



SPRING 2025

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE UNIVERSITY DISTRICT FOOD BANK



GiveBIG is May 6-7: Help us meet increased demand

Can you help the Food Bank raise \$200,000 during GiveBIG, doubling last year's amount? We're raising the bar to meet demand!

Your donations fund a tangible cause that helps our community thrive and feeds families, children and the elderly, provides food delivery services, Packs for Kids to provide weekend meals, and so much more.

We know this community coupled with generous donor matches can help us meet this

goal and match our rising food budget, which has quadrupled since 2021.

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 Give-

BIG fundraising!

Want to become a fundraising ambassador for the Food Bank

during GiveBIG? Ask your network to support feeding the community and strengthening your neighbors.

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 us today to set up your personal GiveBIG fundraising page: Paul Yunker, paul@udistrictfoodbank.org or Christine Bagley, christine@udistrictfoodbank.org.



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

Hello Friends:

Last year was the busiest in our organization's history. If you've been reading our newsletters or following along on our social media, this doesn't come as a surprise. We've expanded customer access across Northeast Seattle, grown school partnerships to reach more students, responded to an expanding need for home-delivered food, and added a café program to reach community members better supported with fresh, healthy, ready-to-eat meals. By removing these barriers to access, it's no wonder that we served at record levels.



Unfortunately, our supply of donated food – historically the most significant source for our distributions – is not growing at the same rate. As grocery stores close and partnerships evolve, our donated food supply remains flat against increasing customer demand. Gratefully, we have managed this by purchasing more food. Last year, we distributed about 3.8 million pounds of food, over half of which was purchased. Some of our programs rely on purchased food for 90% of what they provide. This shift is not temporary; it's the future. Your ongoing support makes sustaining our programs possible.

We work with a diverse network of wholesalers to stretch every dollar. Having sufficient financial resources makes this possible. In March, we made the difficult decision to pause our egg purchasing because of significantly higher industry prices and shortages caused by bird flu. We're working through replacement strategies to build back a reliable supply of healthy protein for our customers, but none of them will be easy or any less expensive. Thankfully, we have the flexibility to navigate these challenges because of this community's generosity.

Spring is always a season when food and financial donations slow down, but the challenges are more significant this year. A difficult state budget, looming trade uncertainties, and reductions in federal support for basic needs programs like SNAP all point to a tough road ahead. More neighbors will need our help, and food prices continue to rise.

This spring, we must raise more funds to keep food on our shelves and meals on our neighbors' tables. If you can give, now is the time. Your support directly translates into fresh produce, protein, and pantry staples for families who depend on us. Every dollar you give strengthens our ability to meet the growing need.

Please consider making a gift today, whether it's your first donation or an additional contribution. Together, we can ensure no one in our community goes hungry.

Thank you for your generosity.

In peace,
Joe

Save the date for our annual auction

Save the date for our 30th annual auction on Saturday, October 18, at St. Demetrios in Seattle! All funds raised support the University District Food Bank's operating budget, which has quadrupled in size since 2021.

It's a great time to start building your auction table and inviting friends or coworkers! Keep an eye out here for ticket info this summer. Early bird pricing will last through September.

We're now accepting auction items. Have any of the following items or access to them through work or friends? Visit udistrictfoodbank.ejoinme.org/DonateAuctionItems to fill out our easy online form.

- Local Sports Tickets
- Theatre Tickets
- Flights
- Vacation Rentals
- Wine Tastings
- Experiences



Scenes from last year's Take a Bite Out of Hunger Auction.



Meet our AmeriCorps team

We are so lucky to have these folks supporting the Food Bank and bringing their energy and passion to this community!

