

the amount of food we possess. Before the inventory system, much more time was being wasted in the effort to decide on what to stock the shelves with because we didn't know how much we had or what was coming in.

One of the biggest resources our agency has is volunteers. The inventory system has made our volunteers even more effective because they can quickly locate items by date in an assigned location. Volunteers have been empowered to see the importance of food safety even though they have been trained on this. For instance, meat is dated when it goes into the freezer and volunteers can see which meat should be pulled first to ensure best practices in food safety.

Our outreach efforts have improved because information is now quickly available to any staff or volunteer that is speaking to individuals, groups, churches and/or schools about the food bank needs. Whereas before, the staff had to gather information from a number of people to accurately determine what food we needed.

When reviewing the inventory summary we can identify if certain items are not being cycled into the food bank for meal selection. This alerts us to the possibility of foods that may be waiting too long in inventory and expiration could occur. To ensure food safety, we would then physically inspect expiration dates and develop a meal plan to include those items. The summary also allows us to make sure that we are providing well balanced choices to meet the increased demand of people who use the food bank.

To meet the increasing needs of hungry people, we created an inventory system that can maximize our facility storage, volunteer and staff time, community partnerships, and overall insurance in food safety best practices. It has strengthened our food bank program enormously to better serve our customers with nutritious food.

## Food in Motion

### Operation Sack Lunch - Seattle



Food in Motion OSL approaches the work we do in the community from a place of shared resources. With our Food In Motion program, we currently rescue more than 300,000 pounds of viable, nutritionally dense food, and high quality proteins, each year, that otherwise would be discarded into the waste stream. We use this food for the more than 1200 meals we prepare daily for the hungry and food insecure; breakfast, lunch, and dinner, seven days each week. We also share these resources with other agencies in the Seattle area; providing pick-up and delivery for those organizations that do not have transportation resources or the ability to procure high quality meal ingredients. Food In Motion has allowed us to develop relationships with a variety of donor partners. Meal preparation, focusing on nutritional content and dietary restrictions, as well as meal ingredient rescue is the primary focus of our organization. We network

with and complement other meal programs by being active partners in rescuing, sharing, and delivering nutritionally dense meal ingredients to their respective programs. We monitor and evaluate our efficacy by keeping accurate records, conducting surveys, and including our stakeholders in organizational decisions.

**What it takes:** OSL is an organization that has been built on services that are accessible and inclusive to all. There are no requirements or restrictions associated with receiving a meal or food resources from our organization. We are committed to our foundational premise that Nutritional Excellence is a right we are all born to, not a privilege that we earn. OSL is also committed to contributing to the health and sustainability of the food safety net for the greater Seattle Area. We believe that hunger can be eliminated in our community by the sharing of resources, and ideas, and by the creation of a common voice that is non-political in nature, promoting the communal common good as the focal point. We created Food In Motion as an instrument to organizationally participate in addressing hunger needs with and for the greater community. We currently have 46 food donor rescue partners, and 22 meal supply agency recipients. These numbers fluctuate. Through these partnerships we schedule pick-ups and deliveries, sort food, maintain temperature control, and anticipate what our partner agencies are looking for to better serve their customer base.

We are an organization that has learned to navigate with fluidity while we also understand that we must create concrete action steps towards our own longevity in order to continue to be a major component in Seattle's food safety net for challenged populations. This understanding has a multidimensional benefit to our customers and to our own program. Our Food In Motion program (FIM) contributes to the greater hunger needs in the Seattle community by providing nutritionally dense, quality proteins and other meal supplies such as produce, herbs, etc. to other Seattle area Meal Providers for their customer base, thus expanding our reach to the hungry and food insecure in our community. We also participate in the 'greening' of Seattle and work to help eliminate the extraordinary amount of food that is dumped into the landfills each year. Food items account for 13% of landfill waste. More than 33 million tons in rotting food is dumped into the garbage each year creating methane, greenhouse gases, which are 22 times more toxic than carbon dioxide. Wasted food costs Americans over 100 billion dollars each year. FIM puts only a small dent in this extraordinary waste, but it is a start. By rescuing more than 300,000 lbs or 150 tons of food each year before it hits the waste stream, we contribute to the economic well-being of all the programs we share these resources with, as well as contributing to the well-being of our own customers by offering meals that are made with safe, healthful and quality ingredients. Finally, through networking and partnerships we actively participate in our dedication to building the capacity and sustainability of our over-all organization and to continue to be instrumental in the ongoing creation of a sustainable food system for the hungry and food insecure in our community.

