



# ISSAQUAH

## Food & Clothing Bank

Spring-Summer 2021

### Executive Report

by Cori Walters, Executive Director



As pandemic restrictions are reduced and more people feel comfortable visiting the food bank, our priorities continue to be:

- Clients First
- Gracious Space
- Safety
- Efficiency / Manageability.

Our goal is to get back to pre-pandemic service levels and frequency, including a

fully operational clothing bank, weekly food distribution in our market and delivery program, ability to accept in-kind donations, and all IFCB employees being able to work in our building together.

As we evaluate how best to do this, we are looking at possible intermediate measures of making

minor renovations to our existing building for maximum efficiency. Stay tuned to hear updates as we learn more!

***Thank you for helping make it all possible!***

#### INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

Client Story 2

Upcoming Events 3

Lake Sammamish Fireworks Show 3

Champion Spotlight 4

Spring Lunch for the Break 4

CORE Connect Program 5

Donation Information 6

Open Garden Tours 7

Summer Lunch 7

### What does it mean to you?

What better demonstration of community vitality than an organization built on

compassion and driven by community! We are so proud of YOU and all the

people who have made the IFCB what it is today. **Let us know what the IFCB means to YOU and help us share this inspiring story!**

Learn more about this fun opportunity on our website at [issaquahfoodbank.org/50th-anniversary](http://issaquahfoodbank.org/50th-anniversary).



## Overcoming—Elizabeth's Story

by Bonnie DeCaro-Monahan, Development Director



What do you do when the unthinkable happens? Most people aren't prepared to be catapulted into homelessness and having to navigate systems to find resources can feel impossible. For Elizabeth, it was thirty days with no health insurance that caused everything to collapse. *"Thirty days without health care cost us everything but our strength and love for one another"* shared Elizabeth. Thinking back on the catastrophic medical event that left her husband, Gerard, unable to see clearly for three months and so fragile that she had to bathe him, help him build up his strength physically, and help him regain his mental facilities, she added *"These past four years have been the most difficult in my life."*

Both in their mid-to-late sixties and having grown up in upper middle-class homes with successful careers in IT, it was a shock to find themselves broke financially, medical bills mounting, and without family support. Elizabeth described it as a *"frightening, constant panic situation"* remembering when they could only buy *"necessary emergency foods like orange juice"* for

Gerard's diabetes. She added *"We could only eat once a day from McDonalds' dollar menu. Eating this way took a quick toll on our bodies and was leading to mental decline."*

During this time, Elizabeth and Gerard lived out of their car in the Lutheran church parking lot and Elizabeth became ill with a gastrointestinal infection that caused her to lose all her teeth. With no teeth and living out of a car, she wasn't able to find work in her field as an IT Service Delivery or Program Manager. *"I have been told that until my dental issue is resolved, they will not retain or hire me"* explained Elizabeth who has had to take minimum wage jobs, including a temporary position in an Amazon warehouse lifting 10-30 pound boxes. This *"carries severe shame for me because I cannot help myself or Gerard get out of our financial hardship"* she shared.

Fortunately, while living in the Lutheran church parking lot, they sent Elizabeth and Gerard to the Issaquah Food & Clothing Bank. *"The first time we went to the food bank we were greeted with big smiles. Someone explained all the services. We looked like we were in shock because we were in shock. They asked caringly about our current situation. We were quickly loaded up*

*with prepared meals, healthy snacks, water, and other much needed goodies. Most important, we were given the blessing of hope. The team treated us like normal people. Our weekly visits kept us going while we lived in a parking lot"* she remembered.

*"During our last week of being homeless, I became very ill due to bronchitis, and Gerard became ill from his diabetic disease and severe depression from being homeless. His legs were swollen like an elephant because he wasn't getting enough circulation from being in the car."* shared Elizabeth. Fortunately, the Lutheran church representative, Kate, recognized they were not doing well and put them up in a hotel temporarily. After four long years of being without a place to call home, Elizabeth & Gerard were able to find an apartment through a program at the Catholic church.

Elizabeth has such deep appreciation for all these people she calls "angels", adding *"The Issaquah Food & Clothing Bank kept our bellies full of healthy food and they clothed us. All the time expressing kindness and asking weekly about our situation to make sure we were okay physically and mentally. Because of the Issaquah Food & Clothing Bank services we were able to re-*

# Elizabeth's Story (Continued)

*build our health....Our future is different because the panic and worry wondering if you will have enough money for healthy food is now just a memory."*

To all the volunteers, donors, and community partners who

make the Issaquah Food & Clothing Bank possible, Elizabeth wanted to share some final sentiments "You are keeping families and individuals healthy, you are giving us hope, and daily you are changing our

*lives for the better. This may sound drastic, but it is true. You have saved lives including our lives. God bless you all."*

