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SUMMER  
2020

A PROGRAM OF  HRDC

# GVFB NEWS

*Local support for local families*

## *Summer 2020>>> Why no food donations?*

HRDC's Gallatin Valley Food Bank (GVFB) has been operating for 38 years and there are a few aspects of our service that we hold near and dear to our hearts. The first is our customers and providing the groceries and support they need to persist and someday even thrive. The second is our volunteers and the third is receiving donations. All aspects have been deeply affected by COVID-19. Long have we known that volunteer support is the power that keeps our emergency food system operational. In our past fiscal year, our volunteers rescued food, assisted customers, sorted food donations, packed senior groceries and KidsPacks, delivered food, and repackaged bulk food to the tune of over 20,000 hours of service; 384 hours a week! Without them, we simply cannot operate the same model.

While one role of GVFB is to provide emergency food service for

individuals experiencing a food shortage (over 3,600 in April 2020), we are also part of the response team for community emergencies. Our Food Bank, just like grocery stores and medical workers, is essential. Although our role is to respond to food shortages, our responsibility is to maintain food and human safety. It is because of this essential nature that we make decisions to protect our service. The 206,000 pounds of food from Can the Griz was the reserve we pulled from in the beginning of this crisis. During CTG 2019 we strategically placed many of our food drives at grocery stores to ensure donated items were not expired. In mid-March, we quickly sorted over 50,000 pounds of food to build pre-packed bags so we could begin distributing food using a drive-thru model. Without this reserve, we would have been scrambling to make purchases

that were unavailable in the quantities we needed, at a time when everyone was stocking up on groceries. Our Food Bank store is currently a warehouse where there is only room for items that can be quickly packed to make a food box. Food safety (receiving walk-in donations) requires time, personnel, tact, compassion, and human contact. Right now, during COVID-19, we are short on time and personnel because we are trying to limit human contact.

We miss our volunteers and look forward to the day they can return safely to the food bank so we may begin putting our store back together and accept food donations. Thank you to our donors who have been so generous through this emergency and made it possible for us to purchase the food we need. Our Gallatin Valley Food Bank is 97% funded by our community. We appreciate you!

# Changing Customer Needs >>> When Hardships become Harder

*March marked a new era for our families. Every day they experience a myriad of new challenges in the wake of COVID-19.*

GVFB is no stranger to helping families facing hardship, but we have seen an increase in families needing help for the first time. Normally we see about 100 new customers each month, in the last 6 weeks since the stay at home order was issued, we have seen over 220 new families needing help due to COVID-19. Job loss is a common theme: "My husband was laid off and we have been coming to the food bank since March. We have never needed help before, we are so grateful for the help. My husband found new work and I am hopeful that we will no longer need the support of the food bank."

For other families COVID-19 has exasperated their existing hardships: "My family and I were struggling before COVID-19 hit. But now with the uncertainty of my husband's job and my son and I both immunocompromised, we have many hospital bills and even more on the way. My husband was instructed by the hospital to stop working due to our illnesses. He has a week's worth of sick leave and then we will have no way to pay rent. We live in Family and Graduate Housing, so our rent is not too expensive, but we need help. We have been going to the food bank and the staff has been

very supportive of our needs there." GVFB remains committed to helping families no matter what challenge they face.



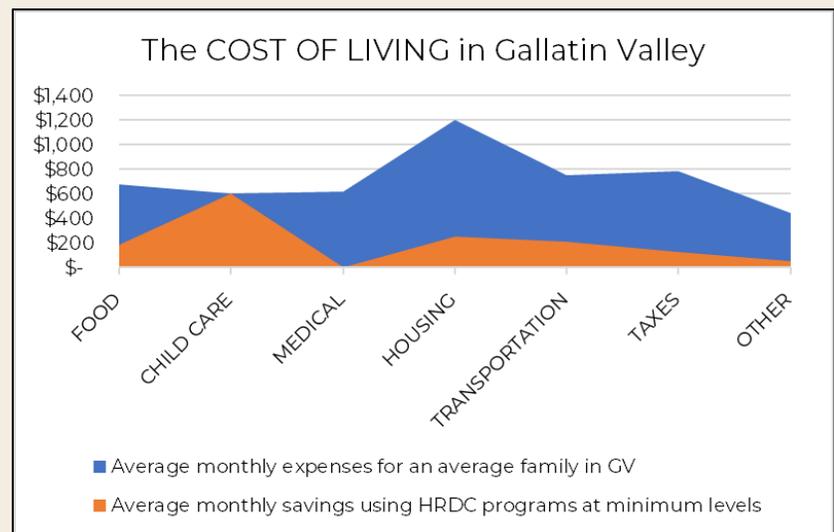
## Donor Spotlight:

We are so grateful for two donors that typically help with Holiday food and have stepped up once again with substantial gifts during this crisis. The **Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation** gifted \$15,000 to our three food banks and **Town Pump Foundation** delivered \$35,000 to the Gallatin Valley Food Bank and \$10,000 to the Headwaters Area Food Bank.



