



ISSAQUAH

Food & Clothing Bank

S I N C E 1 9 7 1

Fall-Winter 2022

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Executive Report

by Laura Skelton, Interim Executive Director

Wow, what a year it's been!

When I arrived at the Issaquah Food & Clothing Bank in early February, we were still navigating the COVID Omicron wave. While we cannot yet say we are in a post-COVID world, more and more things have begun returning to "normal" this year.

We have resumed most volunteer activities, and boy are we grateful for our volunteers! We have also brought back several in-person events that help us feel more connected with our community, like Recipe for Hope and the Issaquah Turkey Trot.

As I reflect on the past year, one big theme comes to mind. While



there is an increasingly large need for our services, our amazing community continues to come together to serve generously!

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Year-End Giving

by Bonnie DeCaro-Monahan, Development Director

Your giving literally changes — and saves — the lives of families, children, seniors, and others in our community.

Our economic climate is a treacherous one for those with income limitations. We are seeing substantially more people accessing our services for the first

time due to drastic increases in the cost of basic necessities like food, housing, and gas.

This, combined with decreased food donations, creates significant challenges to keeping healthy food and vital resources accessible to everyone who comes to us.

We are so grateful to everyone who has already included us in their year-end giving.

To give, please visit issaquahfoodbank.org.

Thank you for nourishing and nurturing others through your generosity!

Executive Report, cont'd

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You have probably all seen and heard how increasing prices for everything from rent to food are affecting people. We see this in real time at the food bank. In January, we provided food for just over 600 unique households. By October, we were serving 800 households per month. Sadly, this trend does not show signs of stopping anytime soon.

And yet, every time I start to worry that we will not be able to serve everyone, YOU — our volunteers and donors — show up for us in a big way. Just last month, 200 volunteers contributed over 1,500 hours of service — and that doesn't even include our big Turkey Trot event on Thanksgiving morning. And when we told our community that more families than ever had signed up for our Holiday Gift

program, our donors completely met the need!

Here are just a few examples of what we have achieved together this year so far:

- **Over 11,000 Power Packs (weekend food packs) have been distributed to students in the Issaquah School District.**
- **Holiday gift support was provided for 1,428 children and counting — up 20% from 2021.**
- **Over 700 new and like-new winter coats were distributed to ensure everyone stays warm.**

But, numbers don't really tell the full story of the work that all of us do together. We are honored to be able to provide individualized support to those who need

more than food — whether that means providing a warm blanket and essential clothing items, getting replacement identification cards, or assisting with applying for DSHS benefits. We would not be able to do this work without dedicated volunteers and donors who believe in the power of collective compassion.

As we head into the new year, it is hard to predict what will happen with the economy. However, I can predict what will happen with IFCB. Together, we will continue to do our utmost to meet the needs of our community. And we will continue to be deeply grateful to you for partnering with us in this work.

I wish you a joyful and peaceful holiday season!



“The Issaquah Food & Clothing Bank is more than just a place that provides food and clothes; it’s a place of hope, faith, and love for everyone.”

— Guadalupe, Issaquah Food & Clothing Bank recipient

Mark Your Calendars!



HOLIDAY CLOSURES

Before/After New Year's Day

Friday, December 30

Monday, January 2

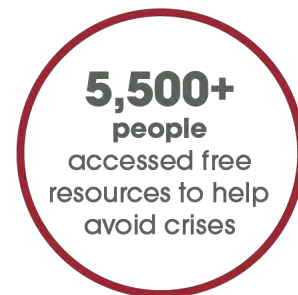
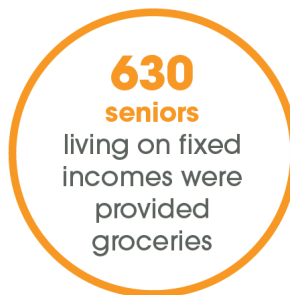
Martin Luther King Day

Monday, January 16

Presidents Day

Monday, February 20

Through Fall 2022, Thanks to You...



We're Hiring!

Are you or someone you know looking for ways to make work more meaningful? We have several opportunities to join our amazing team!

We're currently hiring for:

- **Executive Director**
- **Client Advocate**
- **Volunteer Coordinator**

We offer great benefits, including 401(k) matching and the privilege of working with the most amazing community!

Visit our website or contact Interim Executive Director Laura Skelton for more information: lauras@issaquahfoodbank.org.

Help us spread the word to find just the right people!



Needs Increase, But Food Donations Are Down

As inflation takes its toll, we are facing a troubling dichotomy. More and more people are seeking out our resources — many for the first time — and our food donations continue to drop.

