

FISHline

News from GHP FISH Food Bank & Community Services

Fall 2023



Photo & story by Kathy Cummings

Driver Dennis Brown picks up 10-15 boxes on his morning run to Albertsons.

This team really delivers

Early every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, GHP FISH volunteer drivers enter the back doors and loading docks of our community's grocery stores.

They aren't shopping like you and I do. Instead, they check each department—meat, deli, bakery, produce and select freezers—for items designated for the food bank. Then they wheel carts full of donations to their personal vehicles and load the food into "banana boxes," the hefty, thick cardboard boxes essential to everyday business at the food bank.

"When I do my run to Albertsons I can pack 10 to 15 boxes each time," volunteer Dennis Brown explained. "You never know what you will get, but it brings a smile knowing this food

goes right onto the shelves. It's a godsend for our clients and it's great to see support from the grocery workers."

Those boxes add up. This year, from January through August, volunteer drivers picked up 147,594 pounds of food from Fred Meyer, Albertsons, Safeway, Target, Costco and (once a week) Metropolitan Market.

"These drivers are the backbone of our operation, but they do their work so early they are hardly noticed," said Sigurros Welborn, GHP FISH Volunteer Support Manager. "Drivers use their own vehicles, gas and, in many cases strength, to get these donations to our building."

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Report From Ron

Growing to meet new challenges

A lot has happened during the first full year in our new facility.

With this larger new building, our wonderful volunteers and our generous community have enabled us to meet new challenges beyond what was possible in our previous facility. At the same time, continuing inflation has significantly increased the number of neighbors needing assistance.

The new monthly food drive at Fred Meyer on the third Friday and Saturday of the month and the Safeway food drive on the first Friday and Saturday of the month have been great helps in meeting the growing demand for food. The same is true of the Gig Harbor Food Project, with participating neighborhoods filling green bags with groceries for delivery to the food bank every other month.

Our volunteers continue to be the heart of the organization. And as GHP FISH continues to grow, they're stepping into new roles that give us great flexibility.

Sigurros Welborn has left the board of directors to join our part-time staff as Volunteer Support Manager. She has extensive experience working with another food bank and has formal nonprofit education.

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Drivers are unsung heroes

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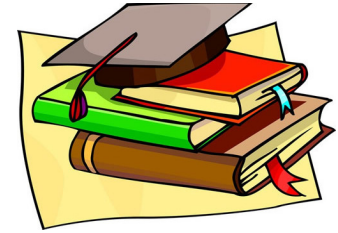
For large loads from Target and Costco, drivers use our blue FISH van, but the weekly donation from the Emergency Food Network (EFN) in Tacoma requires our new box truck, which accommodates up to six pallets of donations. So far this year EFN has provided 70,094 pounds of food for our shelves.

Once the loads reach the Food Bank, loading dock volunteers manage the banana boxes with strong backs, sturdy carts and the pallet jack. Teamwork and camaraderie lighten the loads a bit. Our new building's covered loading dock makes the work less burdensome than before.

Loading dock volunteers also keep busy accepting deliveries from community food drives, as well as walk-up window donations of used clothing and household goods.

In all, there are 24 drivers and dock workers. These unsung heroes contribute immensely to keeping our shelves stocked and our clients fed.

"They get up early, always go that extra mile if we have special food drive pick-ups, and they always stand ready to help with our annual Toy Drive," Sigurros said. "It's wonderful to see the spirit of hard work and dedication among this team. Without them, the Food Bank just couldn't serve our clients with the variety we have now."



Education Aid makes impact

Congratulations to two Education Aid students who achieved major milestones this summer.

A young man we assisted with community college expenses has earned his Associate in Science degree and now has a full scholarship to Washington State University. He plans to major in medicine, and deeply appreciates the support he received from GHP FISH.

A career-change woman made our day with a "Dearest FISH" note expressing her sincere gratitude for financial assistance with her PSI Real Estate Broker exam: "That will in time allow me to help others and have self-sufficiency. God Bless Always."

Thank you, GHP FISH donors, for enabling Education Aid to help local students on their journeys to self-sufficiency.

When clients need help paying for books, equipment, certification exams or other post-secondary education expenses (excluding tuition), they can call an Education Aid counselor at 253-851-8800.

