

# FOOD FOR THOUGHT

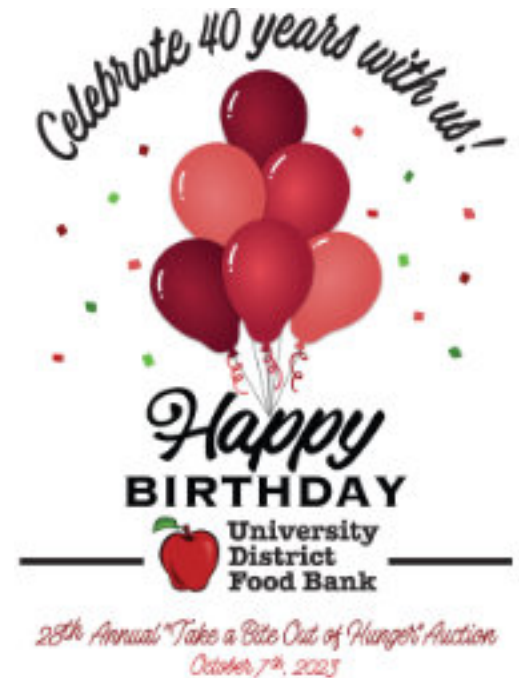
THE NEWSLETTER OF THE UNIVERSITY DISTRICT FOOD BANK

## Save the date for our annual auction

Save the date for our annual benefit auction at St. Demetrios in Montlake on Saturday, October 7, 2023! This year marks 40 years of the University District Food Bank and we can't wait to make it a record year for donations and support. The need is greater than ever in 2023 as we face many challenges and a growing demand for nutritious food.

Please save the date and invite friends and family to join you for a fun evening of dinner, drinks, dessert, auctions and community!

If you'd like to donate an item to our auction please contact Paul at [paul@udistrictfoodbank.org](mailto:paul@udistrictfoodbank.org).

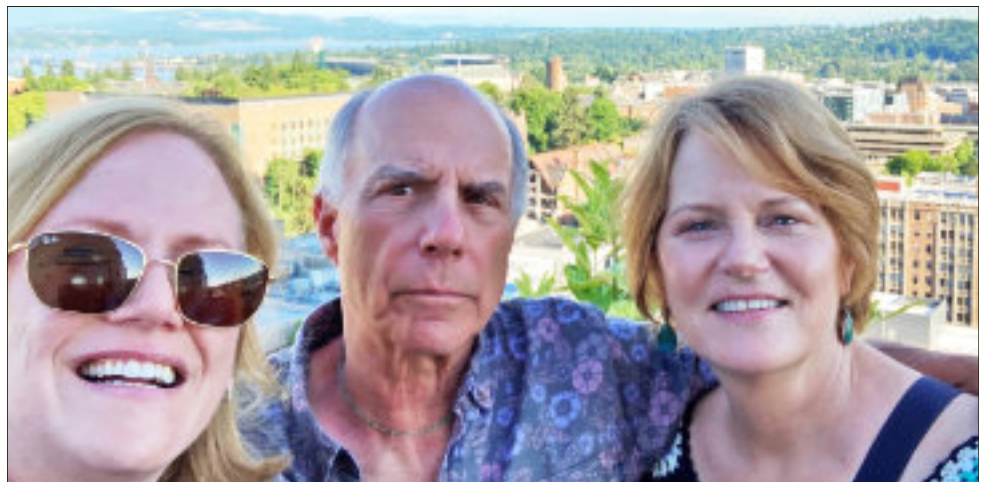


## Volunteer spotlight: Meet Jess Levine

Meet Jess Levine, aka the Mayor of the University District Food Bank, who has been consistently volunteering with us for ten years! He finds so much joy and purpose in volunteering with the Food Bank that he bookends his weeks with a Monday and Friday shift, noting that he's one of the few people who really looks forward to Mondays. And we look forward to having him!

