



# ISSAQUAH

SINCE 1971

## Food & Clothing Bank

Spring-Summer 2022

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## Executive Report

by Laura Skelton, Interim Executive Director

In the five months that I've had the pleasure of being on the Issaquah Food & Clothing Bank team, I've been struck by the volume of good work accomplished with the help of such a dedicated group of volunteers, donors, and staff. Every day, mountains are moved to provide a safety net for anyone in need of extra support.

That support isn't limited to food. Our doorbell rings throughout the day,

five days a week, even when our market is closed. If anyone at the door needs emergency food or other assistance, they receive it. I have witnessed our staff and volunteers work to locate mattresses for a newly arrived family, to secure a bed at a shelter for someone with nowhere to go, and to sit with a person who fled an abusive situation earlier that day.

This kind of responsiveness only happens when



people act from their heart to give of their time and resources. Thank you to everyone who does just that. Together, we can ensure that no one in our community goes hungry, and that everyone who comes to our door feels truly welcome.

## Community Leadership Award



Jaek Avants, Erin Longchari, and Mike Bresko

We're honored to have been nominated by the Issaquah School

District and awarded the 2022 WASA (WA Association of School Administrators) Community Leadership Award for our partnership with the Issaquah School District.

We celebrate our amazing team members for their dedication to growing and nurturing these vital community partnerships and for their

dedication to this work.

We also thank YOU, our volunteers, donors, and partners for joining us to make a meaningful impact to reduce food insecurity and increase connectedness in our community.

*Thank you!*

# Solo Parenting Through a Pandemic

by Bonnie DeCaro-Monahan, Development Director



None of us are strangers to the harsh effects of the pandemic and, for Kathryn, life is still significantly impacted.

Kathryn loved her job as a schoolteacher for special needs kindergarten students. It gave her purpose and provided stability for her and her children. When school budgets were cut as a result of COVID-19, however, all that went away when she lost her job.

As a single mom supporting her six-year-old son, Calvin, and her six- and ten-year-old nephews who are currently in her care, Kathryn scrambled to find ways to replace her income. She took anything she could get, ending up with multiple odd jobs tutoring, dog-walking, and acting as a personal assistant.

With changing jobs and the instability of childcare centers during COVID-19, consistent childcare has been difficult. When asked about her life currently, Kathryn shared,

*"Food, shelter, and safety are my three main goals. Once those are secure, then I can prioritize things like work-life balance."*

Unfortunately, even with three different part-time jobs, Kathryn's income didn't cover her living expenses and she was forced to move in with her parents. The wait list for affordable housing is long and, though she's been applying for six years, she still hopes to get in someday. *"Getting into housing is like the lottery,"* shared Kathryn.

When she was younger, Kathryn volunteered at a food bank in Smokey Point where she helped pick up food from grocery stores and take it to the food bank. When she wasn't able to qualify for food stamps due to living with her parents, she remembered her food bank experience and searched for a food bank in her area. She was relieved to find the Issaquah Food & Clothing Bank so close by, knowing that many resources are not as easily accessible and, for many people, resources are difficult to find.

Kathryn has been able to access bi-weekly shopping in the food bank, as well as Power Packs and Holiday Gift Barn for the boys. Our partnership with Eastside Baby Corner has been instrumental in helping her keep three growing boys clothed while our clothing program has been limited to

seasonal events. She still has to make difficult choices to make her income stretch each month. *"We still alternate what bills to pay and when,"* added Kathryn.

Because she is using the food bank as her main source of food, and resources typically only cover about 50-75% of a family's food needs, she struggles to keep food on the table. *"We eat a lot of canned food right now. We need the food to live,"* Kathryn shared. *"Although it is a tremendous help to get some food every other week, we still have to scramble and rely on the generosity of others to have enough meals."*

*"I feel like things will be more manageable once we get past COVID,"* added Kathryn. She hopes to get back to her job as a schoolteacher, so she does not have to rely on the food bank so often. In the interim, she's so relieved that the donors, volunteers, and staff all do what they do to make the Issaquah Food & Clothing Bank what it is to her and so many others.

