
FISHline

News from GHP FISH Food Bank & Community Services



Spring 2023



Photo & story by Kathy Cummings

Part-time employees Bill Mumford and Pam Leazer are the Food Bank's first paid staff.

Keeping us well connected

Still enjoying minor celebrity status from the public announcement of her new executive director job at GHP FISH, Pam Leazer is approaching the role thoughtfully.

"This is a big change for an organization that has run on all-volunteer labor for 47 years," Pam said in a recent interview. "I hope everyone recognizes that GHP FISH is still led and run by volunteers."

"My position is all about communication and organization. In the old building, everyone bumped elbows and knew everything happening in the building. The close proximity enabled volunteers to talk about issues and come up with solutions together."

"Now, volunteers working the

warehouse, loading dock or picking up from grocery stores might never even get to the front counter to chat with front desk volunteers. The front desk folks are so busy they might not even make it inside the grocery aisles. That's where I come in—to establish lines of open communication so we all know what is happening."

Pam's extensive non-profit career experience and leadership in our capital campaign also help shape her view on donor relations. "Part of my job is to address the future needs of the organization and position us for decades to come."

Pam will be, as she says, "connected at the hip" with the volunteer leaders and Operations Manager Bill Mumford,

Continued on page 2

Report From Ron

Needs just keep growing

Now that Spring is here, things are growing—they're not the same as just a few weeks ago. That is exactly how it is at GHP FISH Food Bank. Hoping we were about finished with the pandemic and the economic downturn, we now find that the number of neighbors needing assistance is growing faster than ever.

In March, 619 families with 1,447 members came to us needing food, financial assistance and clothing—the highest number we have ever served.

Significant increases in local rents have caused more people to use the food bank. This is especially true for those on fixed incomes. Fortunately, the new building is making it possible to deal with the increased need. Thanks to our generous donors and incredible volunteers, we are able to help our neighbors.

Increased shopping, storage and refrigeration space has given our volunteers the tools to meet the surge in demand. The new building was designed to help us meet the unexpected, and it's working.

Continued on page 2

Our mission: Neighbors helping neighbors in need with food and other assistance as they move toward self-sufficiency.

Food drives make helping easy, fun

Regular food drives help GHP FISH avoid a seasonal slump in donations. Thanks to our store hosts and volunteers, here are some easy options:

- Donate to monthly food drives at Safeway (first Friday and Saturday of each month) and Fred Meyer (third Friday and Saturday).
- Give from home through the new Gig Harbor Food Project (<http://gigharborfoodproject.com>). Sign up to be a food donor or neighborhood coordinator and help this grassroots program grow.
- Help your letter carrier Stamp Out Hunger and place a bag of non-perishable food by your mailbox on May 13.



Volunteers and donors match growing needs

Continued from page 1

Community support helps us meet challenges our neighbors face. This includes the new Fred Meyer food drive on the third Friday and Saturday of the month, which joins the ongoing Safeway food drive on the first Friday and Saturday; the Gig Harbor Food Project, the Letter Carriers Food Drive and the efforts of many other organizations and individuals.

We hope you will join us on May 23 for our annual meeting, which will be held at Chapel Hill Church. This will be a fun time for volunteers and donors to celebrate our accomplishments this past year and to look at the year ahead.

Thanks for what you have made possible!

Ron Coen
Board President

Meet our new board members

GHP FISH welcomes three new members to its board of directors: Marie Sipple, secretary; Richel Falk, fundraising/grants coordinator, and Sigurros Wellborn, Food Bank staffing coordinator.

They're all hands-on volunteers and experienced professionals. Go to the About Us tab on our website and click on the director's name for a brief bio.

Many thanks to retired board members Kevin Cummings, Donna Fisher and Carrie Selby for their service.

Part-time staff, full-time impact

Continued from page 1

who works side by side with volunteers in the grocery store and warehouse. He holds the only other part-time paid position at GHP FISH and is quick to say: "I love my job."

Bill has been instrumental not only in organizing the workflow in the new building but in reaching out to provide food support to other organizations like Communities in Schools, Food Backpacks 4 Kids and Middy Rotary's little food pantries.

"We are not just helping our clients but serving the community as a whole," he said.