## Pulling it all together >>> The Path to Self-Sufficiency

Low wages and a high cost of living create challenges for families to make ends meet. A family of three living in poverty might only make \$21,330 a year but have expenses that exceed their earnings. HRDC's services are designed to work together to make the difference between a family being stable and becoming vulnerable. The illustration below shows the average monthly expenses based on typical expenses (livingwage.mit.edu) for average household size for Gallatin County (census.gov) to be around \$5,080 and by utilizing six of HRDC services, a family can save around \$1,430 per month. Budgeting is a key component to move from an unstable situation to a more stable one.



## Adapting to COVID-19 >>> Taking care of business

COVID-19 has not only caused financial hardship across communities but has disrupted the ways in which we interact with each other and as an agency delivering services.

For the last 2 months, GVFB's service delivery has looked a lot different. We closed our lobby and store and implemented a drive-thru for our food box distribution.

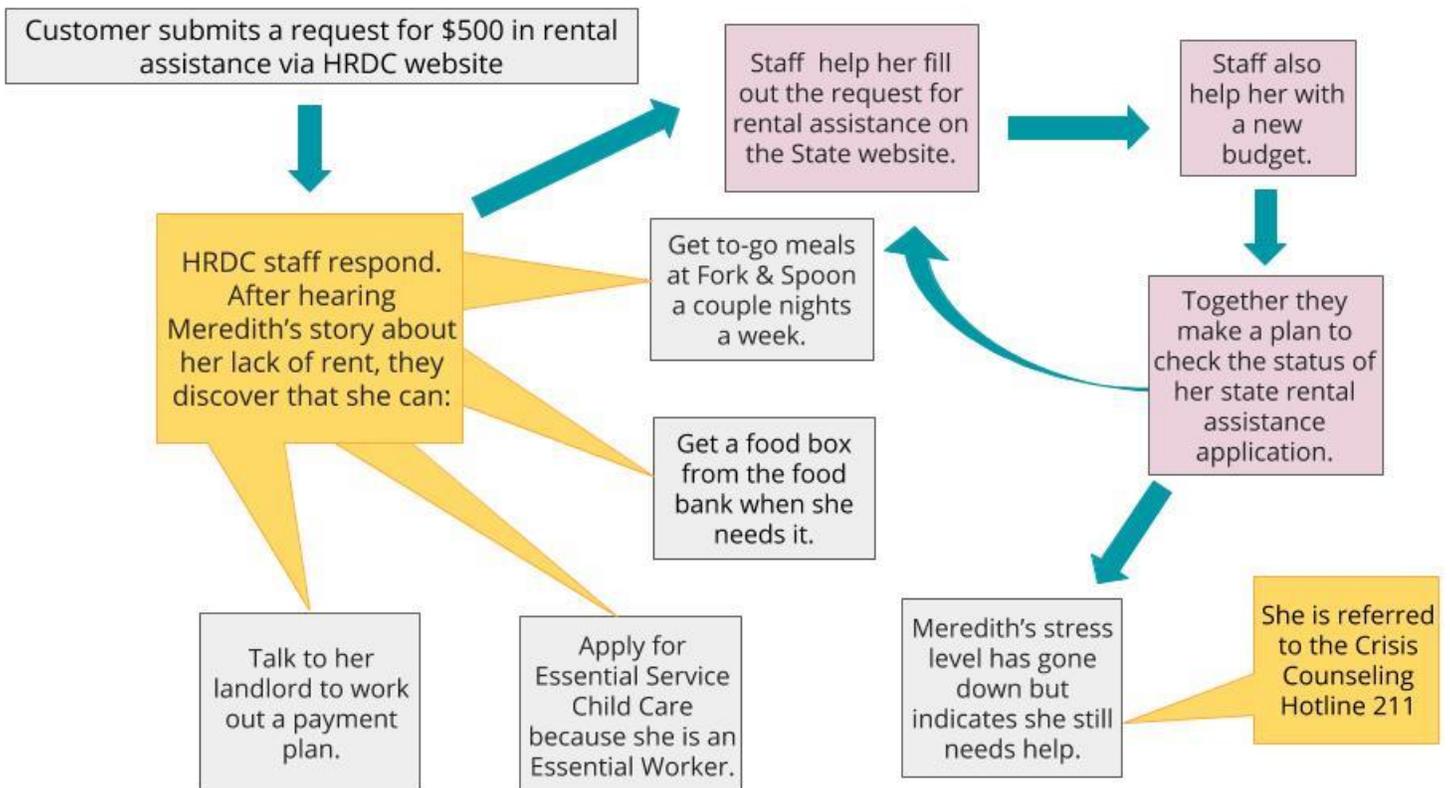
Normally, when customers come in to shop, we conduct an intake interview and help connect them to other community resources to help get them stabilized. It has been tough to connect our customers to community resources in a drive-thru model.

