



ISSAQUAH

Food & Clothing Bank

S I N C E 1 9 7 1

Spring-Summer 2023

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From the Director

by Stephanie Norton-Bredl, Executive Director

As I'm approaching the end of my fourth month here on the Issaquah Food & Clothing Bank team, I must thank my teammates, our board, our volunteers, and the community for such a warm welcome! I'm impressed with how invested you all are in the success of this organization and how helpful you have been in helping me understand the community and the important role the organization plays here.



I've had the opportunity to work side-by-side with many of you, meet you at events such as the Volunteer Appreciation Lunch, and in group or individual meetings.

The more I learn from you, the prouder I am to be part of this great community, but also, the more I see that there is still so much to do!

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Crucial Help from the Food Project

by Bonnie DeCaro-Monahan, Development Director

There's little as powerful as a community banded together for good. The Issaquah Sammamish Food Project is a great example of this, with 70 neighborhood coordinators and about 700 families participating.



less than 10 hours a year on bi-monthly food pick-ups and enjoy the opportunity to collaborate with their neighbors on such a valuable project.

In October 2022, the Trossachs Food Project was added and has already grown to six

Neighborhood Coordinators.

Since 2019, this effort has donated over 120,000 pounds of food and hygiene items, at a time when resources are in high demand. Neighborhood Coordinators spend

We are so grateful for our Food Project volunteers and donors! Thank you all!

To get involved, visit bit.ly/istp4ifcb

From the Director (cont'd)

With continued inflation of food costs and the reduction of SNAP and other COVID relief benefits, we're seeing a significant increase in the need for resources. We're now averaging 60 new households registering for our services each month and are seeing an overall 35% increase in families shopping in our market January-May as compared to the same five-month period last year. Each week that our market is open, we see about 575 households come in to shop.

On our alternate delivery weeks, our volunteers pack and deliver groceries to another 240 households. In response, we increased our food purchasing budget by another 20% after increasing it a whopping 50% in 2022.

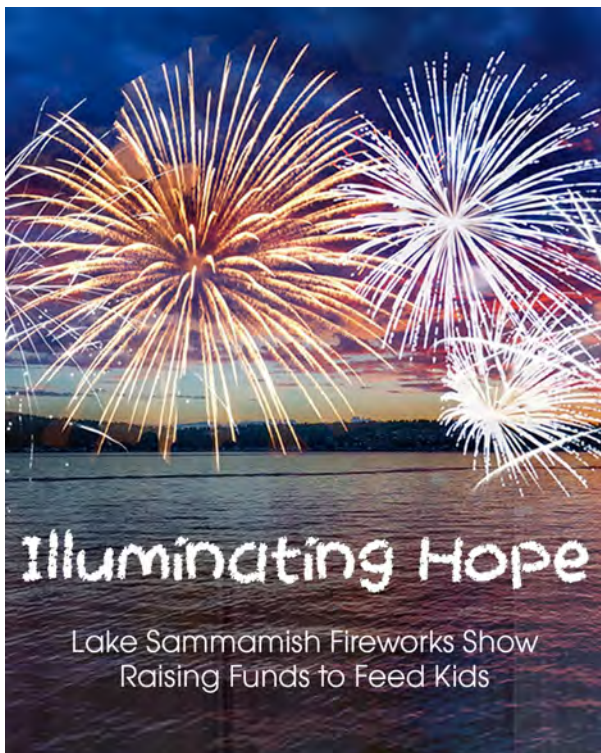
Programs such as the Issaquah Sammamish Food Project have been essential to providing sufficient food and hygiene products for our market shoppers, Groceries to Go delivery recipients, and our youth programs.

If you would like more information about the Food Project and how you can help, please visit our website:



If we have not had the opportunity to meet, know that I'm happy to set up a time to talk with you or a group that you are affiliated with!

