

Food for Thought

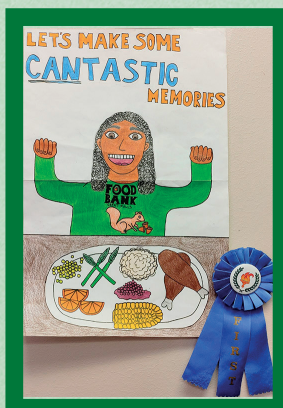
Back With A Roar!

Our annual D. A. Davidson/SCHEELS CANTastic fundraiser came roaring back this past March after a 3-year Covid-caused hiatus. Thanks to our amazing sponsors, teams and volunteers, this Great Falls institution returned in spectacular fashion with some of the best structures ever as well as a solid total for one of our most vital programs.

CANTastic is a unique event where civic teams, aided by local architects and engineers, build structures out of food (mostly cans), which are then displayed and judged. The crowning jewel this year was an amazing dinosaur structure built by the CANTastic veterans from the Giant Springs Chapter of Credit Unions. CANTastic has raised more than \$325,000 over the years, all in support of our Backpacks4Kids program which feeds children on weekends and holidays throughout the school years. This year's total was around \$45,000. Our executive director, Shaun Tataraka, said he was thrilled with the results.

"The off years didn't seem to slow us down at all," Tataraka said. "It was so nice to see all the familiar faces and some new ones. CANTastic has been an interesting way to not only raise money to feed children but also awareness of hunger in our community. It was very comforting to see this great event come back so strong."

Lael Humble of Montana Credit Union has worked on several structures over the years for the Giant Springs Chapter of Credit Unions. She



said she enjoys the social aspect of the event, as well as feeding children in her home city. "We always have a lot of fun working with the architects and our fellow teammates." Humble said. "We missed it during the pandemic but we were so glad CANTastic came back as the Backpacks4Kids program is so important to our community."

CANTastic newcomer Sarah Fleming of First Interstate Bank said

the experience was all that she had hoped it would be. "It was a great team-building experience putting our own Wall-E structure together, and we loved seeing all the other team's cool ideas. Such a fun way to support the Food Bank."

We asked some of our generous donors to help judge the structures—a difficult task this year as all the structures were outstanding. This year the Food Bank had 5 award winning teams: Giant Springs Chapter of Credit Unions' Jurassic Park was named "Judges Favorite"; Great Falls High School Key Club's Snoopy and Woodstock was awarded the "Food Bank Favorite"; North Middle School Government's Taco won the coveted "People's Choice" award; First Interstate Bank's Wall-E won "Best Meal" and C.M. Russell High School Key Club's Rubik's Cube was awarded "Honorable Mention."



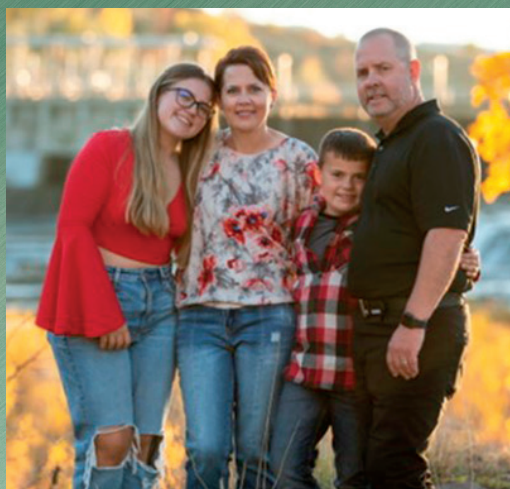
CANTastic also featured an art contest for sixth-graders from local elementary schools. 1st place received a \$150 Scheels gift card; 2nd place, \$100 gift card; 3rd place \$50 gift card and 4th, 5th, 6th place received a \$25 gift card. We displayed more than 80 posters!

The Backpacks4Kids program provides packs of ready-to-eat, kid-friendly, shelf-stable meals children take home on week-ends and holidays. It costs the Great Falls Community Food Bank approximately \$150 to distribute these packs

to one child for a school year. The public and businesses were invited to sponsor a backpack for \$150 per child. Each entity which sponsored a child received a poster created by a local sixth-grader and a mention at the art gallery at CANTastic.

We would like to thank all our sponsors, including D.A. Davidson & Co. and Scheels as well as all the architects and engineers who guided the teams. The Food Bank would also like to thank Subway for feeding our hungry volunteers on build night. Check out our website for more pictures of structures and info on our Backpack4Kids program.