Margot

- 1. What is your title and role within the organization: AmeriCorps FoodRecovery Specialist
- 2. When did you start at University District Food Bank: June 2023
- 3. What is the most fulfilling aspect of your work: Finding new opportunities to recover additional food, and seeing the food we recover go directly to our community
- 4. Your hometown: San Francisco
- 5. First concert: Kiana Lede
- 6. Coffee or Tea: Coffee
- 7. Favorite Pizza Topping/s: Olives and arugula
- 8. What's your dream vacation: Iceland
- 9. Favorite place to take out-of-town-ers in Seattle: Gasworks Park

Lilly

- 1. What is your title and role within the organization: Satellite Pantry Assistant



- 2. When did you start at University District Food Bank: October 2024
- 3. What is the most fulfilling aspect of your work: Connecting with the communities of our Magnuson Park and North Seattle College pantries, and seeing my efforts add up to meaningful impact for our customers and volunteers!
- 4. Your hometown: Tacoma, WA
- 5. First concert: Fleetwood Mac
- 6. Coffee or Tea: Coffee
- 7. Favorite Pizza Topping/s: Any and all veggies
- 8. What's your dream vacation: Brazil
- 9. Favorite place to take out-of-town-ers in Seattle: A walking tour of all my

favorite spots in Capitol Hill

Tyler

- 1. What is your title and role within the organization: I am the Cafe King. I am second to Arra, the Cafe Queen. I help plan meals, serve plates, cook, prep, do dishes, and ensure we have the necessary supplies for each day. On Monday Lilly and I prepare Door Dash boxes for the North Seattle College Pantry.
- 2. When did you start at University District Food Bank: I started volunteering in January 2024, I started my AmeriCorps term in September 2024.
- 3. What is the most fulfilling aspect of

your work: Serving our community delicious and healthy meals that put smiles on their faces.

- 4. Your hometown: Mukilteo, WA
- 5. First concert: Summer Jam in 1999 I think
- 6. Coffee or Tea: Coffee
- 7. Favorite Pizza Topping/s: Pineapple and breakfast bacon, not Canadian bacon
- 8. What's your dream vacation: Maybe a massive road trip to all the amusement parks with the most roller-coasters.

Our AmeriCorps team members are, from left: Margot Kirby, Lily Durham, Tyler Karas and Cherie Liberty

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An intern in the Bloom Urban Farm program works in our Rooftop Roots garden in 2022.

Learn more about the many programs and what they provide our community through our chat with Bill Lowie, the University District Food Bank's Assistant Director.

What are the main job training programs?

1. Job Intern Program: Administered through the YWCA
2. BRIDGES: Skills building with Seattle Public Schools kids
3. TRAC Associates Program: Provides employment services for eligible refugee and immigrants
4. Bloom Urban Farm Internship: 10-week paid urban farming internship for youth ages 18-24, held on our Food Bank rooftop farm
5. YES 2 Summer Internship Program: Seasonal summer program focused on summer internship opportunities for visually impaired youth
6. SYEP(Seattle Youth Employment Program): City of Seattle for Youth Employment Program

What are the requirements for each program?

1. Job Intern Program: For individuals receiving TANF benefits, referred by DSHS. Participants work 20 hours per week at an internship site. Must also attend YWCA programs like Job Training, Job Search, or Life Skills workshops. Regular meetings with an Employment Specialist are required.



Did you know the Food Bank has job training programs?

2. BRIDGES: Serves young adults (ages 18-21) with disabilities needing continued special education after high school. Focuses on building job, life, and independent living skills. Students work at volunteer sites to develop vocational and social skills with staff support.

3. TRAC Associates Program: Provides work opportuni-

ties eligible refugee and immigrants to build job and English skills while they stabilize in the US and deal with the trauma of relocation.

4. Bloom Urban Farm Internship: Paid three-month internship for individuals ages 18-24 experiencing housing instability. Fo-

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Job training programs build our community

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cused on participants with an interest in learning about food systems, urban farming, art and wood working. Run by our fabulous Master of the Garden Shanelle.

5. YES2: For individuals who are legally blind or visually impaired. Participants must independently manage personal and medical needs. Must have orientation and mobility skills for safe travel. Must be active clients of DSB's Vocational Rehabilitation program.

6. SYEP: Open to ages 16-24. Focuses on leadership development, job readiness, and career exploration. Includes a summer internship in the Seattle area. Goal: Prepare participants for meaningful, well-paying careers.

What are the expectations from each?

All programs focus on helping participants build real-world work experience to strengthen their resumes, with the goal of securing meaningful, full-time employment elsewhere. There is a greater emphasis on 'life skills' in Bridges and YES2 programs.

What are some of the

biggest successes you've seen from these programs?