Illuminating Hope for Kids



When school is out of session, at least 1,800 Issaquah School District students lose access to free and reduced-price school lunches. This is where our Lunch for the Break, Power Packs, and Summer Lunch programs fill a vital gap!

Thank you to everyone who has donated to help support these programs through our Illuminating Hope fundraiser. None of this would be possible without our partners at The Kritsonis Lindor Team of Windermere Real Estate. We are so grateful to them for putting on this fundraiser, the amazing fireworks display over South Lake Sammamish (July 1), and for matching donations of \$150+ up to a total of \$20,000! If you haven't participated yet, we'd love your help reaching our \$60,000 goal to fund these vital programs for youth in our community!

It's not too late to give! Visit issaquahfoodbank.org/illuminating-hope

Fanny's Story

By Bonnie DeCaro-Monahan, Development Director

As a new mother caring for her three-year old son, the death of her husband was an especially difficult time for Fanny. Suddenly taking on the sole responsibility of raising her child — caring for his physical needs, supporting his studies, sports, and social interactions — was a big transition. Working full-time with this responsibility became impossible, which further limited her resources.

In an effort to reduce her financial burden and allocate enough of her limited income to meet her son's needs, she researched resources and found the Issaquah Food & Clothing Bank. She was thrilled that we offered access to not only free food, but also clothes for her son through our partnership with KidVantage. "My child grows up very fast and often needs to change clothes every three months," shared Fanny of her now 6-year-old son. "With their help, my child can always wear the right clothes and shoes."



Fanny has been extremely grateful for the resources she now has access to. "The help given to me by this organization has greatly reduced my financial burden. Food stamps can only be used to buy food, not clothes, but Issaquah Food & Clothing Bank can (help) my child wear suitable and decent clothes at any time, and sometimes some useful books are available," shared Fanny.

When asked about her experience at the Issaquah Food & Clothing Bank, Fanny said, "Your service and staff are always responsible and patient. Sometimes when I go to get food, there are a lot of people waiting in front of me, and I am afraid that I will miss the time to pick up my (son). They are always willing to help me and let me get milk, eggs, fruits, veggies at a time. That's enough for me."

Matching Makes Your Generosity Go Further!

Did you know that matching donations from employers are a significant source of revenue that helps to maximize the efforts of our donors and volunteers?

Many employers will match donations or volunteers hours, some up to 300% of the original donation! Check with your employer and make your generosity go further!



A View Over the Food Insecurity Cliff

By Erin Longchari, Operations & Programs Director

Any way you look at it, the number of families in our community facing food insecurity is on the rise. People often think of food insecurity as simply lacking enough food. Here at the Issaquah Food & Clothing Bank, we view food insecurity as not having consistent access to healthy, nutritious food to help you and your family thrive, or having to make choices between healthy food and other important priorities like rent, medicine, or childcare.

King County & Washington State

There have been many stories in the news recently about a “hunger cliff” facing families across the country and here in King County.

One undeniable factor is the nationwide end to temporary COVID-era SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or “food stamps”) benefit levels on March 1 of this year. SNAP benefits temporarily increased in 2020 to help families manage pandemic-related financial instability. Qualified enrollees received a minimum of \$95 or the maximum amount for their household size — whichever was larger — regardless of household income. The primary purpose of these increases was to help balance pandemic-related job losses, but these essential benefits also came at a time of unprecedented inflation in core areas of food and gas.

Unfortunately, benefit eligibility has now returned to being based on income alone, regardless of family



size, while inflation — particularly for groceries — remains critically high. Many are unaware that other stability benefits, like Social Security and Supplemental Security Income, count as income for SNAP eligibility. This often means that people with the greatest need, like seniors or those with disabilities, receive less in SNAP benefits. Single seniors are among the hardest hit by reductions; some have seen food assistance cut from a pandemic high of \$281, down to \$23 per month.

