

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE UNIVERSITY DISTRICT FOOD BANK

AUCTION SAVE THE DATE!



TICKETS AVAILABLE JUNE 1ST, 2024 • 2100 BOYER AVE EAST, SEATTLE, 98112 • DOORS OPEN 5:30PM



Save the date for our 29th annual auction on Saturday, October 19, at St. Demetrios in Seattle!

We're calling on our community to "step up to the plate" and help us double our food purchasing budget to match our increase in demand.

It's a great time to start building your auction table and inviting friends or coworkers! Keep an eye out here for tickets.

To donate an auction item please use the link:
<https://udistrictfoodbank.ejoinme.org/DonateAuctionItems>

Volunteer profile: Meet Holly Johnson

What is your hometown?
Helena, Montana

What is your volunteer position?
Accountant

How long have you been volunteering at the Food Bank?
15 years

How did you end up in your current role?
Our church, Faith Lutheran in Wedgwood, has supported UDFB since the beginning, so I've always been aware of the organization. In 2008 I

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Holly Johnson

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,

As we round into spring, some of the most hope filled planning conversations happen in my work, connecting with our farm partners for the coming year and building relationships with potential new ones. These conversations let us think about the wide variety of produce grown across Western Washington and plan how we can bring that into our work.

Year after year, fresh produce is among the most requested and most selected items by our shoppers. On an average pantry visit, 50% of what is selected are fresh fruits and vegetables. Knowing this, sourcing what we can from local growers aligns with our values.

For all you regular farmers market shoppers or CSA subscribers out there, you already know how great our region is at providing an abundance of fruits and veggies. If you're not as familiar, definitely give your neighborhood farmers market a look sometime. At the food bank, the real joy is when that same fresh produce is reliably available for our customers.

Tremendous partnerships make this possible. On-going grants from King Conservation District and PCC are the fertile soil in which our farm relationships take root. Smaller community grants fertilize this rich soil throughout the growing season. Harvest Against Hunger offers a trellis of support to our contracting and networking processes so we can find new partners and ensure that we have fair agreements in place early. But it is your individual gifts that are the seed, sun, and water for our success. Your gifts help us reap a bountiful harvest for our community. And your gifts sustain this work every year.

Last year, we spent more than \$100,000 buying locally grown produce directly from our network of small farm partners. Significantly more than ever before. But we were significantly busier, too. In exchange, from May through December, we received an amazing variety of fruits, greens, row crops, root veggies, and squashes of all shapes and sizes to share with our community.

Blueberries from Cooperativa Tierra Y Libertad up in Everson, peppers, tomatoes, herbs, and raspberries (just to name a few) from the network of new farmers hosted by Viva Farms, hardy greens from Francis at Faith Beyond Farm, or zucchinis and summer squash from Dino at SnoValley Farms. Their labors – and that of at least a half a dozen other farmers – help our customers to celebrate the seasons and satisfy their needs.

We are deeply committed to strengthening a healthy, local food system. These partnerships help us do that in small ways while meeting some of the cultural food needs of our community at the same time. With intentionality and effort, we are promoting a community that values the work of our farmers fairly, that treats our environment with care and concern for future generations, and that celebrates the right to healthy, culturally familiar food for us all.

Thank you for continuing to help us plant these seeds for a thriving community.

In peace,
Joe



New staffer keeps customers connected

Meet Sam Plascencia our new Community Connector! Learn about all that he does to help our shoppers stay connected to important resources in the community and help them gain access to basic necessities. We're thrilled to have him and all of his knowledge on the Food Bank team!

Where did you grow up?

I was born in Mexico but grew up in Renton.

What is your background?

I come from a background in public health. While attending UW as an undergraduate, I became interested in public health and passionate about working with individuals and communities to improve health outcomes. After graduating, I worked at Seattle Children's Hospital for three years. I started as a pediatric mental health specialist on the Psychiatry and Behavioral Medicine Unit working with youth experiencing mental and behavioral health crises. Later, I transitioned into a program coordinator role with the Food Security team. In that program, I supported patients and families experiencing food insecurity. I returned to UW to pursue a master's degree in public health with a focus on health systems and population health, culminating in 2023.

When did you start at University District Food Bank?

I started in November of 2023.

What is your title and role within the organization?

I'm the new Community Connector. The Community Connector position helps our customers navigate and sign up for resources in the community. My goal is to provide a supportive program that helps individuals access their basic



Sam Plascencia is seen with his wife, Monica Romero.

needs.

What is the most fulfilling aspect of your work?

The most fulfilling aspect of my work is building meaningful relationships with our community members and connecting them to essential services.

What would you like our donors and volunteers to know about the FoodBank?

Thank you for your time and financial support! Our community connector program is rapidly growing, as we know how important it is to connect individuals to life-changing resources. The more volunteers and donors we have, the more our program can in-

crease staff capacity to support our customers.