*"The people at the food bank are so amazing. They make it such a good experience. I appreciate seeing the same volunteers each time I visit. They are always in a good mood, friendly, and helpful. Consistency of the volunteers is important to us. It feels like I know I am being taken care of,"* Kathryn shared.

## Mark Your Calendars!



**Volunteer Appreciation  
Drive-Thru Coffee & Donuts**  
In front of the Issaquah Food & Clothing Bank

**Friday, August 26, 2022**  
8:00 - 10:00 a.m.

*Come by for a little breakfast and a lot of thanks!*

**Recipe for Hope is back in person this year!**

Eastridge Church in the Issaquah Highlands

**Tuesday, September 27, 2022**

Breakfast 7:30 - 9:00 a.m.

Lunch 11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

*Childcare available during lunch*

Table captains and sponsors needed!

Contact [bonnie@issaquahfoodbank.org](mailto:bonnie@issaquahfoodbank.org).

Recipe for  
**HOPE**



**Issaquah Turkey Trot is back this year!**

Plan now to join family and friends for this favorite holiday tradition on Thanksgiving Day!

**Thursday, November 24, 2022, 9:00 a.m.**

Registration opens August 8, 2022.

Sponsors needed!

Contact [bonnie@issaquahfoodbank.org](mailto:bonnie@issaquahfoodbank.org).

## 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
- Resource Navigator
- Program 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: [laura@issaquahfoodbank.org](mailto:laura@issaquahfoodbank.org).

Help us spread the word to fill these positions with just the right people!



## Fireworks Show Supports Youth Programs



John Kritsonis, Bonnie DeCaro-Monahan, and Taylor Hiroe

Our youth programs are a crucial aspect of reducing childhood food insecurity and creating a safe entry point for families in our region. Since 2015, John Kritsonis and Karl Lindor of Windermere Real Estate have been holding the Lake Sammamish Fireworks Show fundraiser to support these vital programs. Through their efforts and the generosity

of the community, this fundraising event has raised \$284,000 to date for the Issaquah Food & Clothing Bank!

We are so grateful to everyone who has faithfully supported this fundraiser and enjoyed the amazing fireworks display hosted by Kritsonis Lindor. After a 2-year hiatus from the fireworks display due to COVID restrictions, it was especially exciting to bring the show back this year!

With a move to a July 2nd show and a slightly more visible location on Lake Sammamish, more people than ever were able to enjoy the stunning display.

Thank you to the Kritsonis Lindor team and everyone

who participated to raise over \$30,000 this year. With a generous \$25,000 match from Kritsonis Lindor, the total comes to over \$55,000, providing 550+ children with healthy breakfast, lunch, and snack foods for an entire month. Now that's something worth celebrating!

It's not too late to give toward our youth programs: <https://bit.ly/lfsf-donate-2022>



## Summer Lunch & Tools4School

Two of our amazing youth programs include those going on right now: Summer Lunch and Tools4School. This year, we're thrilled to bring Summer Lunch back inside the building to provide families with more freedom to choose from many healthy options for breakfast, lunch, and snack foods their children will enjoy. We expect to serve over 500 children through the program this summer.

Our partnership with the Issaquah Schools Foundation on the Tools4School program is improving with a shift to school pick-ups for families. This program provides students with a new backpack and all the school supplies they need to be geared for success from day one.

For more information about these programs and to donate, visit <https://bit.ly/ifcb-programs>.



# Feeling the Heat of Rising Inflation

by Erin Longchari, Operations & Programs Director

As summer makes its long-awaited arrival, unprecedented challenges emerge in a changing world where costs far outpace living wages for thousands in our region. Rising prices for food, gas, and housing are putting a squeeze on folks in new ways, at a time when most state and federal COVID-19 funding and emergency support has ended.

Articles about escalating inflation abound across the country. Nationally, June's CPI inflation rate hit 9.1%, a level not seen since 1981. In the greater Seattle area, June's inflation rate is even higher, at 10.1%. Our local food costs rose 10.3% over June of last year, and energy prices (primarily gas) are a whopping 31.5% higher.\* Seattle's inflation rate is significantly higher than our neighbors in San Francisco (6.8%).