## Saluting Good Ideas

### Food Lifeline - Seattle



Food Lifeline (FLL)'s Excellence Awards are designed to promote and share great ideas that will help end hunger. Begun in 2006, the program invites large and small agencies to nominate their best practices for recognition in several categories. The idea grew out of FLL's experience monitoring agencies that contract with them, and being impressed by the amazing work that agencies are doing but others may not see. "There are many 'best practices' that agencies develop but are unaware of how unique or effective they are compared to what other similar programs may be doing. They are also not necessarily aware of how many other agencies could benefit from borrowing their great idea," says Tiffani Kaech, Agency Relations Manager. Although FLL always tried to share this information informally, the Excellence Awards gives the ideas more visibility, recognizes the agency publicly for their creativity, and encourages them with a cash award. Applications are solicited in four areas of excellence, and several FLL board members serve as judges. To promote fairness, judges evaluate applications with agency identifying information removed. Award winners are held secret until they are announced at the FLL annual agency conference, where they receive a plaque, a check and are publicly applauded for their work. FLL has tried to create a process that allows even the smallest volunteer-run agency with a great best practice to apply and win. By applying, agencies agree to share their idea, put it in a how-to format for others to read, and even polish their grantwriting skills.

**What it Takes:** FLL has worked to create an accessible, fair process for identifying and recognizing best practices in emergency food. For a program like this to work, it is important to keep the application and process simple and transparent. Designate a contact person to be available to answer questions or give advice to applicants. Set a realistic timeline allowing adequate time for each stage in the process. If you want to make awards on an annual basis, design your program to be sustainable and manageable over time.

## Get Ready: Preparing for Disaster



While many food banks and meal programs help families and individuals respond to the recurring emergency of hunger, they have yet to create and implement a plan to respond to a local or regional disaster or emergency. But recent natural disasters across the country and around the world have started some programs preparing before disaster strikes. Barb Shimizu, Coordinator, South King County Food Coalition (SKCFC) points to Hurricane Katrina which hit the Gulf States in September 2005 as the impetus for their disaster planning. "We realized that it was 'our customers' sitting stranded on those rooftops,"

she said. Emergency food programs are a valuable resource “in efforts to reach and educate vulnerable populations such as low-income families, immigrant populations, and shut-ins,” says Shimizu.

With funding from King County, SKCFC completed an assessment as a first step that “will provide the foundation upon which we can build our emergency preparedness plans.” The assessment gave SKCFC members a clearer picture of the hazards facing their community. An Americorps\*VISTA member from the Washington State ReadyCorps joined the SKCFC in December 2006 to assist members in completing their emergency plans and putting important pieces in place, such as making arrangements for each food bank to have an alternate location to operate from in the event that their facility is shut down due to disaster-related damage. “Acting together makes sense. If your neighbor doesn’t have a strong plan and you do, there’s a problem. We now understand how it is all going to fit together” adds Shimizu. SKCFC expects to continue their preparedness work together. “Consider the decision to purchase generators. Think of the duplication of effort if each food bank is researching generators separately. It makes sense for one person to research it and to seek funding together. The same goes for developing educational materials for our customers.”