Bill realizes the importance of the social connections among volunteers as we have tripled our grocery space and expanded the warehouse to five times its previous size. He's especially proud of our volunteers' commitment to treating each client with dignity, respect and genuine care.

Together, he and Pam seek to support those volunteers any way they can.

Shelf Story: What's behind special smile?

As I was stocking the grocery shelves, I said hello to an older woman and her daughter who were shopping. We chatted for a moment sharing a laugh. Later, walking to the front desk, I spied the woman's daughter standing alone smiling. I asked, "What brings that special smile to your face today?"

Continuing to beam she replied: "I was really worried about my mother living alone in her home. But I bring her here, she gets to shop, make her own choices and you all make it such a pleasant experience. I'm just so happy. You'll never know what a huge difference it makes in both our lives." — Kathy C., Wednesday morning volunteer



Volunteer Spotlight

A great place to give back

One of our valued volunteers, Marilyn M., is moving to California. As a parting gift, she shared her perspective on volunteering at GHP FISH. Thank you, Marilyn—and all our volunteers!

In 2021, during COVID, I was looking for places to volunteer my time. I wanted a place that supported and gave back to the community.

Gig Harbor Peninsula FISH Food Bank immediately came to mind. Ron and Jan Coen have done an amazing job creating, building and growing this wonderful, caring, kind and helpful organization. It has tremendous community support, both with volunteers and donors.

I knew this would be a good place for me, and it didn't disappoint. I look forward to Wednesday mornings at GHP FISH. We have a great group of kind, caring folks who want to help make a difference in people's lives.



I've made many wonderful friends and am grateful for my experience here.

I help stock food on shelves, in fridges and freezers. I'm one of the Floor Shoppers who help clients locate items as they shop. I also work at the front desk to enroll new clients and check in return clients.

Other volunteers pick up food at local markets, or unload, weigh and check in

donated food and other items. Financial Aid volunteers help neighbors who need assistance for rent, utilities and other necessities.

GHP FISH also has a boutique that provides donated clothing and household items to shoppers free of charge. Volunteers in this area catalog and display the items.

GHP FISH volunteers help with food drives and fund raisers throughout the community, and participate in events like the Maritime Gig Festival in June and the annual toy drive during the holidays. Others help with technology, finance and other tasks behind the scenes.

There's something for everyone. If you're looking for a place to volunteer and make a difference in our community, I highly recommend GHP FISH.

Ed. note: For more information, contact the volunteer coordinator: jeannier@ghpfish.org

Save the dates

Tuesday, May 23

Annual meeting and luncheon to thank and honor volunteers.
Chapel Hill Church, 12-2 pm

Saturday, June 3

Wave and cheer on our entries in Maritime Gig Parade. Downtown Gig Harbor, 10 am

Questions about these or other happenings? Contact ghpfishfoodbank@gmail.com

Young volunteer is a big help

On the first Friday of each month, Phoenix W. joins other volunteers inside the Gig Harbor Safeway. He asks shoppers if they would like to purchase items for the GHP FISH Food Bank and offers them a list of needed items.

At the end of the day, the high school sophomore helps pack up the hundreds of donated food items and helps unload them back at our Food Bank facility. "Having Phoenix is a tremendous help," says Amy Gartlan, food drive coordinator.

Phoenix appreciates gaining experience outside his comfort zone and talking with shoppers.



He advises others wanting to get involved: "It's an opportunity that you won't get often, and it's not a difficult one. It's also a good thing to get on your resume if that's what you want it for."



Gig Harbor Peninsula FISH
Food Bank & Community Services
PO Box 154
Gig Harbor, WA 98335

Food Bank Location (no mail)
4303 Burnham Drive
Gig Harbor, WA 98332

Contact us:
Office: (253) 858-6179
Financial Aid (253) 851-8800
ghpfishfoodbank@gmail.com

Inside this FISHline

Executive director is a "first" for GHP FISH
Ron Coen highlights how we're growing
Food drives make it fun and easy to give
Volunteer reflects on finding her place to serve

For more news & information:

Visit our website (www.ghpfish.org) or click on the QR code.
Follow us on Facebook ([Gig Harbor Peninsula FISH](#)).
Subscribe on YouTube ([GHP FISH Food Bank](#))

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
HOLIDAYS**

To remove your name from this mailing list or share your email address, please call (253) 858-6179 or email ghpfishmedia@gmail.com