At the Issaquah Food & Clothing Bank, we tangibly feel these inflation pressures in multiple ways. We see it in our neighbors who increasingly rely on us to help meet their nutritional needs, or folks needing one-time, emergency financial assistance. We see it in a decrease of usable "rescued" products from our grocery store partners (as stores face their own supply shortages), and in the rising costs of purchasing healthy food and basic essentials amidst supply chain, agricultural, and transportation issues.



Last month, we saw 102 new households register for services – the largest increase outside of the traditional holiday season spike since May of 2020. Our shoppers routinely rely on us for expensive, “perimeter” items in grocery stores like fresh fruit, veggies, milk, cheese, and meat – products that quickly make a major dent in tight monthly budgets and force people to make hard choices between healthy food and other critical expenses. People get these high-cost, nutritious products – and more – at our food bank, freeing up their resources to meet the demands of progressively higher rent, gas, and medical costs.

While inflation will not continue rising indefinitely, it's becoming clear that prices may not return to “pre-COVID” normalcy. To ensure ongoing equitable access to nutritious foods, we have increased our food purchasing budget by 120% since 2019. In addition, we continue to seek inventive means to steward our resources and augment fresh goods, including sourcing

directly from local farms, farmers markets, and pea patches, while continuing advocacy and procurement through Food Lifeline/Feeding America.

With the support of our partners at Northwest Harvest and the generosity of our donors, we were recently able to provide \$50 Safeway gift cards, for food or gas, to nearly 600 families in our community who regularly rely on us for food shopping or home deliveries.

We continue to work closely with our unhoused community members, and folks experiencing housing instability, to meet our most vulnerable neighbors where they are. Our efforts to provide emergency supplies; essential basics like mail service, phone support, and ID assistance; and benefit application assistance are small but critical steps on a path towards greater support and stability.

These are just a few of the ways we try to measure progress, each and every day, towards a more compassionate and hopeful future. As we press on together in the face of great challenges, we are strengthened by the generosity of all our supporters and partners and heartened by our special place in this community.

\* [https://www.bls.gov/regions/west/summary/blssummary\\_seattle.pdf](https://www.bls.gov/regions/west/summary/blssummary_seattle.pdf)

## Graduate Leaves Legacy Garden to Feed Others, Inspire Change

Reprinted in part with permission by Wendy Castleman, Issaquah School District

Gibson Ek High School graduate Connor Lo grew 130 pounds of fresh produce for the Issaquah Food & Clothing Bank last year. As a senior, Lo planned a legacy garden that could grow even more fresh vegetables for community members in need – a garden that new and returning Gibson Ek students can continue and maintain in years to come. But his ideas, inspiration and the research he put in go far beyond preparing the ground and sowing seeds.

Since Lo was young, he and his family have volunteered at soup kitchens. He's also something of a foodie, and loves eating delicious, fresh food. In his second year at Gibson Ek, Lo researched epigenetics – the study of how a person's behavior and environment can cause changes that affect how their genes work, and whether lifestyle choices impact health later in life. "Connor is incredibly smart and has a passion for science," said his adviser, Victoria Mott, who teaches chemistry and biology at Gibson Ek. When studying epigenetics, "He wanted to know: Could a high school student's decisions today influence their children in 30 years?"

Each of those pieces played into his capstone project, which brings together his work of growing fresh produce to help break the cycle of food insecurity with his research into the myriad of ways that not having easy access to good nutrition can affect people.

During the height of the pandemic, Lo and his family were looking for new ways to help those in need. "I was just trying



to find a way to help," Lo said, noting that they were still cooking and dropping off meals for others throughout the Seattle area. "We're Chinese, and food is a symbol of hospitality. We put a lot of effort into our meals, and I don't think having money should be the deciding factor in being able to eat what you want to eat."

As he started to notice longer lines waiting at the food bank when he drove past, an idea started to coalesce. "I thought, what if I just grow food for them?" Lo said.

And so, in his third year of high school, his parents let him take over the garden space at their home. "I didn't really know what I was getting myself into," Lo said. But, he found a mentor, Terry Bockovich of Down to Earth Community Gardens, who did know. Bockovich offered her expertise and helped Lo overcome multiple obstacles, from gathering supplies and donations, to garden pests, to the extreme heat from the heat dome.