### When did you start volunteering at the Food Bank?

December of 2013 was my first time volunteering here. When I started, we were in the former food bank space in the church basement, a very small space so



Food Bank volunteer Jess Levine, center, with fellow volunteers Pam Copeland, left, and Betsey Curran, right.

we all worked close together. When the new space opened, we were so spread out it was strange

at first but quickly we came to love how much room we had 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).

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# Letter From The Director

Dear Friends,

Seattle Channel visited us last month to record some footage for a segment included in their program “City Inside/Out.” Their visit footage helped set the context for a conversation they hosted about the recent reduction in monthly SNAP benefits. While you might have missed this episode (you can always stream it from their archive), I hope that you’ve heard about this most recent round of SNAP benefit cuts and the impact it is having on our community.

Throughout the early days of the pandemic just three years ago, the enduring image many of us had was the long lines of cars waiting to access food banks across the country. But as time wore on, government supports expanded and rates of poverty, especially child poverty, actually began to decline. While hunger remained a real concern, expanded government supports helped buoy those most at risk. Unfortunately, over the past year, these added supports have been eliminated. These SNAP reductions are the most recent and impactful.

We have spent more than \$800,000 this past year buying food to keep our community nourished. This is more than we budgeted. And this was on top of the 1 million plus pounds of donated food we collected from business partners and the two-thirds-of-a-million pounds of food we received from our nonprofit distribution partners.

Despite all this, we will still fall short of having all the healthy and culturally familiar food we need to keep our neighbors nourished. Our shelves still have choices, just not as many as we want to offer.

The State Legislature passed an early action bill to help bring more resources into the emergency food system before the new budget year begins this July. This action will help, but it will again fall short of what we need.

Our work has been hard these past few years, but your generosity has sustained us. Your generosity, when combined with that of your neighbors, has made an important difference. Small gifts really add up to make a big impact.

I know that the recent economic news has not been rosy for many in our community. However, if 2023 leaves you with economic stability, please consider making a gift in support of food security. Consider a gift to help us restock our shelves.

So far in 2023, we are 40 percent busier than we were this time last year and food donations are down by 10 percent. If you are able to help us respond, I invite you to do so.

We are working collectively to help bring positive change to government supports like SNAP. It is a Farm Bill reauthorization year and our delegation in Washington is focused on making the Farm Bill work better for us all, including the thousands in our community who experienced a loss in their SNAP benefits in March.

However, those changes in SNAP will be a long time coming, assuming they are even adopted. In the meantime, your financial support today can help us remain a reliable resource for all our neighbors. We hope you are able to make a gift to help restock our shelves. Thank you.



In peace,  
Joe



# Local breweries craft a beer to benefit the Food Bank



Local brewers seen at the brew day for Mister Hazy's Neighborhood were, from left, Nick Ladd (Ladd & Lass Brewing), Roy McLaughlin (Big Time Brewery), Eric Lundquist and Julia Astrid Davis (Burke Gilman Brewing Company), Jessie Quan (Ladd & Lass Brewing), Phil Pesheck (Burke Gilman Brewing Company), and Jessie's doll, Honey. Not shown is Josh Yoker from Project 9 Brewing Co.

Sales of a new beer crafted by five northeast Seattle breweries will benefit the University District Food Bank. Two dollars from the sale of each pint will go to fund programs at the Food Bank.

The beer went on sale on Saturday, April 15, and will be available for a limited time.

Thank you to these great local breweries for their generous support!

Breweries that got together for this "collab" are:

- **Ladd & Lass Brewing**, 722 NE 45th St.
- **Bottleworks Beer**, 1710 N. 45th St. #3
- **Big Time Brewery & Alehouse**, 4133 University Way N.E.
- **Burke Gilman Brewing Company**, 3626 N.E. 45th St., Suite 102
- **Project 9 Brewing Co.**, 1409 N.E. 80th St.

