

SPRING 2021

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE UNIVERSITY DISTRICT FOOD BANK

Generous donation helped hire needed part-time workers

COVID-19 forced us to alter every aspect of the way we work at the University District Food Bank. We changed the Walk-In Food Bank's grocery distribution model from a customer shopping experience to a volunteer shopping system based on customer preferences. We added a second day to our Home Delivery program specifically for Food Bank customers at a high-risk of contracting COVID-19, growing the program from 180 pre-COVID to 500+ Home Delivery households.

COVID-19 health guidelines limited the number of people we could have for each volunteer shift. These operational changes compelled



CURT MILTON PHOTO

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5 Lucinda Hark helps a customer with their order in May, 2020.

New farm manager is helping our garden grow



Shanelle Donaldson West

Last October, Rooftop Roots welcomed Shanelle Donaldson West as our new Farm Manager. Shanelle is an urban farmer, food preservationist and food justice advocate focused on healthy relationships to land, power and community. From working with toddlers growing gardens to connecting locally sourced food to people experiencing homelessness, she has supported

more than one thousand King County residents over the last decade. She expanded her nutrition education to include food preservation classes as a method of self-care and extending the harvest.

In 2016, Shanelle co-founded Percussion Farms whose mission is to undo racism and other oppressions that prevent access to

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University District Food Bank assists low-income individuals residing within Zip Codes 98102, 98103, 98105, 98112, 98115, and 98125.

Food for Thought is published quarterly by University District Food Bank for our volunteers, donors, and public at large.

University District Food Bank is a program of the University District Service League, a registered 501 (c) (3).

Staff

Kelley Alexander, Floor Manager

Shanelle Donaldson, Farm Manager

Hannah Duffany, Floor Manager

Joe Gruber, Executive Director

Mariela Koleva, Floor Manager

Bill Lowie, Assistant Director

Jak McKool, Floor Manager

David Mills, Operations Support

Emily Palena, Volunteer Manager

Ron Post, Weekend Food Recovery Specialist

Sara Rowley, Home Delivery Coordinator

Rachel Shervin, Magnuson Park Pantry and Packs for Kids Coordinator

Liliya Shtikel, Community Engagement and Resource Specialist

Sonia Valmore, Floor Manager

Eric Wirkman, Grocery Rescue Manager

Paul Yunker, Development Director

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Address

5017 Roosevelt Way N.E.
Seattle WA 98105

Website

www.udistrictfoodbank.org

Email

udfb@udistrictfoodbank.org

Phone

206-523-7060

Letter From The Director

Dear Friends,

Happy Spring to you all! As the world around us wakes up from the long winter and brings familiar color and vibrancy to our yards, our neighborhoods, and our parks (and as I once more attempt a modest but ultimately doomed garden plot), a similar spirit of renewal and hope fills us at the University District Food Bank. The rooftop farm is coming to life. The later sunsets mean that it is light during all our customer shopping hours. And staff and volunteers are importantly on their ways to being fully vaccinated. With all this, the air just feels fresher and the load a little lighter.

The past year has been hard for us all. Fear and anxiety have been prominent emotions for so many, including the team at the Food Bank. While volunteers brought important energy to our work that sustained our efforts, and generous donors ensured that we had the resources we needed to hire more staff and keep our shelves amply full, it has still been a challenging year. For our customers, a visit here felt both more necessary and less safe with all that was unknown about the pandemic. And yet, together we have risen to meet each of our challenges: collectively, we have found the safest ways to preserve choice for our community of shoppers; collectively we have added new services to meet the changing need in our community; collectively we have found new partners to align with in order to increase our effectiveness; and collectively we have persevered to build a hunger free community.

We know that as our community opens back up, the pressure of the pandemic for many will ebb. Life routines will return to the more familiar. But we cannot abandon our collective response. Our own efforts at the Food Bank rely on this collective effort each and every day. More importantly, our collective response can help us rebuild towards equity. Housing stability and job opportunity continue to be at the forefront of our customers' concerns. The pandemic's impact has been disproportionately borne by our BIPOC neighbors. As we think about how our local, state, and federal governments architect their responses – and as we plan our own Food Bank's responses – collectively we must lobby, pressure, design, and hold ourselves accountable for taking actions that reduce and eliminate long-standing inequities. Anything less than that squanders the unique transformative opportunity in this moment.