## Mark Your Calendars!

### HOLIDAY CLOSURES

**Independence Day**  
Monday, July 5th  
CLOSED

**Labor Day**  
Monday, September 6th  
CLOSED

### EVENTS

**Recipe for Hope**  
Tuesday, September 28th  
Breakfast - 8:00 a.m.  
Lunch - 12:00 p.m.

**Turkey Trot**  
Main event - Thursday,  
November 25th at 9:00 a.m.  
Plus 4 open routes  
Thursday - Sunday,  
November 25th - 28th



## Lake Sammamish Fireworks Show

Although we are still unable to hold a beautiful fireworks display this year, we have expanded the Lake Sammamish Fireworks Show fundraiser to provide financial support for all of our youth feeding programs, such as Summer Lunch, Power Packs, and Lunch for the

Break! Our wonderful partners, John Kritsonis & Karl Lindor of Windermere Real Estate have generously provided a **\$25,000 match for all donations \$100 or more!** Please join us in fighting childhood food insecurity by donating online at <https://bit.ly/LSFS-donate>.



**Thank you for your support!**

## Champion Spotlight: The National Guard

by Lisa Haynes, Volunteer Manager



Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, a team of National Guard Soldiers have been working closely with the Issaquah Food & Clothing Bank, volunteering their time and people-power to help operations at the food bank and our warehouse.

Alex Harshberger, Tech Sergeant, is the leader of our National Guard team. Alex, Mike, Devan, Sarah, and Shrisa have been assisting in food bank operations

such as sorting and organizing food donations, re-stocking the store, and managing food bank and warehouse inventory. Alex says that everyone on her team has had experience at larger food banks and all of them have appreciated seeing the direct impact of their work here in our community. They have particularly enjoyed working with Kim Skok, Operations Coordinator at the Issaquah Food & Clothing Bank, and all of the wonderful volunteers in being a part of ensuring the smooth running of the food bank. *"There's really no downtime, there's always something to be done."* Alex shared.

Throughout the pandemic, we have been thankful to have had the assistance of the National Guard. Our current crew has been with

us since October 2020 and we will be extremely sad to see them go at the end of June. They are hardworking, fun, and happy to jump in and do whatever needs to be done. They lift heavy crates of cans, with seemingly little effort, for hours at a time! They are really going to be missed.

When asked about challenges at the Issaquah Food & Clothing Bank and her hopes for the future of the food bank, Alex noted that having multiple programs at the same time is difficult with our current locations. She would like to see us in *"a larger space to grow with the community."*

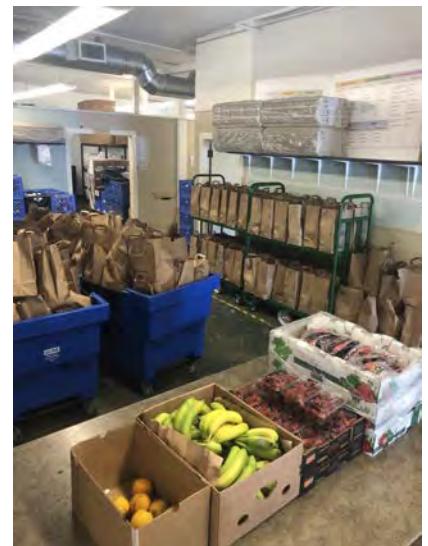
**Thank you for your service  
Alex, Mike, Devan, Sarah &  
Sharissa!**

## Spring Lunch for the Break

Our Spring edition of Lunch for the Break helped to feed over 400 children living in the Issaquah School District!

This year, thanks to the generosity of the Issaquah Schools Foundation, we were able to provide grocery store gift cards to all the participating families. In addition to gift cards, families received bags of fresh produce, cheese, and bread to supplement their school-age children's nutrition.

For more information on how to get involved with future Lunch for the Break distributions, you can visit our website at <https://bit.ly/issaquah-lftb>. Thank you!



## CORE Connect Program

by Rebecca Rice, Community & Social Services Manager

In November 2020, the Issaquah Food & Clothing Bank (IFCB) and Eastside Fire & Rescue (EFR) officially launched a new partner program together.

The Mobile Integrated Health (MIH) Program is a King County-wide program at several different fire departments. The goal of the program is to provide extra assistance and connection to people who need it, while reducing the number of 911 calls for non-emergent health needs, such as falls or ongoing mental health issues. This reserves emergency resources for true emergencies while addressing ongoing or chronic issues outside of the emergency response system.

You might be asking, "Why is the food bank involved in a fire department program?" Great question! This program is actually exactly what our social services team does at IFCB – connect individuals to resources, help navigate our complex system of resources and assistance, and provide that additional support and listening ear to people who need it. More recently, we

have hired a care coordinator, Erica Stapleton, who goes out in the community with a firefighter to do this work and expand our ability to reach people.