Get to know Sam:

Hometown: Renton, WA

First concert: Paul McCartney with my uncle

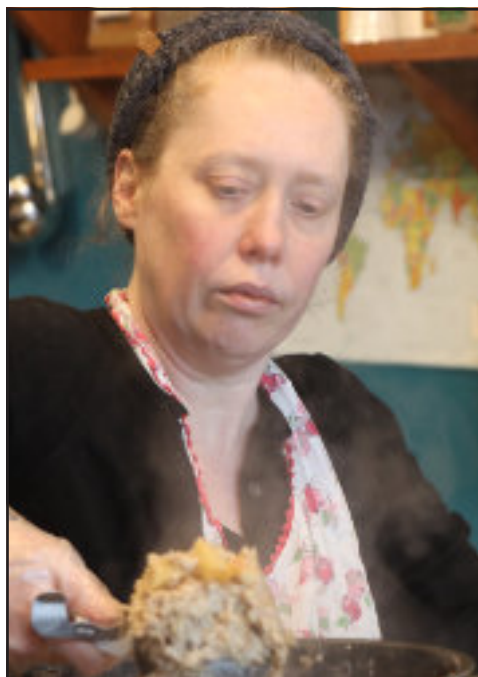
Coffee or Tea: Prefer lattes, but I won't say no to tea

Favorite Pizza Topping/s: Pepperoni

What's your dream vacation: Traveling throughout Latin America, eating food, touring museums, watching live soccer games, and finding beaches to lay on

Favorite place to take out-of-towners in Seattle: Seward Park and lunch at Dick's Burgers

Apple a Day Café is now open at Food Bank



“With this cafe, everyone will be treated to food that they can enjoy immediately.”

Arra Ebersten

Café manager

We're thrilled to announce that the University District Food Bank has taken over the space adjacent to us and turned it into the Apple A Day Café! This café is now open and will better serve our shoppers with free meals and beverages.

Meet Arra Ebersten, our café manager, who is leading us in this exciting new venture. Read on to learn more about the café and her vision for how it will further support the community and extend our mission.

What is your vision for the café?

I want to offer free, satisfying, and nutritious meals for everyone that visits the Food Bank. My goal is to meet the needs of any dietary restrictions or food preferences and provide some culturally familiar dishes. I also want to reduce food waste by utilizing some underappreciated products.

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Top photo: Arra Ebersten, café manager, prepares oatmeal for breakfast for Food Bank customers. Above right: the café's logo. At left: Arra gets supplies from the well-stocked shelves in the café.

Photos by Curt Milton

GIVE BIG

POWERED BY
501 COMMONS

MAY 7-8

GiveBIG is May 7-8 - Support the Food Bank!

We have an ambitious goal to raise \$100,000 during GiveBIG 2024, doubling last year's amount! We know this community can help us raise this amount to match our rising food budget which has doubled again this year due to increased demand.

Save the dates and make a plan to donate any amount you can, it all helps in this time of increasing costs for purchasing food and goods to support our community.

Please look out for early giving days in April as well to give us an early boost in

GiveBIG fundraising.

Want to become a fundraising ambassador for the Food Bank during GiveBIG?!

Here's how:

Call on your personal network and community to support something that is important to you – the Food Bank!

This helps us reach more donors to allow for increased fundraising

Contact Paul Yunker today to get set up with your own personal GiveBIG fundraising page at paul@udistrictfoodbank.org

Her driving goal: 'People gotta eat. It's as simple as that'

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had a big birthday party and asked for donations to the food bank instead of gifts. People donated \$4,000 and an SUV full of food! When we dropped it off, I asked about volunteering with our sons. We went together that summer. When they went back to school in the fall, I kept going to the Food Bank. I worked in the back room for the first 5 years. In 2013 I watched Joe working on a deposit one day and asked about their accounting function. It turned out that Joe was the both the Executive Director and the accountant! I offered to switch my role to accounting, which was a better use of my skills.

What are your main responsibilities?

I handle everything accounting and finance related. I devote one day a week to making and recording deposits, managing cash balances, managing staff credit cards, paying vendors, tracking contracts, paying the staff, working with investment advisors, preparing monthly financial statements for the finance committee and board of directors, and attending finance committee meetings. I am currently managing the annual financial audit in which an outside accounting firm audits the books, which is required by the City of Seattle contracts. My goal is to handle all the financial administration so the staff can concentrate on serving the clients.

What is or was your profession?