In peace,
Joe

JOHN ANTHERS

Volunteer helped us computerize, and more

John Anthes, a quarter-century University District Food Bank volunteer, died from cancer in September 2019. He was originally recruited to assist in preparing a grant application for the Food Bank's first computer.

Realizing that the new computer would be useless without appropriate software, he developed the first intake, distribution, and reporting software for the Food Bank. John subsequently donated that software to 10 Seattle food banks, for which he was given the Mayor's End Hunger Award by mayor Norm Rice in 1997. He also served on the UDFB Board of Directors for four years in the 90s.

Because of back problems, John was unable to perform many of the standard volunteer roles at the Food Bank and used his car to volunteer instead. Years before acquisition of the Sprinter van, now used for grocery rescue, he made pickups three mornings a week at 3-5 bakeries and coffee shops to



John Anthes

pick up day-old baked goods and bring them to the Food Bank. Since he made these pickups in the early morning, and dropped them off at the Food Bank before staff and other volunteers arrived, few people knew of his work.

When the Home Delivery program started, John added one day a week of delivering food to people who could not make it to the Food Bank to pick up food themselves. He continued the pickups on a reduced basis after the van was acquired. He made both pickups and deliveries until a few months before he died.

Development Director Paul Yunker commented: "John impressed me with his work ethic. He was consistent, rarely missing a shift picking up baked goods at Madison Park Bakery or delivering food on his Home Delivery route, even when he was battling cancer. You never had to be worried about John getting the job done! He is a testament to the lasting impact volunteers have on our work. We still use, to this day, the customer intake database he developed. John is missed."

Food Bank role came after years of activism

Hi all, I'm Eric Wirkman.

I am a lifelong Seattle resident who loves both the rain and the (maybe too small?) window of beautiful summer we get here.

I was hired as the Food Recovery Specialist in November 2019. This past summer, I took on managing our Grocery Rescue Program, as well as doing some floor management in the Food Bank itself. Monday through Thursday you'll find me cruising around North Seattle picking up donations from our various partner grocery stores. Friday I am in the back of the house processing incoming donations and helping to make sure that our front of house team stays well-stocked on food for our customers.

I first got involved with food security and provision in the late 1990's as part of the Seattle Food Not Bombs Collective. At the time



Eric Wirkman

we provided hot meals to anyone who needed them every Sunday in Occidental Park, maintained a weekly food pantry at Yesler Terrace, and provided food to protests and demonstrations as we could. Through connections made in Food Not Bombs, I began volunteering at the ROOTS Young Adult Shelter, eventually becoming an overnight supervisor and on-call fill-in staff. I came to fall in love with working with youth and young adults – especially those who had slipped through society's

cracks or were on the edge.

Eventually, I was hired to run Teen Feed, the primary meal program for homeless and street-involved youth and young adults in the University District, which put my office just across the alley from the old Food Bank location at University Christian Church (at the time Teen Feed actually also served out of another part of the basement). More than once when things were looking, um, dire, I hit up Bill or Joe for some food just to make sure dinner happened. They always came through as best they could.

Eleven years later, I am actually working with them and the rest of the crew that makes the Food Bank go. It has been such an honor to get to be part of the Food Bank Community. The volunteers and my coworkers are truly amazing, and have stepped up in ways that are nothing short of inspiring.

Thanks for making our 2020 auction a success!

We are extremely happy to report that the 25th annual “Take a Bite Out of Hunger” benefit auction on October 24, 2020, grossed \$241,277. That is the second highest total in the history of the event!

Fund-A-Need (includes matching pool and donations during auction): \$162,251

Silent plus Live Auction Sales: \$43,186

Sponsorship: \$22,750

Admission: \$12,490

Miscellaneous: \$600

Thanks to our sponsors: WSECU, Kaiser Permanente, University Kiwanis, Audi Seattle, Beneficial State Bank, Center For Spiritual Living, Cooper Cartwright, Davis Wright Tremaine LLP, HomeStreet Bank, S. Landau Services, Seattle Children's, Seattle Interiors, Shook Hardy & Bacon, University of Washington Office of External Affairs, Pacifica Law Group, University Book Store, Ballard Printing, Tim Brincefield & Nancy Brown, and Robert Hartman. Their support allowed us to keep the auction an essentially free event.