Our Mobile Integrated Health Program, called CORE Connect, serves EFR in Issaquah, Sammamish, Carnation, and North Bend (yes, we spend quite a bit of time in the car!). The fire crews identify patients who could use support from the CORE program when on a 911 call, and the CORE team follows up within a couple days. As part of the CORE program, Erica works full time with EFR. Along with a firefighter in the trusty Prius, Erica visits individuals and families at their homes to identify needs, provide services, and then follow up as needed.

Since we began home visits in early 2020, we have been to dozens of households and made strong connections with both individuals and agencies that can provide assistance, such as Lifelong, Adult Protective Services, DSHS, caregiving resources, mental

health resources, and many more.

The Issaquah Food & Clothing Bank is proud and excited to be a part of this important work, and to deepen our community connections and the scope of services we're able to offer to our neighbors.



*Help us welcome Erica (pictured above) to the IFCB team! While she will be spending most of her time building relationships out in the community, you can also find her at EFR headquarters or at the Issaquah Food & Clothing Bank.*

## We're Full!

After many months of distributing emergency boxes of canned goods and other non-perishables last year, our shopper's pantries are full of these staples and we're finding that these items are in extremely low demand for now. The community has also provided significant clothing donations for our clothing bank events held at our partner location, Eastside Fire & Rescue.

This, combined with government assistance and our incredibly generous community responding to our Emergency Needs list requests for staple items, has resulted in a packed warehouse with a very robust inventory of non-perishables and clothing. With such limited space in both our ware-

house and at the food bank, we must be very strategic about how we plan our inventory to remain as safe and efficient as possible.

What are in high demand by our families are the higher priced, perishable items like fruits, vegetables, meats, and dairy products that are harder to stretch SNAP benefits for. For these reasons, we've had to drastically scale back our list of non-perishable items on our Emergency Needs list and reduce the number of donation drop-off dates for the time being.

In the interim, we welcome financial donations to help us purchase the high-demand, perishable items or sought-after non-food items such as shoes, detergent, and feminine

products. We are evaluating all avenues for resolving our capacity constraints, both in the immediate and long-term.

We will continue to keep our Emergency Needs list updated with specific items that are needed to fill inventory gaps based on demand. We hope to resume more regular donation offerings and drop-off dates in 6-9 months, so be sure to watch our website for updates on when those changes occur.

**Thank you for your patience, understanding, and partnership to help us resolve this issue so that we can be responsive to community needs while also prioritizing safety and efficiency!**



# Open Garden Tours

## *to Benefit the Issaquah Food & Clothing Bank*

Self-Guided Tours on Saturday, July 24th and August 21st | 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Have you been getting cabin-fever staying indoors? Enjoy this rare opportunity to self-tour beautiful outdoor gardens, made possible by local Master Gardeners!

Stroll through beautiful landscapes and gardens with friends and family while gaining inspiration and knowledge you can apply to your garden at home.

There is a suggested donation of \$10 per person at each location and all donations made through this effort will be used to provide food and basic needs resources through the Issaquah Food & Clothing Bank!

So mark your calendars and plan to check out this unique opportunity!



**Visit our website for full details at [issaquahfoodbank.org/open-garden-tours](https://www.issaquahfoodbank.org/open-garden-tours)**

## *Summer Lunch has Begun!*

In 2020, our Summer Lunch program served peak numbers, with the average number of children served in any given week increasing by 73% from the previous year! Families with children not only received fresh produce, cereal, bread, deli meat, cheese, yogurt, and chicken tenders, but every participating family also received a \$25 grocery store gift card to help fill any gaps in their fridges and pantries.

We would not have been able to support so many families last year without the extreme generosity of you, our donors, and our partners at the Issaquah Schools Foundation! Childhood food-insecurity rates in King County are still higher than pre-pandemic years and we are expecting to continue serving higher numbers this year.

Please help support the Summer Lunch program this year by giving at <https://bit.ly/ifcb-summer-lunch>.

**Thank you!**



179 1st Avenue SE  
Issaquah, WA 98027  
425.392.4123  
issquahfoodbank.org

## Tools 4 School

Help students gear-up for success this upcoming school year through Tools 4 School!

Tools 4 School is a program in partnership with the Issaquah Schools Foundation, providing new backpacks and supply packs to students attending any school in the Issaquah School District boundaries.

In 2020, this program distributed over 1,000 backpacks and supplies to Issaquah School District families! With your support of \$30 per supply pack and \$15 per backpack, we can help equip students with what they need to start school, ready to learn! Give online through the Issaquah Schools Foundation at <https://bit.ly/T4S-ISF>.



### Our Mission

The Issaquah Food & Clothing Bank provides basic needs to our community members to promote self-sufficiency.

***"Thank you so much for all that you folks do for all of our families.  
You guys and all the donors are TRUE BLESSINGS in our lives!"***

Parent of student participants



