

SUMMER 2025

# FOOD FOR THOUGHT

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE UNIVERSITY DISTRICT FOOD BANK

## Thank You for Giving BIG!

We're so grateful for this incredible community! Thank you to everyone who gave \$5 or \$1,000+ during this drive! We set an ambitious GiveBig goal to raise \$200,000, and with your generous donations and matching dollars, we raised \$170,000!

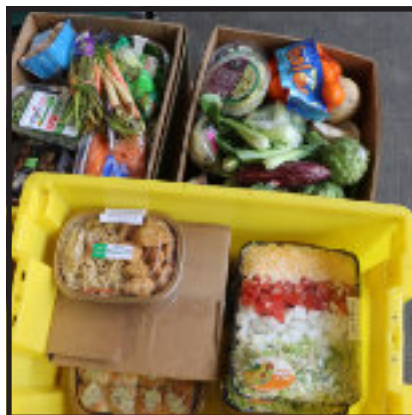
We fell short of our goal but here's how the numbers stack up:

- 62% more raised this year than in 2024.
- \$65,000 more dollars donated compared to 2024
- 130 additional people donated

We raised a record amount this fiscal year, trending towards \$3.6 million in revenue. Even so, we're anticipating a \$300,000 budget shortfall come June 30, the end of our fiscal year. Our expense budget has grown due to several factors:

- Higher demand for our services (70% busier than two years ago)
- Hiring more staff to accommodate the service increase

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Scan this QR code to go to our donation page

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:

Our goal for every customer visiting us is to offer at least three days' worth of food—food that is healthy and culturally familiar. While visits throughout the week may vary depending on what's on our shelves, we assure our customers that their visit will be meaningful. They may not find everything they need, but they will have choices and access to quality food for their families. To make this commitment, we rely on many sources of food.

Our longtime partner, Food Lifeline, is a weekly source. Every Wednesday, on a truck we share with other food banks, food is delivered to us from their South Park warehouse. This includes donations we've selected, food purchased in cooperation with other food banks, and items from TEFAP—The Emergency Food Assistance Program, a federal program providing free USDA food to those in need.

Store partners are a daily source of food donations. Seven days a week, we're on the road collecting nutritious food from nearby grocery stores, bakeries, convenience stores, and other shops that would rather share their excess food than see it go to waste. Some stores we visit daily, others a few times a week, but our refrigerated van and food rescue staff (plus dedicated volunteers) ensure this food gets to customers while still fresh and safe.

Smaller, less frequent donations also add up throughout the year—from the U-District Farmers Market, private food drives, church collections, backyard and p-patch gardeners, City Fruit gleaning, our rooftop farm, and UW's SCRAM(Student Cleanup, Recycle, and Moveout) program. These high-impact donations supplement what shoppers find.

Finally, our own purchasing brings in a wide variety of essential items—from produce to dairy, halal meat to eggs, rice and pasta, canned goods, cooking oil, diapers, and period products. Our wholesale relationships help us stretch our spending, and we partner with local farmers to source the season's freshest produce, unexpected surpluses, and even "imperfect" items that are still delicious and nutritious.

When it all adds up, purchased food makes up about half of our weekly distribution; the other half is donated.

As we've gotten almost 80% busier over the past few years, purchasing has become more important than ever. Donations have been flat, so we've doubled our purchasing to meet rising demand—but we need your help to sustain this.

With proposed cuts to SNAP—the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as food stamps—and Medicaid, we expect more customers will turn to us for support. SNAP provides about nine meals for every one the food bank offers, so even modest reductions will have a big impact.

And TEFAP is expected to be cut by up to 50% this year, which could mean a loss of over 200,000 pounds of food for us. That gap will need to be filled through purchasing.

Your gift today helps us prepare for these challenges and sustain our food purchases through the summer. Our newsletter reaches nearly 12,000 households. A \$25 gift from each reader would help stock our shelves through July and August, cover our \$300,000 budget shortfall, and ensure every neighbor finds what they need when they visit.

Thank you.

In peace, Joe







# University District Food Bank open house

WEDNESDAY  
AUGUST 13TH  
5 TO 8 PM

5017 ROOSEVELT WAY NE  
[WWW.UDISTRICTFOODBANK.ORG](http://WWW.UDISTRICTFOODBANK.ORG)

## Food Bank Open House

Join us for an Open House on Wednesday, August 13, from 5-8 p.m. at the Food Bank. Come see what's new at the Food Bank, enjoy bites from our Apple-a-Day Café, and connect with staff and local legislators.