Thanks to our auction item donors – listed below. Please support their business if you can!

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Meet part-time workers who kept us moving

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us to add 10+ hours to our weekly distribution schedule to meet the demand for our services. For the short term that was fine, but in the long term it wasn't sustainable for the health and well-being of staff and volunteers.

It wasn't in the budget, but we needed to hire more staff to handle the extra workload. That's when Paula Becker and Barry Brown entered the picture. Long time supporters with a strong connection to the Food Bank, they provided the seed money needed to hire five part-time workers. The Becker-Brown's gift



Hunter
Maxwell
Becker Brown

was made in memory of Hunter Maxwell Becker Brown, their 25-year-old son who died unexpectedly in June 2017.

Liliya Shtikel, our Community Connector, commented: "Our previous distribution model prioritized customer choice and it was important to us that we kept that as part of our COVID-19 adjusted distribution model. There was so much unknown about COVID-19 early on and our new system was so labor intensive that we were struggling to keep up. We desperately needed more help and we were fortunate to have Paula and Barry's support to hire extra staff. We truly could not have continued operating without them. We were all stressed and pushed to the limit trying to continue providing food for our Walk-Up customers and Home Delivery customers. Prior to hiring extra support, a lot of our team had to put their other responsibilities

aside to make sure we were able to get food out the door. We were only able to continue to provide food that our customers wanted and needed because of our incredible new teammates."

We literally struck the mother lode with our new coworkers. All are hard workers with friendly personalities, a wonderful reflection on our community. We're pleased to introduce you to Adrian, Lu, Alyssa, Mariela and Jak:



Adrian Tan

Background: "I was born in Malaysia. My father is Malaysian-Chinese and my mother is Danish. The first five years of my life, I grew up on a rubber plantation. When I was 12, we moved to Denmark.

"When I am not at the Food Bank, I work on sustainability issues – mostly with companies, but in the past for public institutions such as the World Bank, the European Commission and various national Environmental Protection Agencies. My specialty is circular economy business models (the circular economy refers to the idea

of maintaining the value of products, materials and resources in the economy for as long as possible, e.g. repurposing, reuse, remanufacturing, recycling, etc.). The Food Bank is an excellent example of the circular economy in action."

What is your job at the Food Bank?

"My job is to assist Bill and Chris with daily operations at the back of the store. I also do a few pick-ups of donations from partnering grocery stores."

What would you say to a friend if you were describing your experience at the Food Bank?

"The Food Bank is a brilliant place! Besides the wonderful cause of providing food to those in need, the staff and volunteers are some of the nicest people that I have met. The rooftop garden is by far the coolest rooftop in Seattle!"

Anything you want the community at large to know about the Food Bank?

"How nice people are – from the employees at the partnering grocery stores to the staff and volunteers at the Food Bank. I was totally blown away with how big, beautiful and productive the rooftop garden is! Although the Food Bank is fortunate enough to get a lot of donations and we are often unable to redistribute everything, I was thrilled to see that leftover food is repurposed as pig food or composted, and any packaging that can be recycled is properly sorted.

"The Food Bank gets A LOT of cakes, cookies and other delicious pastries. You can always treat yourself to something sweet ;-)"

Update: Adrian has returned to full-time work.

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They helped us deal with pandemic's impact

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Lucinda Hark

Background: "Originally from New York City, I moved to the PNW a little over a year ago. Stunning mountain views and easy access to all kinds of natural wonders lured me out here in 2018. Before the pandemic, I was working at the University Village location of the Canada-based retailer Aritzia. When I am not at the Food Bank, you can find me walking around Volunteer Park with my friends – at a social distance of 6 feet, of course! I also perfected Spaghetti Carbonara during the state mandated Stay-at-Home order."

What is your job at the Food Bank?