## TEAM PROFILE

# Karilynn Cooper keeps us connected to our community

Karilynn works hard to help our shoppers get access to resources like SNAP benefits, housing and much more. Her open door policy allows shoppers to visit her anytime with questions, concerns or issues they might be experiencing. She's a trusted confidant who is there for them in hard times but also celebrates the victories and small wins.

### Where did you grow up?

Born and raised in Sacramento, CA.

### What is your background?

For my educational background I earned a BA in social work from Cal State Sacramento. Professionally, I spent 7 to 8 years doing various social work or case management roles at a variety of organizations. I worked with AmeriCorps in Spokane and that brought me to Seattle in 2015. I've worked with people living with HIV, people with substance disorders and severe mental illness.

### When did you start at University District Food Bank?

Late September of 2021. My title is Community Connector officially, but I also go by Community Engagement and Resource Specialist. My role can also be referred to as a social worker. I help our shoppers obtain various resources including housing, SNAP benefits and more.

### What is your role within the organization?

I prioritize client work and

spend at least 50 percent of my time with clients of the Food Bank, but it varies day to day based on what our clients need. I operate a walk-in program to make it easier for customers to have access to my services vs. making appointments. This helps to meet people where they are at and not feel constrained or that they will miss an appointment. I will also offer appointments if that's easier for another client.

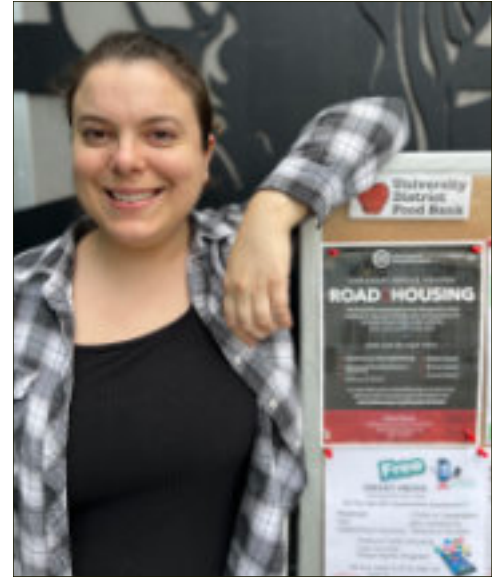
Shoppers find me by word of mouth typically I also have cards and flyers around the Food Bank to inform someone who might be new. Customers often come in to shop and ask if we have someone who can help them with accessing services.

Some needs are quick and simple, and others require a lot of help. I will meet with them as many times as it takes to get them the access to the resources they need. If their needs go above my abilities, I will recommend them to other local services.

### What is the most fulfilling aspect of your work?

I love the relational part of the job, not so much the paperwork! I have a lot of regular customers that I've bonded with over the last year. Some will come in just to touch base about their life – share their triumphs or setbacks. I love that they are comfortable to come to me and share this info.

I encourage people to come back and share updates and keep in touch, I love those moments with them. It's a difficult job for sure and those are the parts that



Karilynn Cooper

keep me sane and keep me going.

The most difficult part of this position is seeing the many setbacks within the systems in place and the hoops that customers must jump through. As a society we're not prepared to care for people who are chronically homeless. This has required me to change my outlook in order to move forward and be present with clients. It's taught me to celebrate the small wins.

I've seen a lot of small wins over the last year and positive changes in people. And it's important for our customers to have someone who holds on to those wins for them, someone who notices how hard they are working and acknowledges that.

### What would you like our donors and volunteers to know about the Food Bank?

I want to extend gratitude to the volunteers and staff. They have such strong relationships with our clients that it makes it easier for customers to trust me because they know we all have their best interest in mind. Thank you to everyone who makes this community go around.



# The Food Bank needs YOU! We're looking for volunteers

The University District Food Bank is always accepting new volunteers – both individuals and groups – to help keep our programs going strong! It takes many hours each week to staff our main food bank, satellite food banks, run our Pack for Kids program, and more.