According to Washington’s Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), these reductions equate to a loss of about \$90 million per month statewide in SNAP food assistance as of March. About 520,000 households are impacted in Washington, or about 13% of the state’s 7.7 million residents, 116,000 of which are in King County.¹ In addition, a recent report from King County Public Health showed that food insecurity was already on the rise last year, even before the end of the additional SNAP benefits.²

Getting a clear picture of food insecurity in our county and state requires cobbling together data from multiple sources, sometimes lagging a year behind real time and

not always consistent across agencies. However, data from King County Public Health, Feeding America, and Northwest Harvest combines to show the clear and rising need.³

- **One million** Washington residents visited a food bank in the past year.
- **1 in 10** Washingtonians consistently struggle with food insecurity.
- **1 in 6** Washington kids live in a household that faces challenges in putting enough food on the table.
- **1 in 8** Washingtonians live below the poverty line — currently \$30,000 for a family of four.
- **1 in 8** Washingtonians relies on SNAP benefits, and 30-50% of people on SNAP are kids.
- Most working-age Washingtonians living in poverty are working or actively looking for work. Many work more than one job.
- The number of households receiving SNAP benefits in King County has **risen 9%** since January of last year.
- The number of families visiting food banks **rose 13%** January-June 2022 and 5% for seniors
- Food insecurity is more prevalent in South King County and among LGBTQ+ and BIPOC communities.
- Due to the high cost of living in our east King County community, families with household incomes up to 400% of the federal poverty level still need regular food assistance.

- Current rental costs within the Issaquah School District range from \$2,700-\$3,800 per month.⁴

Unfortunately, growing need is coupled with sustained high food inflation and declining resources across food banks.⁵ After a shocking 11% overall increase last year, grocery inflation is predicted to rise on average by another 6-8% this year. Food benefits were cut at a time when groceries — particularly healthy produce, dairy, and protein items, as well as toiletries and diapers — remain prohibitively expensive for many. Families are spending considerably more to feed their families, and visits to food banks, including ours, are on the rise.

Impact at the Issaquah Food & Clothing Bank

We see significant challenges and impacts of this “cliff” here at the Issaquah Food & Clothing Bank. We see the growing need week after week in our grocery market, with more Issaquah, Sammamish, and Renton families, among others, accessing services each month.

Changes within the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) — the primary source of valuable food commodity support to food banks — mean we cannot restrict food service by ZIP codes. All food banks receiving federal/state commodity assistance must serve all residents of Washington state, regardless of residence. While this is an important diversity, equity, and inclusion shift that aims to address a legacy of systemic food injustice in low-income, rural, BIPOC, and other chronically underserved communities, it means we are now serving a larger population while at the same time receiving reduced funding and resources.

We spend more on the nutritious food we purchase for families

because we know these are the most difficult items to afford, focusing on providing a wide variety of fresh produce, dairy, and proteins. For all of 2021 and much of 2022, donations from partners and food drives meant we did not need to limit dry goods in our market. Now, our non-perishable inventory is stretched thin each month, and families often need more than our posted limits — often just one or two per family of essentials like canned tuna, peanut butter, pasta, or rice.

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Overall, we are experiencing rising demand amid reduced resources:

- We saw a **24% drop** in food and hygiene donations in 2022 despite significant efforts by our essential community partnership with the Issaquah Sammamish Food Project — likely due to the high cost of food.
- We experienced a **15% decrease** in food donations from state, federal, and grocery store partners in 2022, due to food and fuel inflation and supply chain issues.
- We increased our food purchasing budget by **50% last year**, and another **20% this year**, to account for declining state/federal/grocery partnership food donations, rising inflation, and increased services.

- We have seen a **35% increase** in families shopping in our market through May of this year, compared to the same time last year.
- An average of **60 new households** register for food services with us each month.
- Participation in our youth nutrition programs **grew about 30%** last year, and we expect additional increases this year as families struggle with reduced SNAP benefits over summer and school breaks.

Thank you for your vital help!