Drop in anytime from 5-8p.m. We look forward to seeing you there!





Customers get a text on their phones when it's time for their grocery appointment.

# Shorter lines = Happier Food Bank shoppers

We're excited to share something we've had in the works for a long time.

As many of you know, our Food Bank offers significant covered sidewalks that shelter our shoppers from the rain while they wait in line, a big step up from our old location. But over the years we've seen new hardships the long lines have created.

To remedy this, our team has been working hard to launch a reservation system for our shoppers to offer timed entry, avoiding long lines that lead to crowding, and offer a more efficient and enjoyable experience for all.

We chatted with Thomas Bernardi on our team to share more about this effort that he and Jordan Saibic have been spearheading.

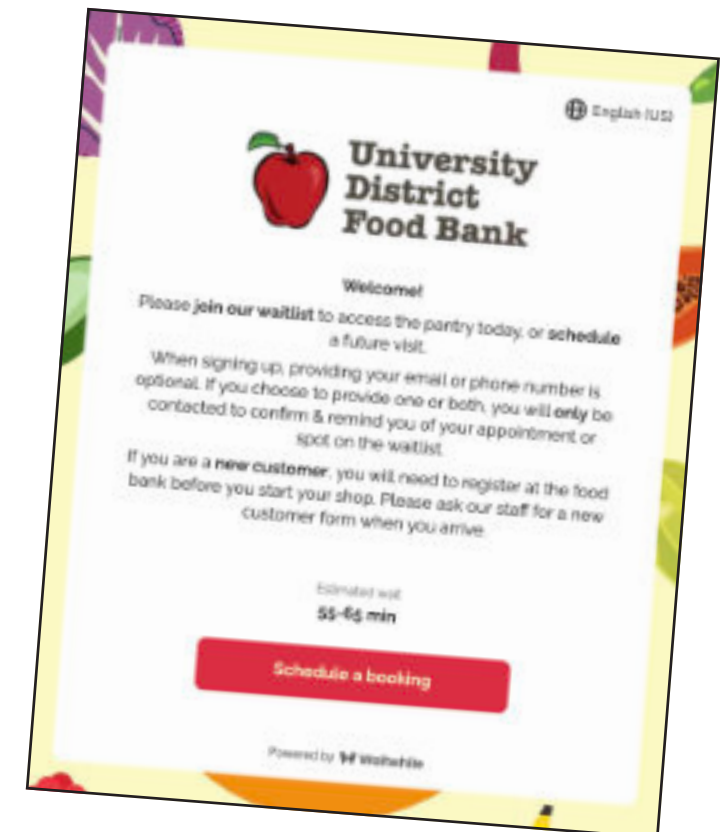
## How does the new reservation system work for shoppers?

Reservations are a hot commodity but for those who manage to make a reservation it means they can plan to be here exactly at their reservation time, rather than waiting around for an hour and a half. Customers can make a

reservation online or with the assistance of our staff up to two weeks ahead of time. There are 3 slots every 10 minutes. Those who don't make reservations get in line on a virtual waitlist. They can do this from their phone or computer before showing up, or on an iPad located at our exit door. A TV screen as well as a link sent to their phone will show them their position in line. When it is their turn, we call them up to the door and send them a text message. Customers have a generous 30 minute grace period to come to the door after they have been called.

## How has it been received?

The first few weeks were very difficult as people adapted to the new system. It took a while for customers to see the benefits. As time has passed, we have had more and more positive feedback



Getting a reservation to pick up groceries at the Food Bank begins on this landing page on the Food Bank's website.

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# Calling a red card on hunger — Join the team at the Food Bank auction!

Seattle is about to become the epicenter of world-class soccer! In 2025, we're one of six host cities in the FIFA Club World Cup, and then in 2026 we're hosting six-FIFA World Cup games, bringing global soccer fever to Lumen Field.

At the food bank, we know food — like soccer — connects people across cultures. That's why we're calling a Red Card on Hunger this year.

Join us for our 30th annual Take a Bite Out of Hunger auction on Saturday, October 18, 2025, and help us ensure no one is sidelined by food insecurity.

We're now accepting auction items — sports tickets, travel experiences, gift cards, wine tastings, and more. Have something to donate? Visit [udistrictfoodbank.e-](https://udistrictfoodbank.ejoinme.org/DonateAuction)



[joinme.org/DonateAuction](https://joinme.org/DonateAuction)  
Items to fill out our easy online form.