GHP FISH Mission: Neighbors helping neighbors in need with food and other assistance as they move toward self-sufficiency.

RMD gift could pay off at income tax time

Consider doing well at tax time by doing good if your retirement account has a required minimum distribution (RMD) this year. You may reduce your taxable income by taking up to \$100,000 of your RMD as a qualified

charitable distribution (QCD) to a non-profit such as GHP FISH. To qualify, your IRA custodian must make out the check to GHP FISH Food Bank. Be sure to check with your tax adviser and get a receipt.

Shelf Stories: What our clients say

Volunteers hear the nicest things. For instance:

A woman said she loved being able to find clothes and supplies she needed because "everything is always so clean and nice here."

Another client, who was unhoused, said how much he appreciated FISH because he could always find nice people here and "they seem to always want to help out."

Serving with grandma hooked her on helping

Once a week, when her Harbor Ridge Middle School day ended, Josie Behrens would head straight for the GHP FISH Food Bank to volunteer alongside her grandma and the other young people who staff the late Wednesday afternoon shift.

She was hooked. "It spiraled into a lot of community service," she said. In high school she racked up 445 volunteer hours with us and many other non-profits, and graduated from Peninsula as a 2023 Student of Distinction.

"Josie did everything I asked of her," said her grandmother, Marilyn Behrens. "She's emblematic of the teens who work here. We ask a lot of our teen workers, even more than of many of our adults. We grow leaders."

It was hard work. Josie recalls "going home so tired. But it was the highlight of my week. Getting to do it with my



Volunteer Spotlight

grandma was really special."

It also was eye-opening to see the need so close to home. "A lot of people, even in communities like ours, need a ton of help," Josie said.

"Sometimes it was someone I'd know or see in the hallways at school. I learned that need exists, but also how to be courteous and handle it with discretion. We all need help sometimes," she added.

Grandma Marilyn believes it's good for kids to come face to face with people who are less fortunate. The students also give her hope. "They're so patient and non-judgmental.

"I read recently that we don't need to raise future food bank volunteers; we need to raise poverty abolishers,"



Photo & story by Sue John

Josie and her Grandma Marilyn

Marilyn added. "I hope this will energize them.

Josie is clearly energized. Now studying elementary education at the University of San Diego, her advice is to walk in love and always give back to others. She's had a good example: "My grandma definitely is someone to look up to."

For information on middle and high school volunteer opportunities and ways that younger children can help, please contact our Volunteer Support Manager at sigurrosw@ghpfish.org.

Growing to meet great needs

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With the addition of Sigurros, we now have 1.75 FTE employees to provide increased support to our growing number of volunteers.

She will expand and build on the groundwork laid by long-time Volunteer Coordinator and board member Jeannie Rodenberg, who now will focus on working with our wonderful student volunteers. Thank you, Jeannie!

There are other board changes too. Jasmine Ragan is our new Financial Aid Coordinator, and Jennifer Clark is now our Board Secretary. Like the other directors on our working board, all are actively engaged in the organization's operation.

Our Gig Harbor community is unique in so many ways, but one of the most significant is how it takes care of its neighbors. Thank you for being who you are.

Ron Coen, Board President



Sigurros Welborn

It's a great time to get involved

October thru December is a busy and exciting time at GHP FISH Food Bank. Contact our Volunteer Support Manager (Sigurrosw@ghpfish.org) about these and other ways you can get in the holiday spirit by helping us help our neighbors.

Toy Drive - Help sort toys, set up, host distribution days, etc.

Drivers - Pick up food & toys from local drives

Store Food Drives - Hand out flyers and collect food at Safeway and Fred Meyer



**Gig Harbor Peninsula FISH
Food Bank & Community Services**

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Thank you for your support. You can give now by mailing a check, dropping off your gift during open hours or clicking the **Donate Now** button on our website.



HOURS

MONDAY

9:30 AM – 3 PM

TUESDAY – CLOSED

WED - THU

9:30 AM – 5:30 PM

FRIDAY

9:30 AM – 3 PM

SATURDAY/SUNDAY

CLOSED

**CLOSED FEDERAL
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