From the Intake Desk

To welcome in the new year, let’s sit down together at the intake desk to look at the trends of who is visiting HRDC’s Gallatin Valley Food Bank and why.

The comfort of a meal and the dignity of being treated without judgement are, and continue to be, guideposts in our work to alleviate hunger across Southwest Montana. These principles are uniquely present at the intake desk, where customers are welcomed into the store to shop. The intake desk serves as a window into the challenges and triumphs of our community. Right now the struggle of finding affordable housing is a weighty reality for many of our customers. Those living paycheck to paycheck, due to the high cost of housing, come to GVFB for free groceries. This includes students, families, and individuals working full-time who, once their rent and car payments are made, rely on GVFB for their weekly shopping. Those living on a fixed income, including seniors, also shop for groceries in our store. One customer living on a fixed income saw their rent increase 600 dollars a month; this prompted them to return to the food bank for the first time since the beginning of the pandemic for free groceries. High housing costs have pushed many to the point of homelessness. More than ever before we see people living in their cars, campers, or couch surfing. We will continue to work with HRDC’s Housing Department to find solutions, all the while providing free groceries with no barriers. One win for GVFB is that we see about 20-30 Latino households shopping for groceries in our store each week. This is thanks to a long process of trust building and the dedication of bilingual volunteers.

Here is to another year of meeting the needs, solving the challenges, and celebrating the successes that come to the intake desk every day!
**Volunteer Spotlight >>>

This Quarter’s All-Star Volunteer: Dick Dowdell

Can the Griz won our annual friendly food drive competition with Can the Cats. Our largest food drive of the year is possible because of the ingenuity and dedication of one Dick Dowdell.

Dick provides guidance and leadership year-round as a member of Gallatin Valley Food Bank’s advisory council, but in November we truly rely on him. Here is a non-exhaustive list of how Dick’s days are spent with GVFB during our busiest month of the year: driving a forklift, organizing pallets, directing volunteers, setting up the Thanksgiving box packing, stacking the Holiday Bags, running the Belgrade Thanksgiving Distribution, staffing a 13-hour food drive, receiving thousands of pounds of food during Can the Griz, getting a forklift donated and delivered for two weeks, roping his friends into helping, and acting as an overall morale booster for the staff! This is not his first time at this level of work and commitment. This is Dick’s 9th November with us (and we could not do it without him). We are grateful to Dick who is an integral part of the Food Bank family!

**Staff Corner >>> Farewell to Donovan Glasgow

Last January Donovan Glasgow joined our small but mighty team of staff in Child Nutrition as an AmeriCorps VISTA. Like the PeaceCorps, AmeriCorps (Stateside) VISTA or Volunteers in Service to America serve communities by working to alleviate hunger and poverty. Hailing from New Mexico, by way of Maine, Don jumped right into a robust year of projects. He began by tackling surveys for KidsPack to help us better understand the population we serve, those that could use our services but for one reason or another do not, and how to better support schools in providing KidsPacks/nutrition support. Don simultaneously supported the organizing of Spring for Food/Childhood Hunger Awareness Week events that took place in April. And in May jumped right into Summer Lunch Trainings followed by supporting Summer Lunch volunteers and program meal tracking. In addition to supporting KidsPack this fall, Don has also successfully applied for a variety of grants to support our Child Nutrition programs year round. Don has been an amazing asset to the Child Nutrition programs, the Food Bank, and HRDC as a whole. His calm presence, work ethic, and commitment to equity will be missed when he leaves in January. We wish him well on his next adventures.

**Donor Spotlight: Turkey Angel

John Hodgson wanted to make sure everyone was taken care of and that anyone who needed a Thanksgiving dinner would get one. It all started back in November 2012 when we had about 6 turkeys in the freezer with less than 2 weeks until our Thanksgiving Box Distribution would begin. John showed up at the food bank wondering if we needed turkeys. Every year, until his passing, he purchased about 250 turkeys. From that point forward we referred to John as the Turkey Angel. To honor John, each year his friends at Barnard Construction and family donate funds for the purchase of turkeys.
It Takes a Village!

We are humbled by the generosity of our community! Thank you for helping us make sure everyone had a Turkey Dinner for Thanksgiving. Thank you for helping us provide food day after day.

Collecting donations for 13 hours at Town and Country Foods

Can the Griz total was 654,126.66 pounds and dollars

Delivering 48 Thanksgiving boxes to people's homes

HRDC food banks distributed 921 Thanksgiving Boxes in total!

We loved seeing all the food drives swing by to drop off their donations!
HRDC's Food & Nutrition Programs
OUR COLLECTIVE IMPACT LAST YEAR

GALLATIN VALLEY FOOD BANK
Provided 10,829 individuals with groceries

FORK & SPOON
Served 23,509 meals with a pay-what-you-can model

BIG SKY COMMUNITY FOOD BANK
Helped 821 individuals with food assistance and service navigation

Thank you to the partners, volunteers, and friends that made this possible!

HEADWATERS AREA FOOD BANK
Distributed 245% more food boxes than the year prior

Program Highlight >>>

15th Annual
HUFFING FOR STUFFING

- 3,272 participants (106 virtual participants)
- One year only - a 15k to celebrate our 15th anniversary
- Over half a million dollars raised for HRDC's Gallatin Valley Food Bank since 2007
- Best part of HFS? "Seeing all of the people I know in this healthy generously giving community on the morning of Thanksgiving practicing a healthy lifestyle and giving at the same time." -anonymous participant

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