Board President's Letter



Lael Humble, seen here with husband Todd and their child, is a Vice-President at Montana Credit Union

As a board member for the past five years, I have seen first-hand the ongoing dedication and hard work of our staff, volunteers, community agencies and my fellow Food Bank board members. I am pleased to report that your donation dollars are being used with the utmost care, and with a firm commitment to feeding the hungry in Cascade County.

The board is composed of 12 community members including educators, accountants and business leaders, who have dedicated themselves to our mission and to assisting and supporting our staff to do all they can to nourish the less fortunate. Our staff is made up of five non-profit veterans who have a strong commitment to helping. We know we are lucky to call Great Falls our home and we all feel a deep calling to care for our fellow Cascade County residents.

We also know that as a donor, you expect results, including growth in services and financial viability. Please take a few minutes to read more about our excellent programs and fundraising activities highlighted in this newsletter. We are especially pleased to report that we were able to handle the massive increase we saw in need in the past years. As our Executive Director mentions in his letter, our Backpacks4Kids program soared to record numbers this past school year. But thanks to our diligent staff and the Great Falls public, we managed to meet the growing need. Feeding under-privileged children on holidays and weekends during the school year makes for a better learning experience for all of the children in our communi-

ty, and gives many of them a fighting chance against the cycle of poverty.

I would like to personally thank you for contributing to the Great Falls Community Food Bank's continued success. There are many excellent service organizations in our community, and we are honored that you have confidence in the Food Bank, its mission, and ability to make a difference. We normally do not receive any government funding (2020-21 Covid-related funds being the only exception) and rely solely on donors such as you to feed the hungry in our community. Please know that both the board members and staff are inspired by your confidence in us to produce meaningful results. Whether we are helping a bread-winner look for work on a full stomach; a child in school who struggles to learn when hungry; or a senior who sometimes has to choose between food and medicine, our goal of nourishing our community is vital. With your ongoing support we will continue to work diligently to offer a hand up to those in need.

Thank you again for supporting the Great Falls Community Food Bank and our mission to feed the hungry in our community.

Executive Director's Message

As I begin my eighth year serving as the executive director of the Great Falls Community Food Bank, I remain humbled by the generosity of Great Falls residents. Thanks to the amazing kindness of so many of you, we have been able to accomplish some great things in our determined pursuit of fulfilling our mission—a mission that has become more difficult in recent years due to an increase in need.

Perhaps our biggest challenge lately is the enormous increased need of our Backpacks4Kids program, which serves all 15 Great Falls elementary schools. In just two short years, our average delivery of weekend packs of food to the schools went from 700 to 950. We were able to handle this increase because Great Falls as a community fully understands that education is the best chance for many of our kids to break the cycle of poverty. We also know that a weekend pack of food allows a child in need to show up Monday mornings ready to learn. That helps every child and teacher in every classroom.

One of the main reasons we were able to handle this massive increase is the continued success of our CANtatstic event in March. This popular community event has grown from a \$10,000 fundraiser in 2013 to a \$50,000 fundraiser in

2023. Again, this is all thanks to our awesome donors.

In January of 2020, the Food Bank proudly received the Gold Seal of transparency from GuideStar, the charity watchdog group. We firmly believe every charity has a responsibility to its donors to have complete access to our financial status—our GuideStar designation proves that. And though we fully understand that overhead should never be the only or even the main way to judge a charitable organization, we are proud that overhead is normally in the 14-16% range, which is considered excellent by industry standards.

You may have heard we recently added Ryan Hart of the Great Falls Public Schools to our board of directors. Ryan is a long-time Great Falls educator who now works with the Schools' Transition program. He can tell you first-hand how your food bank donations are making a positive difference in our community and can share many stories of homeless teens turning their lives around because they managed to get through high school in very difficult situations. Ryan will also tell you he and his amazing staff simply could not have helped most of these children without the support you provided via the food bank.

Finally, I would like to thank the people who run and work at all of our local charities who directly feed the hungry in Great Falls. Many of these folks work tirelessly on a volunteer or very low-pay basis. Thank you to all of you for making our home a better place. Please know you are backed by a generous and caring community.



Shaun Tatarka, Executive Director with new grandson, Khai.