Seattle embarked on its own initiative which benefited from the six-month presence of Nick Maryns, a Bill Emerson National Hunger Fellow through the Congressional Hunger Center. The Seattle Food Committee (SFC), which represents each of the 27 food banks, worked to create an emergency response plan for local agencies. The plan aims to prepare food banks as a coalition, as individual agencies, and to educate customers. The primary goal is to enable food banks to communicate effectively, work together to share resources, and refer customers appropriately in a disaster situation. Maryns developed a comprehensive guide to disaster preparedness (see reference below), including a template for an emergency preparedness plan that would be useful to any food bank in any type of disaster. One thing that Maryns heard from food bank staff and volunteers is that they feel disaster-preparedness is important, but that they simply feel that they “don’t have time” to tackle the issue. For individuals who feel this way, he suggests taking incremental steps – for example, dedicating five minutes once a month to prepare for an emergency. Though it can seem daunting and unrealistic amidst the urgent daily events of a food bank, there are simple measures that can be taken to better prepare for a disaster, he says.

Robin Rudy, Director, Tenino Community Service Center, took her first step by creating a special emergency pack for diabetics. It contains a cooler pack for insulin and room to hold pills and other items. Working with the Thurston County Public Health & Social Services Department, she has helped prepare the Tenino Food Bank for an emergency by educating its volunteers and customers alike. All customers are regularly given pamphlets with their food bags, with information on what to do in a disaster, such as how to make one’s own emergency package. Many food bags also contain a bar of soap, provided by the county to encourage hand-washing and other hygienic practices, to prevent the spread of the flu and other diseases. Rudy has also been working with Robert Coit, Executive Director, Thurston County Food Bank, on disaster preparedness at a county-wide level.

Maryns says one of the most important things in an emergency situation is to know who has what information, and who can do which tasks. Having updated contact lists, making sure that all staff and volunteers know how to shut off gas lines, and maintaining a first-aid kit are all basic actions which any food bank can and should take. Maryns also acknowledges that for individuals and families who face food insecurity as part of their daily lives, thinking about what they would do in a disaster situation may be overwhelming. One lesson he has learned very quickly is the importance of how the message is delivered. Rather than sending a message of fear, make the message an empowering one, he notes. For example, instead of emphasizing how unprepared people are, share what they can do to better prepare themselves. Resource: *Hungering for Disaster Preparedness: Strategies, Resources and Tips for Food Pantries and Their Coalitions*, available on the web at <http://www.solid-ground.org/publications/HDP.pdf>.

## INFRASTRUCTURE: FACILITIES, EQUIPMENT & TECHNOLOGY

### Blueprints: Food Bank Design

#### Tri-Cities Food Bank - Richland



Ten years ago a fire allowed Tri-Cities Food Bank, Richland (TCFB) to build a new facility from the ground up. Given this opportunity they sought to create the best possible food bank — food enters through the rear and leaves through the front. Customers arrive and enter a large waiting room where TCFB offers resource and referral information. People are then invited into a small, private side room for intake. For the physical food distribution, TCFB offers a shopping experience — customers shop up and down aisles selecting food from many available choices. “It makes them feel in control of the process and gives them dignity,” comments Executive Director John Neill. In the back of the building is a large warehouse where food is received, with a loading dock and forklift. TCFB’s Kennewick site has a similar layout, and they are now planning to replace the smaller Benton City location with a new, similar facility.

**What it Takes:** The biggest requirement to lay your food bank out like TCFB is lots of floor space. TCFB also boasts a large walk-in freezer and refrigerator, which allows them to serve a greater variety of foods. While not every food bank has this kind of space, for those that do, setting up a store-like environment with aisles, and providing a comfortable waiting area are great design features.