He also did a significant amount of research on the effects of food insecurity on education, including interviewing young people facing hunger, graphing income to overall health of people's diets, and finding links between food insecurity and lower academic performance as well as health conditions such as anemia and diabetes. "How do we break that cycle?" Lo asked. One part of the answer might be gardens like the one he created at his home and at Gibson Ek. "I called my garden 'Genesis' because I want this to be a new beginning."

Kim Skok, the Operations Manager at the food bank, spoke with Lo last year about the food bank's needs and his plans to help. "Access to nutrient-dense foods such as fresh, organic produce can be difficult for lower income households due to the higher cost of the food. Inadequate access to healthy foods has been linked to diet-related diseases and other health issues," Skok said. "Connor's garden provides a real, tangible solution to addressing these issues. I love that the project will be inherited by future students both so that our clients will continue to receive the produce and also to educate the students on the epidemic of food insecurity in our country and how that is something that they can be a part of solving."

"Donations straight from a garden allow the food bank to offer fresh, organic produce that they cannot usually source in any other way, and are very popular with clients," Skok said.

## Donation Drives

Our inventory is getting low, 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 7<sup>th</sup> Ave NW, Issaquah, WA 98027) on these specific days/times:

Saturday, July 30 – 9:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.  
Saturday, August 13 – 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Tuesday, September 6 – 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.  
Saturday, October 8 – 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

### Issaquah-Sammamish Food Project

Start a bi-monthly collection in your neighborhood or join an existing one! Contact [theberries@gmail.com](mailto:theberries@gmail.com).

### Harvest Program

We can accept certain pea patch and other homegrown and gleaned items! Please contact [kim@issaquahfoodbank.org](mailto:kim@issaquahfoodbank.org) for more information.

### Plan a Food or Toiletries Drive

Contact [erin@issaquahfoodbank.org](mailto:erin@issaquahfoodbank.org) for details and to ensure we are able to accept your collected donations.



## What Volunteers Are Saying

Volunteers are the key ingredient to successful operations at the Issaquah Food & Clothing Bank. Whether our volunteers have been with us for 20 years or 2 months, they take ownership of our mission and understand that each of them makes a difference. In April 2022, we sent out a survey to everyone who had volunteered with us in the previous 12 months. We received a healthy response and gained valuable insights that will help us further refine our operations and the overall volunteer experience.

Volunteers expressed interest in participating to further develop operations to reduce waste, maintain equitable food distribution, and keep traffic flow manageable during busy service times. Others were interested in lending their professional experience and expertise by diving deeper into topics that could benefit our organization. Already, many small changes have been made to follow these recommendations and address areas of opportunity. The most common thread of survey responses, however,

was praise for our efficient operation and gratefulness such as, *"It is a joy to volunteer with such a fabulous organization,"* and *"thank you for giving me the opportunity to give back to the community."*



### Our Mission

The Issaquah Food & Clothing Bank provides basic needs to our community members to promote self-sufficiency.

Non Profit Org.  
US Postage Paid  
Permit #652  
Issaquah, WA

## *Volunteers Needed*

Come join in the fun! We currently have openings for bi-weekly Groceries to Go delivery drivers and weekly Grocery Rescue drivers, as well as back-up drivers who can fill in as needed. Our drivers need to have a large vehicle and be in good physical condition for regularly lifting 30–50 lbs.

Are you looking for more ways to connect with those we serve? Sign-up for a regular, bi-weekly shift in our market and help provide a gracious experience for everyone who comes in to shop. For more details on these opportunities, visit our website or contact our Volunteer Manager, Lisa Haynes: [lisa@issaquahfoodbank.org](mailto:lisa@issaquahfoodbank.org).

Are you limited to evening and weekend work or do you enjoy event planning? Our Recipe for Hope and Turkey Trot planning committees can use your expertise and manpower to put on these beloved events! For more info, contact [bonnie@issaquahfoodbank.org](mailto:bonnie@issaquahfoodbank.org).