Let's bring the global spirit of the game to our community and kick hunger out for good!

Huge thanks to our early sponsors:

Wellpoint, Williams Family Charitable Foundation, Humana, Doe Bay Resort, Sound

Team Realty and Stanford Apartments. Your support gets us closer to our goal and makes this event possible.

Interested in joining them as a sponsor? We'd love to have you on the team. Contact us to learn more about sponsorship opportunities at [auction@udistrictfoodbank.org](mailto:auction@udistrictfoodbank.org).





## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

### Joe Gonzales, delivery driver

Meet Joe Gonzales, one of our incredible Food Bank volunteer delivery drivers!

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

I started volunteering around May 2020.

**What are your typical volunteer responsibilities?**

My main responsibility is delivering groceries to disabled and elderly clients.

**What is your favorite part about volunteering?**

I personally feel the best part of my volunteering is getting the chance to meet face-to-face with the people that the food bank serves. Showing up to someone's home with bag of food creates a meaningful connection, often a friendship, with someone in the area.

*“Showing up at someone’s door with a bag of food creates a meaningful connection.”*

**Joe Gonzales**

Delivery driver

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

People should get involved with the U District Food Bank because the work needs doing. Many of the problems around us can’t be resolved quickly. Volunteering at the Food Bank is a concrete way of tackling hunger. Whether it's in the front of the house or in the back, you are guaranteed to be doing something more impactful than you can imagine.

### Meet Luam Wersom, restaurateur and Food Bank supporter

Meet Luam Wersom, owner of Seattle restaurant Mojito, whose passion for food is matched only by his commitment to community.

Luam has been a steadfast supporter of the Food Bank, regularly donating fresh meals

since the covid pandemic, and donating popular auction items to our annual gala, to fight hunger in NE Seattle. Through his restaurant, he’s not only serving up delicious dishes but also nourishing hope and solidarity.

Luam’s team prepares all the food offsite in his kitchen and delivers it to the Food Bank each Monday, where it’s served as part of “Mojito Mondays” in our Apple a Day Café. This partnership is a big win for us since we currently don’t have the capacity to staff the café on Mondays, Luam’s support ensures our community receives a freshly prepared, nourishing meal to start their week.

We’re grateful for Luam’s generosity and proud to have him as a partner in our mission to ensure no one goes hungry.



Luam Wersom

# Reservations make a big difference to our customers

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**How has it changed the way our community shops at our pantry?**

For many of our customers the Food Bank is a much quicker experience, either because they can make reservations or because they can get themselves on the waitlist before heading over. The in-store shopping experience has largely remained the same.

**What are the positive outcomes from implementing this system?**

- The biggest improvement is that there is no longer a 50-person line in front of the food bank! This is a great improvement for a few reasons:
- The outdoor space presents a much more dignified experience. There are fewer people (as people can wait in their car, walk around the block etc.) and the door is not constantly blocked. People are not forced to line up right in front of the coffee cart.
- There are no more disputes over line cutting or places.



Food Bank staff can help customers make a reservation in the system up to two weeks in advance.

There is more of a sense that the sidewalk is a community space. People can hang out, sitting on the bench and chatting with each other.

**What else should the Food Bank community know about this new service?**

This has been an incredible opportunity to improve the use of our limited space. Not only that we are able to offer a modern,

streamlined service like you would expect at any high-capacity restaurant or other service. It has been wonderful to be able to improve our customer experience in such a meaningful way.

In many aspects we are pushing up against physical space and budget constraints in how we can serve our customers, so it has been rewarding to find a way to make a customer visit more streamlined and dignified.

Thanks to  
everyone for  
Giving BIG;  
there is much  
left to do

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- Higher food costs
  - Receiving less donated food (50% of the food we distributed was purchased, compared to a 70:30 ratio of donated to purchased food two years ago)
  - Federal cuts to The Emergency Food Assistance Program and AmeriCorps
- Please consider a donation in

any amount to help fill the gap and continue to feed our friends and neighbors.

If 2,000 people in this community each gave \$150 OR if everyone reading this newsletter donated \$25 today, we would reach our goal and make a huge difference in the lives of so many this year.

Donate today at: [udistrictfoodbank.org/donate](https://udistrictfoodbank.org/donate)

Thank you for your support!