### Super Freeze: Combining Resources to Build Capacity

#### Kitsap County Food Bank Coalition - Bremerton



To meet a common need for additional freezer space, members of the Kitsap County Food Bank Coalition pooled their EFAP proviso funds and put the money toward a large walk-in freezer to be owned by and located at Bremerton Foodline (BF). While BF owns the freezer, participating coalition members contribute to the operating costs of the freezer. The freezer has a separate electric meter, and BF invoices participating food banks for a one-eighth share of energy costs each quarter, plus \$25 per quarter toward a shared maintenance fund. The money is actually remitted to the coalition and then BF is reimbursed. Monica Bernhard, Director, says the formula is designed to recover costs, and that BF does not make any money toward overhead or other costs unrelated to the freezer itself. The freezer benefits everyone, allowing for bulk donations and purchases, and providing a back-up in case an individual food bank’s freezer goes on the fritz. Not every coalition member participates in cost-sharing, because some boards were unwilling to commit either EFAP funds at the time of purchase or ongoing cost-sharing. In spite of this, use of the freezer is open to all organizations recognizing the community benefit.

**What it Takes:** A significant shared purchase like this requires advance planning. You will need to get commitments from each agency board. In this case, BF took the lead in presenting a proposal to the coalition for the capital investment and the cost recovery plan. This information was in turn presented to members’ boards. Even though not everyone chose to participate, they were able to get a quorum to proceed, with BF investing additional funds beyond what other partners could.

### Ingenuity: DIY Tools

#### Community Services of Moses Lake, Inc - Moses Lake



Community Services of Moses Lake, Inc. (CSML) has created a slip-sheet attachment to help unload truckloads of food not on pallets, such as USDA cereal. The cereal came in on a slip sheet — a thick sheet of cardboard — and needed to be dragged off the truck and placed onto a pallet. CSML did some research and discovered that the standard solution for pulling slip sheets, a special attachment for a fork lift, costs \$5,000. “I had a vision and talked to a friend of mine that’s a retired machinist. Together we’ve created a slip sheet puller/clamp for about \$45 that’s worked like a charm,” says Penny Archer, Operations Manager.

**What it Takes:** Ingenuity is the main requirement to design a new tool. In this case, Archer had a vision and was able to communicate what she needed to a machinist who could fabricate the tool from existing tools — a vice grip and an angle iron. Archer also reports that others can benefit from their experience, since the fabricator says he would be more than happy to build one for other food banks --but you have to come to Moses Lake to pick it up!

## Partner, not Donor

### Coastal Harvest - Hoquiam



Coastal Harvest recently received a grant from the Grays Harbor Community Foundation, not as simply a donor to our organization but rather as a partner. We approached the foundation with a proposal to build an ongoing relationship that was different than the traditional relationship between a donor and a recipient.

We asked for the GHCF to work with us to provide fork trucks for our facility. But first, we asked them to look at the issue from the eyes of the nonprofit. We all tend to buy used equipment and run it into the ground—we often just don’t have the funds to do proper upkeep. So when a fork truck starts having trouble, we spend money...and then spend more and more trying to keep it alive. By the time the trouble becomes serious we are bleeding money into this equipment. Traditionally, this is the point at which we seek help from a foundation in the form of a grant to buy another used truck.

The problem is that we are too late. Even if you buy a good used fork truck, your budget is already in the hole trying to fix the old one. There was no time to shop around or seek a deal on a truck, you needed to get one ASAP and put it to work. The cycle begins anew because now you have a used truck and a tight budget means you’ll tend to shortchange the maintenance on your “new” truck. We asked the GHCF to help us break that cycle.

The proposal we submitted was for a multi-year grant. The first phase was to bring our existing fleet up to minimum safety standards to help us in the short term. The next phase was to help us to buy new trucks in the longer term. But we did more than just ask for money. We asked for the foundation to expect more of us than they usually would. For them to be partners, they needed to know that we were spending their dollars as if they were our own. They needed to set an expectation that we would take the responsibility of maintaining the new equipment in a way that would ensure maximum lifespan. Simply put, we asked them to trust us to also be a good partner as we managed their donation and requested that they hold our feet to the fire to do just that.