"I started as a volunteer shortly after the Stay-at-Home order and was quickly brought on board our staff as an Operations Assistant. My day to day is supporting the restock of grocery store goods, managing the rotating schedule of volunteers, and of course serving our customers, with a smile."

What would you say to a friend if you were describing your experience at the Food Bank?

"I get as much out of working at the Food Bank as the people who visit it. I am a social person, if I had to actually stay at home these last few months I would have gone crazy from boredom."

Anything surprise you?

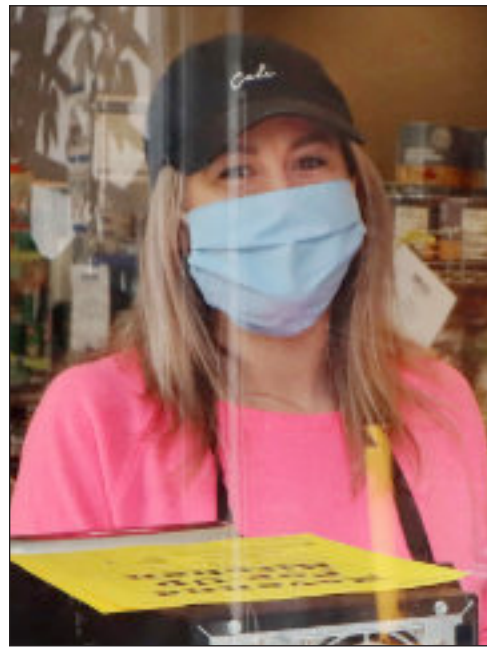
"I am surprised how emotionally invested I have become in not only the operations of the Food Bank (my professional passion), but my emotional attachment to the staff, volunteers and our customers. I have seen the same faces so many times these past few weeks, I get nervous when someone doesn't come in for a

shift or to pick up groceries. I try not to assume the worst."

Anything you want the community at large to know about the Food Bank?

"If you volunteer on a day when I am working I can guarantee an awesome play list with impromptu dance parties. If you can't volunteer, we are still accepting donations of food, grocery bags, books, or even clothing."

Update: Lucinda has returned to full-time work and continues to volunteer weekly.



Alyssa Bumgarner

Background: "I moved here from California in October 2018 after previously working for Tesla. After going through a break in my career in mid-2019, I promised myself I would do something more productive with my time if I was ever to take time off again. I went back to retail as a store manager and when the pandemic began and our store closed, I knew it was time for me to take my free time and turn it into something that was going to make a greater

impact on our community."

What is your job at the Food Bank?

"I started as a volunteer shortly after the Stay-at-Home order and was quickly brought on board as an Operations Assistant. My focus is restocking goods and assisting on training new volunteers. My favorite part of the day is checking in each and every customer who is here to pick up their weekly groceries."

What would you say to a friend if you were describing your experience at the Food Bank?

"Working here at the Food Bank has given me a chance to really practice daily gratitude. I've become such a happier person, I've met so many amazing people, and even if there is a tough day, I wouldn't trade my time at the Food Bank."

Anything surprise you?

"It surprised me how quickly I have connected and have considered the staff, as well as customers, here as a family. I have made it a mission to try and remember as many faces and names as I possibly can. During this pandemic, sometimes I am the only human they have contact or communication with all week. It's important to me that I make that moment personal, efficient, and kind hearted."

Anything you want the community at large to know about the Food Bank?

"We are all human, we are here to do what is best, and most of all – I am here to make your day fun."

Update: Alyssa has returned to full-time work. She used her social media skills recently to fundraise for socks for Food Bank customers.

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Part-timers were key to meeting big demand

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Mariela Koleva

Background: “My name is Mariela Koleva. I am happy and proud to become a part of the University District Food Bank’s amazing team. I come from a small country in Southeastern Europe called Bulgaria. We speak Bulgarian, eat a lot of yogurt, and produce the famous Bulgarian rose. I got a Bachelor’s degree in Bulgarian language from the University of Veliko Tarnovo and a QQI 5 Award in Arts, Culture and History from Dun Laoghaire College in Ireland. I moved from Dublin to Seattle three years ago and have enjoyed the streets, the graffiti and the vibe of the city ever since – despite the weather. I paint abstract art for friends and family. I also volunteer serving dinners at ROOTS Young Adults Shelter as a volunteer.”

