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Pictured: GreenHouse Food Bank in Deer Park

Dignity: An Important Part of the Food Pantry Experience

ELIAS PIÑA | VP OF PROGRAMS & NUTRITION EDUCATION

Dignity. It's an important, fundamental aspect of our daily lives. We experience it in different ways throughout the day, from coworkers seeking our input to friends inviting us to social events. When we are treated with dignity, it can leave an impact.

In our world of food banking, treating clients with dignity during pantry visits is crucial to addressing food insecurity and serving families. By acknowledging the value of people seeking food assistance and upholding their dignity during visits, pantries not only help address the food needs of their neighbors but also contribute to

their overall self-esteem.

A dignified pantry experience can be achieved through a variety of strategies. Examples include improving waiting areas to foster respectful interactions, promoting nutrition education resources, or offering people the opportunity to select their food, known as the client-choice model. When combined, these changes enhance a person's confidence and well-being during pantry visits.

Although there are food assistance providers that continue to use prepacked boxes and other safety measures that were necessary during the COVID-19 pandemic, some pantries are converting to a client-choice model. One of Second Harvest's partner agencies going to great lengths to create a dignified space is GreenHouse Food Bank in Deer Park, Washington.

When their current pantry building needed to be vacated, Executive Director Libby Fitzgerald knew moving their distributions to another building could inadvertently create stress for clients in an already stressful situation. To minimize this, they provided the same experience just a few feet away. The decision was guided by a principle the staff and volunteers believe in.

"Love is our rule," Fitzgerald shared. "If we can take a layer of pressure off a family today, if we can help, then this is a good day."

Replicating the welcoming environment came with its challenges, but the dedicated GreenHouse team was determined to make it work in their new space. After undergoing a few modifications, they are now expanding the resources they offer, such as pantry sampling to "focus on meeting the client's needs."



Pictured: GreenHouse Food Bank Executive Director Libby Fitzgerald and Client Services Manager Denise Porter

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Pictured: Imperial's Garden Main Entrance



Pictured: Manny Imperial and Babe Nyberg, Second Harvest Food Sourcer

Imperial's Garden: Growing Food & Community

KATE ANDERSON | MARKETING INTERN

When you step onto the dry and dusty dirt patch that serves as the parking lot for Imperial's Garden, you may question how anything could grow. But the reality of the Wapato desert never stops the people who live here from nurturing growth in all aspects of their lives.

Two years after Manny Imperial and his family moved to the United States from the Philippines, they started their farming business with 40 acres and a small fruit and vegetable stand. Today, family-owned Imperial's Garden farms about 2,000 acres and supplies produce to a wide range of customers, including supermarkets, restaurants and food banks.

Imperial's Garden provides a variety of produce to Second Harvest that would otherwise be hard to come by, including cucumbers, bell peppers, zucchini, cherries and more. Second Harvest distributes this produce through partner food banks, meal sites and other programs, including Mobile Market free food distributions.

Babe Nyberg, operations manager at Second Harvest, has experienced firsthand how Imperial's helps neighbors facing hunger.

"Our clients might not otherwise have the means to serve healthy, nutritional fruits and vegetables to their families or themselves

without the generous and thoughtful donation of the Imperial family," Nyberg shared.

The Imperial family's care for their community is rooted in their farm. Imperial said that about 70% of his workers return every year for harvest. One employee who has worked here for 30 years watched his father work on the same land.

"We have one of the few farms that the workers and us (the owners) are really close," Imperial said.

His statement was not full of pride but gratitude. The people who work the land keep his farm going, and he keeps them going. Imperial knows this, and he respects it.

Through his partnership with Second Harvest, the commitment Imperial fosters goes back into the community.

Patty, a retiree living on a fixed income, attended a Mobile Market and told us how important fresh fruits and vegetables are to her.

"It allows me to stay healthy," Patty said. "I've been fighting weight loss for a while. And so I have to find more things that I can eat, but they're supposed to be healthy things."

The produce supplied by Imperial's Garden provides nutritious food—and hope—to people experiencing hunger.

If you or someone you know would like to donate food to Second Harvest, please visit 2-harvest.org/givefood to learn more.