We are so fortunate for the generosity of all our donors, volunteers, and community partners. Your support makes a difference in our ability to continue meeting the growing food needs in our region and helps enhance diversity in our community.

You can help by donating, volunteering, joining the growing Issaquah-Sammamish Food Project team, organizing a food drive on our behalf, or donating our most-needed items during our donation drives at our warehouse.

You can also help by spreading the word about the many resources available at the Issaquah Food & Clothing Bank and sharing the impact of our collective work with your friends and neighbors. Together, we can nurture a connected, supportive community where everyone has an opportunity to thrive.

All links for this issue, including sources in this article:



Issaquah Philharmonic Makes an Impact

We are deeply grateful to the Issaquah Philharmonic Orchestra for the return of their annual Food Raiser Concert, May 22 at Eastridge Church. It was a beautiful evening, and the audience thoroughly enjoyed the performance and connecting with many amazing people.

The event raised an amazing **\$2,877 plus 1,220 pounds in food donations** collected at the event and at the Sammamish YMCA!

Thank you to everyone at the IPO and the Y who volunteered their time and talents to make this possible!



Summer Lunch Volunteers

Summer Lunch is on, and there are plenty of opportunities for volunteers age 18 and older, especially for evening hours!

Sign up from our Volunteer web page or use the QR code:



Donation Drives

More people are seeking our services, so your support collecting items from the Priority Needs List on our website is **more important than ever**. We have multiple ways you can do this:

Food & Toiletries Drives

Bring priority needs items (from the list at bit.ly/ifcb-donate-food) to our warehouse at AtWork (930 7th Ave NW, Issaquah, WA 98027) on these specific days/times:

- Thursday, July 13: 1:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.
- Thursday, July 27: 1:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.
- Saturday, August 12: 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
- Thursday, September 7: 1:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.
- Thursday, September 21: 1:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Issaquah-Sammamish Food Project

Start a bi-monthly collection in your neighborhood or join an existing one!

Contact foodproject@issaquahfoodbank.org.

Learn more at issaquahsammamishfoodproject.org.

Plan a Food or Toiletries Drive

Contact operations@issaquahfoodbank.org for details and to ensure we are able to accept your collected donations.

Our Priority Needs List:



Did you know you can remember the Issaquah Food & Clothing Bank in your will?

For more information, please contact Brooke Wiles, Donor Engagement Officer, brooke@issaquahfoodbank.org

Celebrating Our Incredible Volunteers!

Whether you've been volunteering with us for a week or 23 years (you know who you are!), it's easy to see the crucial role that volunteers play in our work. This is why we look for every chance to praise these amazing heroes!

On May 5, we had a wonderful time celebrating our volunteers with an appreciation lunch — Cinco de Mayo style! It was a welcome change to

see so many people come together at one time and place, all with a shared heart for and commitment to those we serve.

Volunteers enjoyed connecting in a relaxed setting without having to schlepp food or be on a timeline to complete a task, and several Board members (also volunteers) joined us to get to know this hard-working team.

Congratulations to the winners of our raffle drawings and a big thank you to Costco for the Le Creuset prize!

If you haven't volunteered yet, give us a try! We have opportunities for a variety of different skills and schedules, including roles on our Board and Board committees.

Find out more at issaquahfoodbank.org/volunteer



ISSAQUAH
Food & Clothing Bank
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issaquahfoodbank.org

Our Mission

Unite our community in nourishing and nurturing individuals by removing barriers to healthy food, vital resources, and connections to essential services.

Non Profit Org.
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Issaquah, WA

Coming Soon!

Recipe for
HOPE

Recipe for Hope
Tuesday, September 26
Breakfast & Lunch

Hear stories and learn more to truly “see” those we serve.



Issaquah Turkey Trot
Thanksgiving Day,
November 23

Join 4,000+ community members to rally support for food security!

Visit our website for sponsorship opportunities!