What is your job at the Food Bank?

“I joined the Food Bank as temporary Operations Support due to the increasing number of people who need help in these hard

times.”

What would you say to a friend if you were describing your experience at the Food Bank?

“I’m not calling it a job or a working experience; for me it is a service and dedication to the people.”

Anything surprise you?

“I was really surprised by the number of volunteers willing to help despite the virus and the jobs lost, but also encouraged by this simple humane act of kindness and empathy.”

Anything you want the community at large to know about the Food Bank?

“If I could, I would shout out loud: We (the Food Bank) are here for you! Please come! Don’t feel ashamed because you are in need. All of us need something as human beings; we have a need for hope, a need for love, and a need for food.”

Jak McKool

Background: “Born and raised in Dallas, Texas, I came to Seattle to pursue a degree in sociology and a career in music. I work as an audio/video engineer, youth teaching artist, bartender and musician. I run a small recording studio emphasizing affordable access for emerging artists. Outside of art and vocation, I spend a lot of time riding bikes, climbing trees and observing the local Seattle ecosystem. I came to the Food Bank looking for a way to mitigate the effects of the COVID crisis in March and I am continually impressed by positive social and environmental impact enacted by this community.”

What is your job at the Food Bank?

“I work mostly in the warehouse alongside volunteers processing donations, keeping the space clean, and restocking.”

What would you say to a friend if you were describing your experience at the Food Bank?

“It’s a very well-oiled machine! Employees and volunteers both are essential in achieving the ultimate goal of getting food to folks that need it. A lot of really capable individuals seem to be drawn to this place.”



Anything surprise you?

“It’s interesting to see just how much food is ‘rescued.’ Food that would otherwise become waste before its time!”

Anything you want the community at large to know about the Food Bank?

“Of all the various non-profits I’ve seen dedicated to alleviating the hardships of low-income individuals, the Food Bank is the most directed. It consistently supplies necessary resources to those who need them.”

SAVE THE DATE!



The live program for our 26th annual (and second virtual!) “Take a Bite Out of Hunger” benefit auction will be on Saturday, October 9, 2021. Check back in June for more details about silent auction opening, dessert dash, ticket prices, Cameron Catering dinner menu – *and much more!*

We have a small team procuring items for the auction. Please help us out if you can.

If you can help us out by donating auction items, please complete this online form: <https://udistrictfoodbank.ejoinme.org/Donate>

Auction Item Wish List:

Local travel packages: Cabin Stays, Airbnb rentals, and Vacation stays in the Northwest.

Food items: Restaurant gift certificates, CSA gift cards, Cooking Classes, Baking Classes, Bakery gift cards, Coffee Cards.

Sports Tickets: Seattle Storm, OL Reign, Huskies Football, Mariners, Seahawks, Kraken, and Sounders.

Miscellaneous: Unique experiences, Themed gift baskets, Handcrafted items, Jewelry, Kids Games.

Want to contribute to the Matching Pool for the Live Auction Fund-A-Need? Contact us at paul@udistrictfoodbank.org or (206) 523-7060 x701. Thank you!

Farm manager to focus on culturally familiar produce

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nutrition and healthy spaces for Black people, Indigenous people and people of color. Shanelle is a proud alumna of the Black and Latinx Farm Immersion Class at Soul Fire Farm in Grafton, New York.

Shanelle is excited to focus on continuing to grow culturally familiar produce for our Food Bank customers, as well as providing farm and garden education to the North Seattle community.

In March of this year Rooftop Roots started a collaboration with The Doorway Project to create a job readiness internship focused on providing farm training to youth experiencing homelessness. Shanelle plans to make the farm an educational space by planting native PNW perennials and annuals, introducing a wider variety of produce that represents many cultures and plant diversity, and making the space more attractive to the wonderful

pollinators in the area.

She is also a soil nerd, so there are already several composting methods being utilized on the farm to help build soil and reduce the food waste created by the food bank.

When she’s not farming, Shanelle can be found reading four or five books at once; canning and baking; cooking with her husband, Mike; playing board games; or, most likely, smooching her sweet dog, Koda.