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Being food insecure takes mental and physical toll



Not knowing where your next meal is coming from can be exhausting, relentless and humiliating. When someone in our community does not get enough nutritional food for themselves or loved ones living in the same household, psychological distress can often set in. This can include anxiety, anger and feelings of hopelessness. Here are a few emotions and comments we see and hear day to day working with the hungry.

Stress & Frustration: Stress from logistically trying to figure out how the system works and if you can figure it out in time. Are the resources that can help open the same hours I work or only open a few hours a week? How much paperwork needs to be completed? What documentation is needed? Not having answers can be extremely frustrating and even fearful. How long will the process take? I have no car and no gas. Is there a delivery service? My food benefits have been cut and I don't have enough money for food for the entire month.

Stigma & Shame: Stigma, the negative judgment of using community resources. What will my co-workers say? Will my family think less of me, I can't possibly ask them for help? I don't want someone to see me in

line for a food box. I am ashamed I'm not able to provide enough food for myself or family.

Sadness & Guilt: I just can't seem to get ahead. I don't want to go to a food pantry every month. I'm so sad and this situation feels hopeless. My children rely on me to provide for them, I feel guilty for not being able to do more, to adequately provide. I have failed, letting my spouse and children down.

Many in our community who are hungry and maybe even homeless, desire positive habits in their life and the ability to overcome destructive and negative behaviors. It is difficult to fight temptation and think clearly when hungry. One component to long lasting behavioral change starts with having enough nutritional food to eat daily. Feeling confident and food secure is a start to a healthier life style. If we can help dispel some or all of these feelings and provide hope and encouragement, healing can begin. We believe in the "teach a man to fish" principal but we also believe he will learn better on a full stomach.

Thank you for helping us ease the burden for so many in our community.

REDUCE YOUR TAXES While Feeding the Hungry



The Great Falls Community Food Bank works hard to ensure that our agencies, schools, and struggling community members receive the resources they need to keep hunger at bay. Thanks to our incredible donors and partners, we have been able to carry out our mission. To help provide long-term funding for our work, we have partnered with the Montana Community Foundation (MCF) to create a permanent endowment. This partnership allows us to focus on our mission while providing opportunities for donors to make impactful gifts that can give the donor opportunities for special tax savings or a potential income stream during retirement.

One such opportunity for charitable giving while providing income is a new piece of legislation titled Secure 2.0 Act, which included the Legacy IRA Act and increased the age for required minimum distributions (RMDs) from your individual retirement account (IRA) from 70.5 to 73 years old. Individuals can make a one-time, tax-free, qualifying charitable distribution from their IRA of up to \$50,000 (spouses can combine their contributions for up to \$100,000). This distribution counts toward your RMD and allows for lifetime income back to the donor in the form of a charitable gift annuity or a charitable remainder trust.

The benefit for contributors would be that they can receive consistent lifetime income back from their contribution at an annual rate of 5%. This provides some predictability for donors that they will receive regular



income in their retirement years. It also allows those contributors to make a significant gift from their IRA to the Food Bank.

If you are interested in knowing more, reach out to us or contact MCF. You will need some time to ask questions, finalize paperwork, and have your IRA custodian transfer the funds. Gathering that information now can help you make important tax planning decisions before things get busy at the end of the year.

If you would like to know more about how you can make a charitable contribution to support the Food Bank from your IRA and provide life income or have questions about other opportunities to support the Food Bank's endowment, contact MCF today at (406)443-8313. Together we can fight hunger in our community!



Welcome New Agencies

The Food Bank is pleased to announce we have added two new agencies to our partner list. We are proud to assist these fine agencies with their missions of serving the community.



Great Falls Community Food Bank
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This newsletter
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our friends at
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What's in the Insert?

Included in this newsletter is a pre-printed insert for the 29th annual Montana Shares raffle. This is your chance to support the Food Bank and become eligible for great prizes. Montana Shares is a partnership of non-profit organizations working to build better communities across Montana. Contributions to member groups are made through Montana Shares each year during statewide workplace giving campaigns. All donations to the raffle support Montana Shares in its efforts to help the Food Bank and other nonprofits diversify fundraising and raise public awareness.

We urge you to make your donation today and help support this great organization. Through Montana Shares, the Food Bank is able to raise additional funds through workplace giving.

If you would like to donate to Montana Shares, please be sure to fill out the form(s) and send to Montana Shares.
Please make your check out to
Montana Shares

PO Box 883,
Helena, MT 59624.

