persons with disabilities who rely on SSI to be eligible for SNAP/CalFresh is a great win for food equity and access by some of our most vulnerable neighbors. I have been working on making this happen in California for over twenty five years. Every other state has fixed the problem, and now California will allow SSI recipients to get food they are eligible for, improving their health. Additionally, it will help Food for People, as nearly 45% of our hungry clients are on SSI. Now these Californians can shop at farmers markets' and grocery stores. It is an economic win for our county, as more money will be used to buy food. Thanks to all the state advocates for finally making this food justice change!" For help applying for CalFresh, contact Heidi at [hugh@foodforpeople.org](mailto:hugh@foodforpeople.org) or call (707)445-3166 ext. 308.







Jan and Lynne, co-coordinators of the Arcata Food Pantry, with Hailey posing happily in their new storage room.

## Satellite Story

### Our Local Food System

By **Hailey Mohland**, Pantry Network Coordinator

The week of the third Thursday of each month is lovingly referred to as Pantry Week here at Food for People. Over the course of four days, I ride along with our delivery driver, Frank, to deliver pallets of commodities, produce, and other foods to our network of 17 pantries located throughout Humboldt County. These pantries range from large to small, in locations as far as Orick, Hoopa, and Garberville. The entire Pantry Network serves an average of 1,500 households per month, not including the approximately 1,200 households that receive food from our on site Eureka Choice Pantry.

We begin on Monday morning. Our warehouse staff has been busy crating and packing the produce to be delivered for the day, as they will continue to do so with the help of volunteers for the rest of the week. On Tuesday we traverse the winding mountain roads to eastern Humboldt, and then end the day at the Trinity Baptist Church where the Arcata food pantry is located. Wednesday is our busiest day of deliveries, with five stops between Blue Lake and Garberville, equaling 170 miles round trip. Finally, on Thursday we visit the Eel River Valley and then follow the river up to Bridgeville to round out a long but gratifying week.

I had the opportunity to visit with Lynne and Jan, co-coordinators of the Arcata pantry, located at the Arcata Trinity Baptist

Church, during a distribution recently. They were both very excited to show me the new systems they had put in place to make their distributions run more smoothly. Previously they had stored their food in a tiny closet that was entirely separate from the room where the people they serve shopped for food. It was simply not enough space, and it was difficult to get commodities in and out of the room (I can say this from direct experience – those deliveries were a challenge!). Over the course of several weeks, along with assistance from the church community, Lynne and Jan were able to move the entire inventory to a room adjacent to where people shop for food, which has changed the way their distributions run completely. Lynne told me, “It just flows now. It’s so much better,” and it’s evident that the seniors, children, and families they serve feel the same way. I loved shadowing Lynne for a while and witnessing her pride for their program, which helps to feed somewhere between 150 and 200 households a month.

Each pantry in our network responds sensitively to the unique issues that face their diverse communities. Many are run by volunteer coordinators dedicated to serving those in their communities. Although each pantry is very different and may seem to operate completely separate from one another, all of the coordinators from across the county will join in an annual Pantry Summit in June to learn from each other, share ideas, and work together toward fighting hunger here in Humboldt. The heart and soul that coordinators pour into their individual pantries is inspiring, and Food for People’s gratitude for their service is immense. Would you like to know more about the closest pantry to you? Find distribution days and times at [www.foodforpeople.org](http://www.foodforpeople.org).





*“Because of your help, we have fresh vegetables.”*



Volunteers Teresa and Honey unloading food for the McKinleyville Senior Distribution.

## Senior Distribution

### Food for Seniors

By **Adam Hayes**, Development & Communications Specialist

**W**e rolled the windows down, and a warm breeze filled the van as we approached a building made of chocolate brown wood. “Here we are.” Michael, the Senior & Homebound Programs Coordinator said. I stepped down from the van that had been towering over other cars on our way to a McKinleyville Senior Distribution. I had never been to a Food for People Senior Distribution before, but I did know that we distribute more than 8,500 bags and boxes per year, and today we would feed 50 people in McKinleyville.

After trying 10 of his 20 keys, Michael got the door to the pantry open. I opened the blinds to let light in, and the room instantly felt cozy and warm. Carrie, a fellow staff member, began unfolding big wooden tables. Michael and I started bringing in crates of pears, carrots, bread, potatoes, apples, and eggs. Two volunteers named Teresa and Honey arrived. Teresa is a powerful force - you can feel the energy radiating off of her - and Honey is the type of person you instantly feel comfortable around. Teresa and Honey have been volunteering with Food for People for years. I asked Teresa why she started volunteering. Without missing a beat she said, “The door was open, I walked through, and I never looked back.” We all worked together to finish unloading what seemed to

be endless crates of high-quality food. As the last crate of carrots was set on the table, we were ready to start the distribution.

I noticed a line forming outside. The program recipients were hugging, smiling, and laughing. I wondered whether we were at a food distribution or a gathering of old friends. What I soon came to realize was, it was both. I went outside under the warm sun to help Michael distribute food. We carried boxes filled with canned foods and cheese to people’s cars. With every person I helped, we shared a genuine human connection. Every person’s story was different. Some had just lost a loved one and were having a hard time covering meals. For others, their retirement didn’t end up working out how they had planned. Whatever the reason, each person was grateful. That day we received countless thank you’s to us and the donors who make this work possible.

The afternoon flew by. Thanks to our donors, we were able to help seniors walk away with a bag of high-quality produce. I was told again and again how the food makes them feel healthy and more alive. The glow of gratitude was a feeling that stuck with me all day - a feeling I hope I can share with you. We are very grateful for our work. Getting to help people creates one of the most fulfilling lives we can live. It was powerful to share stories, laughter, and most importantly, food with each other. After all the food was packed, and Michael and I pulled off onto the summer road I looked at him and asked,

***Can I go again next month?***