By finding the best deal we can for our new trucks, by adhering carefully to maintenance schedules and treating our equipment as our own, we believe we can make the most of the funds provided. By asking for open communication and for the foundation to take an interest in how we do these things, we believe they will see this partnership as beneficial and will want to continue it into the future. Together, we will break the cycle of the peaks and valleys of most grantor/grantee relationships where an agency quickly spends the monies given, has zero incentive to care for the equipment and then simply asks for another replacement down the road. Together, we’ll squeeze every ounce of benefit from every dollar and make the funds given by the GHCF a true investment in our community.

## Enticing Skilled Volunteers to Work for You

### Friends in Service to Him (FISH) Food Banks of Pierce County Tacoma



FISH Food Banks of Pierce County knew they needed technology assistance, and decided to put out a call for interns at the local community colleges. Instead of a student intern, FISH Food Banks lucked out when Tacoma Community College’s Director of Information Technology responded to their notice. She has installed computers, made technology improvements at a number of their eight sites, and is developing a program to track customer information.

**What it Takes:** Beth Elliott, Executive Director, highly recommends connecting with your local college to find a computer literate person who can assist your organization with customized solutions.



## STRENGTHENING BOARD LEADERSHIP

### Deep Roots: Building a Community-Connected Board Toppenish Community Chest - Toppenish



Toppenish Community Chest (TCC) established itself as an independent community organization just four years ago. Prior to that, the local food bank had run under the auspices of several area churches. A few short years later, they are well-known in the community and have a new facility funded by a successful capital campaign. Cecelia Chavez, Executive Director, is clear about how vital the board of directors is to TCC's success. "If you have a core group of at least 10 active, working people thinking ahead and using their connections, you can get somewhere," Chavez says. TCC's board consists of 15 people from different backgrounds

— farmers, schools teachers, the CEO of the Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic, and so on. "Each member has an entity behind them, so they have extra help. Every time we choose a new member, it's something to do with a community service in town. This way, they can access more help, and more people know about the food bank. For example, farmers get us fresh fruit, and our teacher organizes the local school to do a food drive."

Because they want committed, active members, TCC has a thoughtful recruitment process which includes an in-person presentation of the food bank's work to the board candidate, covering "what we have done and what we expect from them." Expectations include working in the food bank at least monthly, and organizing one fundraising event per year. If there is a match, the new person is voted in. TCC feels it is important for board members to spend time at the food bank itself, sorting groceries or doing other daily work. This allows them to know what is really going on at TCC. Chavez adds, "When they see that the work they do pays off, they get interested in doing more. They see the customers getting help. It is working for us."

**What it Takes:** To build a strong board, it is important to have a thoughtful recruitment process, and be honest about what is required of board members. At TCC, community connections are a key requirement for new board members, and this strategy has extended their reach in the community. TCC has established a strong board culture that promotes service and accountability. Aspects of this culture include setting clear, specific expectations for board members, maintaining a focus on the organization's mission and accomplishments so that board members feel they are making a difference, and ensuring that board members have supportive organizations backing them up.

## RECRUITING AND MANAGING VOLUNTEERS

### One Call: Centralizing Volunteer Coordination Hopelink - Redmond



Hopelink has six food bank locations, and centralizes their volunteer coordination. The volunteer coordinator, located in their central office, processes all new volunteer applications. This provides a consistent system in terms of who gets approved as a volunteer, keeps applications in one place, and takes some of the work of volunteer management away from food bank staff. For example, the volunteer coordinator handles background checks on new volunteers, and schedules volunteer orientations. "I only have to worry about scheduling," says Teresa Andrade, Food Bank Coordinator, Northshore Hopelink.

**What it Takes:** This system works best for a larger organization with multiple sites and enough volunteers to justify a coordinator position.