Compared with this same time period in 2021, our food services have increased by 17% while our food donations have decreased by 25%. The consequence is increased hard costs to the food bank and decreased

product availability to those who rely on us to keep food on the table.

Expanded support through our Issaquah Sammamish Food Project and our regular donation drives at our warehouse is vital to restoring a sustainable balance and ensuring that sufficient levels of nutritious food remain readily accessible to everyone who comes to us for help. *Learn more about food donations below.*



Monthly food donations
decreased 25%



The cost of food
increased 13%



Food services
increased 17%

Donation Drives

More people are seeking our services, so your support collecting items from the Priority Needs List on our website is **more important than ever**. We have multiple ways you can do this:

Food & Toiletries Drives

Bring priority needs items (from the list at <https://bit.ly/ifcb-donate-food>) to our warehouse at AtWork (930 7th Ave NW, Issaquah, WA 98027) on these specific days/times:

- Thursday, January 12: 1:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.
- Thursday, January 26: 1:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.
- Saturday, February 11: 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
- Thursday, February 23: 1:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Issaquah-Sammamish Food Project

Start a bi-monthly collection in your neighborhood or join an existing one! Contact theberries@gmail.com. Learn more at issaquahsammamishfoodproject.org.

Plan a Food or Toiletries Drive

Contact operations@issaquahfoodbank.org for details and to ensure we are able to accept your collected donations.

Our Priority Needs List



**You can also remember
Issaquah Food & Clothing
Bank in your will**

For more information, please contact Brooke Wiles, Donor Engagement Officer, brooke@issaquahfoodbank.org

Addressing Youth Food Insecurity

By Bonnie DeCaro-Monahan, Development Director

When people don't get enough food or are limited to inexpensive, low-nutrient foods, there are serious implications on one's physical, psychological, and behavioral health. In children, this includes delayed development, risk of chronic illness, and behavioral problems like hyperactivity, anxiety, and aggression.

As of June 2022, 1,800 children in the Issaquah School District were receiving free and reduced-price meals. This doesn't include those children whose families earn incomes over the program limits yet still under the cost of living.

We are currently serving 6,000 people each year and over 30% of those are children.

Because we understand the gravity of childhood food insecurity, we've developed programs to ensure that children have access to nutritious food at times when free and reduced-price school lunches are not available.

Our Summer Lunch program in 2022 saw nearly 1,900 visits to our food bank over the long school break. Our Lunch for the Break program serves approximately 400 children over Winter, Mid-Winter, and Spring breaks.

Our fastest growing program is Power Packs. From September to December 2022, we created 635 packs every two weeks — up 25% from the same time in 2021.

The Power Packs program is designed to combat week-



Issaquah Food & Clothing Bank

POWER PACKS

end hunger and ensure that children return to school on Monday well nourished and ready to focus and fully enjoy school. Power Packs provide children with kid-friendly breakfast, lunch, and snack foods that they can prepare themselves if needed.

Teachers and school nurses help connect students with their school counselor to pick up a discreet bag that is placed in their backpack each Friday, sending them home with what they need to stay healthy.



Planning for Winter Weather

We follow the Issaquah School District weather closure policy; if the school district is closed, we are also closed, unless posted otherwise. Always check our website and our pages on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram for updates.

Spotlight on Our Client Services Volunteers

By Erin Longchari, Operations & Programs Director

Our client services work is at the heart of all we do and central to our vision of a thriving community — for everyone. As we look to fill a dedicated client advocate staff position, we rely on a team of committed volunteers to assist people with vital services beyond food and basic needs. We asked client service volunteers Mary Nassif, Val Nicklas-Tinker, Nicola Davis, and Christi Schumann to share their experiences working with our neighbors in crisis, transition, or without stable housing. Our community is strengthened and better supported through their work and compassion.

Why did you become a client services volunteer?

Mary: I realized my background as a school psychologist gave me some experience and insights to be able to do this job and felt called to say "yes."

Nicola: I had wanted to increase my volunteer hours, and I thought it was a good match, as I had experience working in homeless services.

Christi: Having someone handle the front door questions allows the staff to focus on their work and gives clients an actual person to speak with.

What's your typical client services volunteer shift?

Nicola: There really isn't a typical day, and that's what makes the role so engaging and fulfilling. The issues we deal with can vary from basic requests for emergency food, bus passes, and clothing to more complicated issues that require referral advice or help in accessing services and resources.

Christi: I'm often getting their mail and finding warm clothing items, or providing emergency food for clients who missed shopping the previous week or who just need a sandwich and a drink. I also get a whole range of questions for assistance with affordable housing, temporary shelter, utility bills, clothing, legal help, and many other things.

Mary: I also see unhoused folks who ask for bus tickets, tents, backpacks and other necessities for living outside, food, help tracking down information or replacing ID cards, or sometimes just someone to listen to them. Almost every day, at least one new family or individual comes to register for the first time.