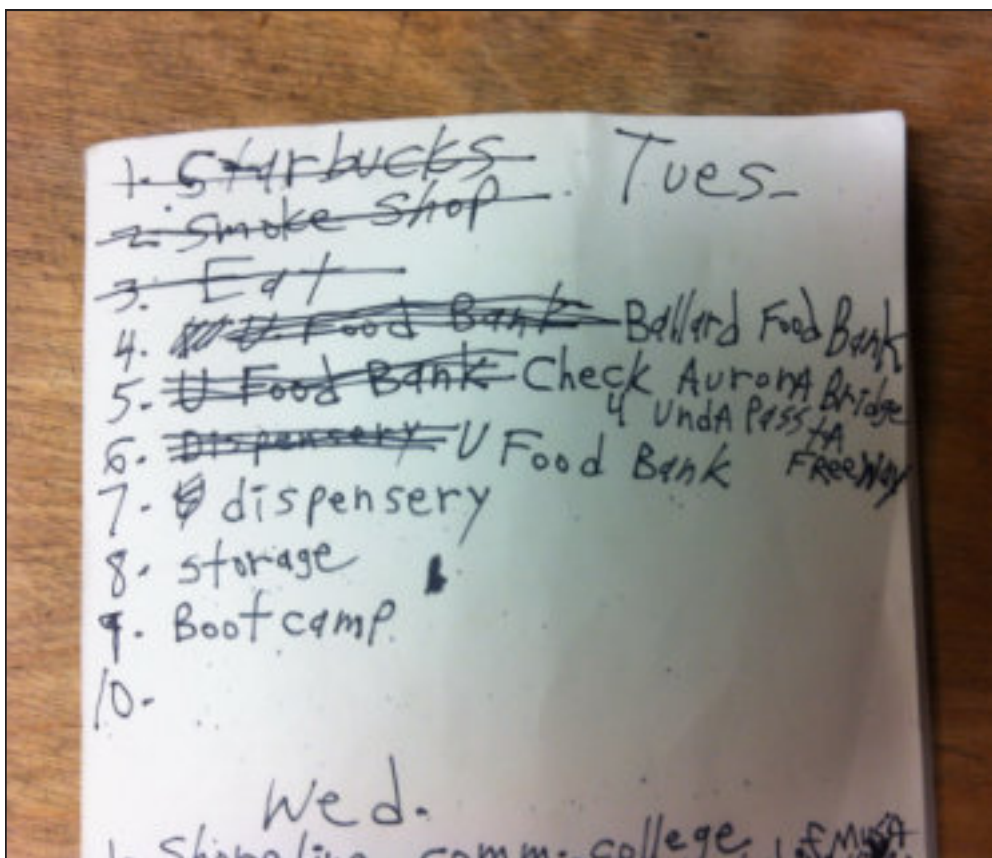
I am a retired CPA. I was fortunate to be able to leave the workforce after our sons were born, and gradually started volunteering, often in board treasurer roles at nonprofits.

What drives you to volunteer at the Food Bank?

People gotta eat. It's as simple as that. I believe that access to healthy food is a right of all people no matter their circumstances. Many years ago, I was tidying the shopping area at the old food bank in the basement of the University Christian Church and came across this To Do List, left by a very organized client:

Why should others volunteer?

Volunteering at the Food Bank is a great opportunity to meet people from lots of different backgrounds who also care about our neighbors. It's also an opportunity to meet and help neighbors who suffer from food insecurity. It's an opportunity to feel a sense of accomplishment at the end of a shift for the hard work put in. Volunteering is like a high-five to humanity.



It struck me that most of us don't have to add "3. Eat" to our daily lists. We take it for granted because we have money to purchase food, and a home with a kitchen to store and prepare food. But many of our neighbors do not have these basic necessities. Although my role is indirect, it frees up staff time and financial resources for serving our neighbors.

A customer at the Food Bank left this note behind and it made an impression on volunteer Holly Johnson. "It struck me that most of us don't have to add 3," she says.

New café feeds hungry customers while they shop

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What will the café offer the community?

We try our best to identify and meet the needs of our customers. There is a self-serve coffee station that we set out every morning before we open, and it's wildly popular. In addition to coffee and tea, people can enjoy fresh fruit, instant oatmeal, and other snacks. And this has allowed us to finally be able to expand to a full meal program offering hot meals and freshly made salads.

Why is this café going to be so impactful right now?

People are hungry when they come in. Shopping at the food bank is a time commitment. Between making their way here and waiting in what can be a very long line they get or arrive hungry. Taking home a bag of groceries to cook for your family is great, but it doesn't help you in the moment. I also find that our shoppers who can cook also want to enjoy the prepared foods that are reserved for our unhoused friends. With this cafe, everyone will be treated to food that they can enjoy immediately.

What will the café hours be?

I would like to be open the same hours as the Food Bank, but we still have a few challenges to work around. Stay tuned!

Any other details our community shout know?

A big shout out to everyone who helped launch this program. It would not have happened without the support of the whole Food Bank community!



Top photo: Café manager Arra Ebersten and Tim Traynor at work preparing morning meals for the Food Bank's customers.

Bottom photo: Colorful oragami cranes line the edges of the supply shelves in the new Apple a Day Café.