Pictured: Students with Bite2Go food

Feeding Kids: Bite2Go goes to George

VIRGINIA THOMAS | PHILANTHROPY DIRECTOR

The small town of George, Washington—arguably the best-named city in the state—has two convenience stores, three churches and a population of less than 1,000 people. Google Maps Street View shows little more than a sliver of George—it’s too tiny for Google’s vehicles to bother exploring.

But small, rural towns like George can face a big problem: hungry kids. At George Elementary School, 33 of 170 students—nearly one-fifth of the student body—receive Bite2Go weekend food from Second Harvest during the school year.

Rafael Sermeno has been a counselor at George Elementary School since fall 2021. Sermeno says many of the students know each other, and several have siblings and cousins also attending George Elementary. One fourth-grade boy says that he and his sister, a fifth grader at George Elementary, sometimes share their Bite2Go food with their cousins. He especially enjoys the Goldfish cheese crackers.



Pictured: Rafael Sermeno

Sermeno says the need at George Elementary is greater than current numbers suggest. Bite2Go could serve an additional 30 kids facing hunger.

El Salvadoran by birth, Sermeno says he grew up eating a lot of rice and beans, much like some of the students he counsels.

He speaks Spanish with many students, often affectionately calling them “hijo” or “hija,” meaning “son” or “daughter.”

“These kids ... in a way, are lost between two cultures,” Sermeno says. “Most of them don’t speak Spanish well, and if they do speak Spanish, it’s a different dialect.”

The food preferences of kids at George Elementary reflect their multicultural upbringing. Some kids bring lunch and snacks from home, such as Takis spicy rolled tortilla chips. Many children eat lunch provided by the school’s cafeteria, which includes American food options such as cheeseburgers, as well as more familiar cultural foods like pork posole, a traditional Mexican stew.

Another fourth grader says her favorite Bite2Go food items are cereal cups and gummy fruit snacks. When asked if she likes sweets, she grins and nods before listing her favorite foods—all of which involve chocolate.

Sermeno says he worries the nutritional needs of some students aren’t getting met, but Bite2Go helps alleviate those concerns with food items such as tuna fish packets and yogurt pouches.

“It’s been a blessing,” Sermeno says of the partnership between Bite2Go and George Elementary School.

Visit Bite2go.org to learn more.



Serving Rural Communities: Pomeroy

BRANDON VASQUEZ | PHILANTHROPY ASSOCIATE

The Mobile Market is a vital service that Second Harvest offers to people experiencing food insecurity in the Inland Northwest. The free food distributions help increase access to fresh produce and other perishable foods for neighbors living in urban and more remote rural areas.

Second Harvest's dedicated Mobile Market teams based in Spokane and Pasco travel throughout Eastern Washington and North Idaho four days a week, transporting food to community centers, schools, church parking lots, businesses and other locations. Generous volunteers help set up and execute the drive-through distributions, serving up to 300 families at each event.

The Mobile Market traveled to Pomeroy in early July. A small town in southeastern Washington, Pomeroy is nestled in an expanse of rolling hills and farmland. The main street that stretches across the quiet town is lined with charming historic buildings.

People who visited the Mobile Market at First Christian Church expressed gratitude for its return; the first Mobile Market had taken place the previous month, and some of the attendees were looking forward to receiving more fresh produce. On this hot July day, neighbors received apples, squash, mushrooms and other nutritious foods.

“I would have never thought about using our food bank or this Mobile Market until we got so desperate that I had to.”

- Brenda

The effects of inflation have made Mobile Market events more impactful for the neighbors who visit them. Brenda described how much inflation has affected her budget. “We have to decide between gas and food. It's really been a really, really tough go. And I don't like it,” she explained. “I would have never thought about using our food bank or this Mobile Market until we got so desperate that I had to.”

Karen, another attendee, shared similar sentiments. “At the store, I'm running out of my food stamps, my food benefit. I never had that problem ever in my life. I'm running out of my food for the first time. This helps me get through.”

To learn more about upcoming Mobile Market distributions, visit 2-harvest.org/food-near-me-wa



Pictured: Brenda



Pictured: Volunteers load free food into vehicle in Pomeroy.



Pictured: Karen



No-Heat Eats: Keep the Kitchen Cool

CAROLYN NEGLEY, RD
NUTRITION EDUCATION MANAGER

It's getting hot out there, so let's explore some key ideas for keeping cool in the kitchen this summer. You don't need your oven, stove, or even your microwave to enjoy delicious and healthful meals this season.