What do you find most challenging or frustrating?

Mary: I can provide help for a person's immediate problem, but it is a bandage that only addresses that issue and not the individual's greater needs.

Christi: We see all the need in our community and know there's only so much the Food Bank can do. We

do our best to provide referrals, but we don't always know that the other organizations will be able to help.

Val: Some of the outside systems don't communicate well with each other, so there are challenges getting people into housing, shelters, etc.

What do you find most enjoyable and rewarding?

Mary: I've never received as many kind words of appreciation as I do from the clients and staff at the food bank. They are some of the most positive and appreciative people I interact with every week.

Nicola: Building relationships and trust with clients is the most rewarding for me.

Val: Seeing smiles when handing out food or warm clothing. They are so thankful, sometimes in tears.

Christi: I've been involved in our youth programs for years, so I've known some families for just as long. I've enjoyed getting to know a wider range of neighbors.

Can you share a particularly compelling experience?

Val: I had an unhoused client who was having a bad day. I gave him some water and simply sat outside with him for close to an hour. He was thankful and said he just needed someone to listen.

Mary: One day a woman who was unhoused said, "Thank you for treating me as a person," and told me that she recently got out of prison and most people do not view her as a person. So many people do not feel valued as they move about our communities.

Nicola: A young unhoused mother and her two young girls, who were victims of domestic violence, came in with a handful of applications and referrals from the many services they had visited that day without receiving any direct services. We immediately offered them emergency food, toiletries, and coats. I hope it gave them some relief so they would be better able to deal with their situation.

What would you like our community to understand?

Nicola: The unhoused people who use IFCB view themselves as part of the community. They engage with local services and some have deep ties to the area.

Christi: It takes a lot of time and work to find an affordable rental unit! When a client calls an apartment complex, there is often a waiting list or it's "first come, first served." It's frustrating for everybody.

Val: We need to better educate our community about the needs of the unhoused, whether living on the streets or in cars. The unhoused are people and should be treated with dignity.

Turkey Trot Fun!

The energy and enthusiasm were high for our 13th Annual Issaquah Turkey Trot, with thousands of people thrilled for the return of the BIG event for the first time since 2019!

It was a beautiful, sunny day, and 3,940 people took part in the 5K fun run, many donning fun costumes and accessories and participating in the Costume Contest.

Smiles were abundant as everyone enjoyed gathering to support the Issaquah Food & Clothing Bank. Many came in to tour the food bank for the first time while enjoying free hot cocoa, cider, and coffee.

Since 2010, this event has raised over \$700,000 to help

provide free food and vital resources to our community members in need. This year, **we anticipate net proceeds to fund food for nearly 1,500 families for an entire month!**

Beyond fundraising, the community connections are priceless, and we are so grateful to everyone who has made the Issaquah Turkey Trot part of their Thanksgiving tradition.

Special thanks to everyone who participated and donated, our event sponsors, our amazing Turkey Trot task force, and our 130+ volunteers who helped with shirt distribution and event day activities. It is no small feat!

See you again in 2023!

We need Turkey Trot/5K lovers who are interested in being a part of our 2023 Issaquah Turkey Trot task force! Contact Bonnie at bonnie@issaquahfoodbank.org for more details!



Still need your 2023 Issaquah Turkey Trot shirt?

We have limited styles and sizes remaining.

Contact development@issaquahfoodbank.org and pick-up your shirt before January 6, 2023!



179 1st Avenue SE
Issaquah, WA 98027

425-392-4123
issaquahfoodbank.org

Our Mission

Unite our community in nourishing and nurturing individuals by removing barriers to healthy food, vital resources, and connections to essential services.

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US Postage Paid
Permit #652
Issaquah, WA

Bringing Joy to Local Children

For those with limited resources, holidays can be especially stressful because no parent wants to see their child be excluded from the joys of the season.

For this reason, hundreds of families, companies, churches, and service organizations work together each year to ensure that every child in our region has a special gift to open for the holidays. This year was no exception, and many hearts were warmed to see so many people show compassion by giving financial gifts and gift cards to ensure that all 1,500+ children registered for our Holiday Gift Barn program could be served.



Issaquah Food & Clothing Bank

HOLIDAY GIFT BARN

With the help of many volunteers, we hosted a two-day event at the food bank where parents could come and pick-up \$50 in gift cards for each child, stocking stuffers, wrapping paper, and candy. We had hot cocoa and goodies, and children enjoyed an activity area, leaving us with a festive wall filled with holiday-themed artwork and creations.

Thank you to everyone who made this possible; you have brought joy to 1,428 children so far this holiday season!