One of the ways HRDC adapted was to create a support request form on their website and have staff triage new requests for help and guide customers through applying for other resources such as unemployment and rental assistance.

Rental and housing assistance are the most frequently requested needs with food and senior needs closely behind.

Because seniors are a higher risk population, HRDC wanted to make sure they were getting their needs met without having to leave their home. They developed Shop 4 a Senior to solve this problem. Seniors are invited to contact HRDC to request their essential needs. HRDC then recruits a donor/volunteer to pick up the items. Those items are given to HRDC, who then delivers the items to the senior's doorstep.

See the diagram below for an example of our problem solving:



# GVFB 101

Here you can find information on who we help, what programs we offer, and how to get in touch with us.

Six unique ways people are helping during COVID	Kiddos donating their savings or birthday money to GVFB, growing a garden, donating restaurant gift cards, building personal care kits, creating unique t-shirts, and donating proceeds, making masks for our crew!
Is Huffing For Stuffing happening?	Our race directors are committed to providing an event that protects your health and safety. We will make an informed decision as we learn more throughout the summer. We remain hopeful as HFS embodies the Holiday spirit of Bozeman and means so much to GVFB. Visit <a href="http://huffingforstuffing.com">huffingforstuffing.com</a> for updates.
What is GVFB's role in an emergency?	GVFB's role is to provide food, warehousing, and transport food in the event of a community disaster as well as individual disasters. Jon Horn, GVFB's Operations Manager serves as a member of the Southwest Montana Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD) team. The SWMT COAD is a regional task force that prepares for emergency events.

## GVFB Garden update >>> Food for Thought:

As of 2018 in Gallatin County, 20% of our community struggled with food access due to physical distance from grocery stores, lack of transportation and affordability of nutritious foods. Food access is a contributor to food insecurity. GVFB provides invaluable supplemental food services to our clients, however when looking at the big picture, a food box is a band aid for a much larger issue. While the cost of housing, food, utilities, healthcare, and other necessities continually increase over time, wages generally remain the same. Rural transportation is another challenge and unexpected life situations are bound to occur, leaving people without financial buffers in times of hardship. Now we are all living in a time of great uncertainty with a pandemic that has highlighted cracks in the foundations of our livelihoods, our healthcare, our

industrialized food system, and thus our security. So how do we move away from uncertainty and towards resiliency? The WWII era Victory Gardens are an example of citizens who took it upon themselves to plant home, school and community gardens that produced nearly 40 percent of vegetables in the U.S. One of our creative approaches to improving food security is through gardening. GVFB has ¼ acre of productive gardens onsite and manages another ¼ acre Learning Garden in the Story Mill Community Park. Our garden goals are multifaceted in that we want to grow more nutritious food for our customers, provide spaces for therapeutic and educational programming, decrease stigma, and raise awareness of the reality of food insecurity in our community, and provide an example of what it looks

like to grow your own food in Montana. We hope that by creating these growing spaces, we can facilitate opportunities for our community to become empowered and self-sufficient through their relationship to food. This old proverb comes to mind: "Give a family a food box and feed them for a week, teach a family to garden and feed them for a lifetime" or something like that...For more information on how to get involved in our gardens, please visit our volunteer portal or contact [mgriswold@thehrdc.org](mailto:mgriswold@thehrdc.org).



**Phone:** (406)586-7600  
**Email:** [infogvfb@thehrdc.org](mailto:infogvfb@thehrdc.org)  
**Mail:** PO Box 1129, Bozeman, MT 59771  
**Location:** 602 Bond St, Bozeman, MT 59715  
**Website:** [gallatinvalleyfoodbank.org/](http://gallatinvalleyfoodbank.org/)

**Food Assistance Hours:**  
**Monday-Friday, 1:00-4:00 pm**  
**Drive-Thru Only, Lobby Closed**  
**Office Hours:**  
**Monday-Friday, 8:00 am-5:00 pm**