We can also use your skills! Accounting, photography, legal work, and more – we have many

volunteer opportunities within the food bank and can use your skill set.

How to volunteer: visit our website to apply online and learn more about the volunteer hours and dates currently available. Then our volunteer coordinator will reach out to get started.

Or you can email us at [volunteer@udistrictfoodbank.org](mailto:volunteer@udistrictfoodbank.org)

## Jess Levine finds volunteering is good for the soul

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get our work done.

Volunteer work has always been a big part of my life. I came to Seattle 25 years ago from Chicago and was involved in a school for children in homeless situations, then I was involved with CASA for seven years which was very rewarding, same as the food bank. I have a background in education working with intercultural kids in Chicago and when I was no longer engaged in that work it was important for me to continue serving the community.

### What are your typical volunteer responsibilities?

I work in all kinds of roles, whatever needs to be done that day. I'll work in the back, help with sorting produce, dry goods and eggs, unload the truck, make PB&Js ... I don't care what it is I'll just chat people up and have a good time doing the work.

I love meeting new people. Any time I see a new volunteer I greet them and welcome them in. People joke that I'm the Mayor of the Food Bank because I love talking

and saying hello to everyone.

### What is your favorite part about volunteering?

I love the people and the community. There's a crew of volunteers on Mondays who have been doing this for a long time. Pam, Betsey and I have all become close friends (we've been nicknamed PB&J) and we'll socialize after our shifts. My wife has met so many new friends through my time volunteering here!

There are many more women than men volunteering at the Food Bank, and I don't know why that is but we need more men to step up and volunteer their time!

### Why should others volunteer at the Food Bank?

I read an article recently and it said at the end: Volunteering is good for the soul. I couldn't agree more. I personally get so much out of volunteering and being of service to others. If we're not here to help each other, why are we here at all?

I've had volunteer work in my life for as long as I can remember, and it's always given me purpose.

I went to an integrated grammar school on the southside of Chicago in the 1950s. We were middle class and I saw firsthand the disparities in equity between me and my friends and it didn't feel right to me. My parents were philanthropic and socially responsible, so helping people just came naturally.

### What else do you want people to know about the Food Bank community?

There's a real sense of collegiality here, it's not hierarchical. They make you feel at home and the staff is very responsive and supportive. I've done volunteer work for 37 years and this is as good as it gets. The shoppers are so appreciative. I've gotten to know so many of them and look forward to chatting.

I also don't burn out here, the work is so important. Food is the most essential basic need, and if we aren't capable of tackling that issue then we're in trouble. Food scarcity is something we have the capacity to address if we work together.





## Join us for an open house on June 4

We are excited to invite you to our University District Food Bank Open House event on Sunday, June 4, from 1-3pm at 5017 Roosevelt Way NE, Seattle, WA 98105.

During the event, you will have the chance to take a tour of our facility (including our rooftop garden space!), meet our board of directors and staff, and learn more about the different programs we offer to help those who are food insecure. We will have local food trucks available for everyone to enjoy, and we would love to answer any questions you may have about the University District

Food Bank and how you can get involved.

We believe that everyone deserves access to healthy and nutritious food, and we rely on the support of our community to make that possible. We hope that you will join us for this special event and see firsthand the difference that your support can make.

The Open House event is free and open to the public, so feel free to invite your friends and family members as well.

To RSVP or if you have any questions, please contact us at [udfb@udistrictfoodbank.org](mailto:udfb@udistrictfoodbank.org). We look forward to seeing you on June 4!

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## A special community thank you to the University of Washington

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We want to extend a heartfelt THANK YOU to the University of Washington for their ongoing support of our programs, auction and events year after year.

For the last 10 plus years, the UW School of Drama and UW Athletic Department has donated to our annual benefit auction. In

addition to this, there are many groups within the UW, including Foster School of Business, who donate time, resources and money. We're grateful to have neighbors like this who support our community and we love to see new generations of students embracing civic engagement and giving.