For many, success begins simply by enrolling in the program. In the case of YES2, that first step is a significant move toward empowerment and long-term personal independence. For participants in the Y program, success often means sticking with it—even when life's challenges knock you off balance—demonstrating per-



Seattle school kids take part in the Bridges program at the Food Bank.

sistence and resilience that can open doors to future employment.

In all programs, the common thread is showing up and pushing forward, no matter what. Over the years, I've seen individuals work hard to catch up, complete the program, and find doors opening as a result. I've also heard from teachers in Bridges and YES2 about young people finding jobs and returning home with a sense of success.

How can the Food Bank community support these programs?

First and foremost, continue to

support all the work we do here. We recognize the vital role the community plays in this effort. If you're in a position to hire—or know someone who is—consider reaching out to us or our partner organizations. Offering someone a chance through these programs can be life-changing, both for the individual and for the workplace.

While I'm not familiar with the exact funding requirements for these programs, I do worry they could be vulnerable to cuts in the name of efficiency or cost savings. It's easy to undervalue these efforts because the payoff isn't always immediate or financial. But the impact of offering someone an opportunity—believing in them, investing time, money, and care—goes far beyond dollars.

We've seen people move from these programs into stable, full-time jobs because someone gave them a chance. I've heard back from participants who say that first opportunity set their life on a new path. These programs work—and they change lives.

We all need a sense of belonging and purpose—these programs help provide exactly that. When we invest in our community, we strengthen it. It may sound simple, even obvious, but sometimes the simplest truths need to be said out loud. So, stand with our neighbors—hire them, support these programs, and advocate to keep them funded. Together, we can ensure everyone has the opportunity to move forward.

Get to know Tiff, one of our newest Food Bank team members

Tiffany Ha is our Pantry Coordinator and we're so lucky to have her talents at the Food Bank supporting customers with Mandarin and Cantonese language translation.

Read on to learn more about her!

Where did you grow up? I grew up in Hong Kong and moved to the US in middle school.

What is your background?

I taught English learners at an agricultural vocational school where I learned about decisions farmers had to make between crop resilience and autonomy over seed production. My experience led me to pursue a Masters of Public Administration where I studied environmental policy and conducted research on small-scale producers' climate adaptations. After graduating, I worked as an evaluator on racial equity and environmental justice initiatives.

When did you start at University District Food Bank?

January 2025

What is your title and role within the organization?

Multilingual pantry coordinator. Cantonese is my first language and I also speak Mandarin.

What is the most fulfilling aspect of your work?

Getting to connect with and support customers and volunteers who speak different languages.

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

Customers have shared that they so appreciate the food op-



Tiffany Ha

tions we have and the care they feel here, thank you for your support!

Quick Round Questions:

Hometown: Sai Kung, Hong Kong

First concert: Lawrence Chow's piano performance

Coffee or Tea: Tea!

Favorite Pizza Toppings: Ricotta, garlic, spinach / Ravioli alla vodka

What's your dream vacation?

On an island where I'm in warm turquoise water with coral and other sea creatures at least 60% of the time.

Favorite place to take out-of-towners in Seattle: Carkeek in November or Union Bay in the Spring.

Meet our team of AmeriCorps volunteers

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9. Favorite place to take out-of-towners in Seattle: Bhy Kracke Park in Queen Anne

Cherie

1. What is your title and role within the organization: Pantry Assistant/ Home Delivery Assistant.

2. When did you start at University District Food Bank: November 1, 2024. I began Volunteering in 2016 the first week that the Food Bank opened at this location.

3. What is the most fulfilling aspect of your work: In these economic times food insecurity is affecting so many people, and being a part of this amazing organization and knowing I am helping my community, is the most fulfilling aspect of working at the Food Bank.

4. Your hometown: I was born and spent my first 18 years in North Syracuse, New York.

5. First concert: My first concert was K.C. And the Sunshine Band

6. Coffee or Tea: Definity coffee over tea

7. Favorite pizza: Super Supreme

8. Dream vacation: Greece or Tahiti

9. Favorite place to take out-of-towners in Seattle: If it is their first time in Seattle is Pike Place Market and the Space Needle, that is generally where they want to go!