1. Fresh produce is key! Remember, produce is high in vitamins, minerals, and fiber. Check out local farmers markets for a variety of fresh and seasonal produce. See something you don't recognize? Take the time to chat with farmers about their crops. They probably have ideas for how to enjoy anything unfamiliar to you.

2. Soup doesn't need to be hot. Cool off with a watermelon cooler or cucumber-based gazpacho. Add a little crunch with shredded carrots, pumpkin seeds, or sunflower seeds.

3. To keep your tuna and chicken salads light, try replacing ½ of your mayonnaise with Greek yogurt. Greek yogurt has less fat than mayonnaise and is a great source of protein. A squirt of mustard, lemon juice, or pickle juice (or all three) will also add flavor and moisture.

4. 'Tis the season to add beans and legumes to all your salads and wraps! Remember to always drain and rinse your canned beans to reduce sodium and starches.

5. Overnight oats, chia seed pudding, yogurt parfaits, and even the classic – smoothies – all make for a nutritious and cool start to the day. Take this opportunity to try new fruits, and don't forget to throw some greens into your smoothies. Add a dollop of nut butter to mix in some healthy fats and protein.

6. It can look like a snack and taste like a meal. Make your own grazing boards chock full of veggies, fruit, nuts, cheese, whole grain crackers and fresh dips. These are perfect for parties or just a family dinner after a long day exploring the great outdoors. Pack mini versions of these boards for easy and fun work lunches.

7. Make your own popsicles by blending fruit and juice. Remember to plan ahead so they have time to freeze (usually 2-3 hours).

8. Remember to stay hydrated! Cucumber slices, citrus, berries, mint, and basil are beautiful add-ins for brightening up your water.



Basic Food: Get Help Today

Applying for SNAP, or Basic Food, may not be as complicated as you think. Second Harvest strives to build healthier communities by increasing access to nutritious food for people in need. Our goal is to connect more people with the Washington State Basic Food Program (commonly known as food stamps).

If you or someone you know needs help accessing monthly benefits for food, please visit 2-harvest.org/basicfood.



Pictured: Mom, Rebekah

“One of the best parts of the program is that it does give you the power of choice. As a member of the community, to be able to go to those local places that accept it is phenomenal.”

- Rebekah

Double your Impact

Did you know? Many employers offer matching gift programs to encourage their employees to support charitable causes such as hunger relief. Visit our website to use a search tool to see if your employer has a matching gifts or volunteer grant program. You can also search for your company during the checkout process while donating online.



**[2-harvest.org/
matching-gifts](https://2-harvest.org/matching-gifts)**

If you have questions about matching donations, please email donations@2-harvest.org or call 509-252-6242.

Mission Moments: Shared Connections

Ending hunger is a team sport. Many caring people make this work happen.

In this newsletter, you'll meet Manny, Libby and Karen—who live in different towns but share a connection with Second Harvest's mission to serve people facing hunger.

Second Harvest provided 35 million pounds of mostly donated food last year—the equivalent of 70,000 meals a day. And that's a good thing, because more hardworking families and seniors are seeking help from their local food pantry or our Mobile Market free food distributions.

Our food supply chain has been strained during these challenging times. Even so, we remain grateful for our retail and agriculture partners who donate a variety of food that we can share with people who need it.

The many retailers who team up for our Grocery Rescue program supply 13 million pounds of donated food every year. And agricultural producers like Manny at Imperial's Garden share a bounty of nutritious, fresh, local produce and other staples.

Libby, who leads GreenHouse Food Bank in Deer Park, talks about the dignified space they created to share Second Harvest's food with their neighbors.



Jason
Jason L. Clark
Chief Executive Officer

Our Mobile Market fills a sometimes unexpected need for food-insecure people like Karen. "I'm running out of my food for the first time," Karen said during a distribution in Pomeroy. "This helps me get through."

We rescue all the food we can to sustain our services and to keep perfectly good nutrition from going to waste. People like you make this possible. Thank you.

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These efforts to provide a dignified space have been well received by clients. One appreciative recipient told GreenHouse staff members, "When I come here, I feel listened to."

GreenHouse is just one of the many pantries across our network that understands the value and importance of creating a dignified space for their neighbors in need. Second Harvest is proud to work with our diverse network of agencies to create compassionate and respectful neighborhood food pantries where people facing hunger feel valued, supported and treated with dignity.

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