## Start Early: Utilizing High School Volunteers

Wapato Food Bank - Wapato



Wapato Food Bank works with the local high school to actively recruit volunteers. Students need community service hours, and the school principal is willing to provide a list of students who need to fulfill hours and their phone numbers. Roy Cardenas, Basic Food Educator, calls the students directly and invites them to work at the food bank. “The extra manpower is great,” says Cardenas. “We usually have elderly women as volunteers, and it’s hard for them to lift 50 pound bags of beans and rice. I was picking up a lot of heavy items, and thought it would be nice to have help!” The students come in on an as needed basis, and are particularly helpful around the holidays. No extra supervision is necessary, and the school seems to select kids who are easy to manage.

**What it Takes:** Establishing a relationship with a school and having a designated person who can call students and schedule their shifts.

## Rethinking Support: Celebrating Volunteers

Hood Canal Food Bank - Hoodspport



Two of the larger churches in the Hoodspport community have a luncheon for volunteers and customers of the Hood Canal Food Bank (HCFB) to celebrate them. All are welcome. HCFB provides some of the food and the church members bring other things, like salads. “It has been so successful! The people that come to the food bank really look forward to it – once a month they can go and have a nice lunch,” reports Director Kathy Roberson. The luncheon is set up in the church, and the pastor comes and sits down with people at lunch. “It’s just once a month, but it’s meaningful to the people, and also the volunteers. It gives them camaraderie. They’re not just working, they’re also relaxing together.”

**What it Takes:** Community partner to host the luncheon, volunteers to cook and serve. Could be started on a quarterly basis at first.

## Increasing Volunteer Workforce

Good Cheer Food Bank - South Whidbey Island



With the economy struggling, it has been hard to increase food and financial donations at the same rate that needs are increasing for food bank customers. People continue to want to help, however, and the efficient and effective use of their offers to volunteer can make a significant difference in the service provided to the community. Last year Good Cheer Food Bank was able to significantly increase the number of volunteer hours provided through a combination of public outreach and volunteer coordination.

Good Cheer Food Bank serves a unique community including the cities of Langley, Clinton, Freeland, Bayview, and Greenbank. South Whidbey Island is growing in population, yet local wages are lower than many parts of the state. High costs of living mean that more people are turning to Good Cheer to help make up the difference between their paycheck and putting food on the table.

In 2010, Good Cheer provided food for up to 25% of the local population. Early in the year we found that the number of new customers was growing faster than the rate of food and monetary donations. One way to reduce non-food expenses is to increase the amount of service hours provided by community volunteers.

**What It Takes:** Good Cheer uses a number of strategies to increase the number of useful volunteer hours. To replicate this program, any or all of them can be used by similar food banks around the state. With these strategies in place volunteer hours increased from 26,366 in 2009 to 32,737 in 2010.

- **Recruitment and Training:** In addition to our general public awareness outreach, Good Cheer makes specific appeals for volunteers on a regular basis. Recruitment and training includes a volunteer job description, brochures, application

forms, training video, and an annually updated volunteer handbook.

- Coordination: It takes resources to effectively utilize resources, and this year we saw a great return from our designation of a staff member as Volunteer Coordinator. We utilize technology in the form of our Salesforce data base to record hours and to send out email blasts to our volunteers to announce needs. Although paying a staff member to coordinate volunteers takes funding, the rewards are great – Good Cheer volunteers donated hours equaled to 20 Full Time Employees in 2010.
- Communication: Volunteers need to know their work is appreciated, and they need to feel part of the overall mission and activity of the food bank. Good Cheer provides a newsletter specifically for volunteers three times a year. Volunteer Forums are held quarterly where we specifically ask for their feedback in how to improve service to our customers or to help meet their volunteer needs. Forums are also used for team building, to provide training and share business information. Once a year volunteers are asked to participate in a satisfaction survey, in which we use the feedback to improve our program.
- Rewards: Although volunteers don't ask for rewards, they do appreciate being thanked and Good Cheer makes sure to thank volunteers often in person, through events specifically for the volunteers, personally with thank-you cards or emails and publically through printed materials, on our web-site, on Facebook, or in our BLOG posts. In addition, this year Good Cheer has partnered with Something-To-Give as a way to analyze volunteer data to help improve our program.

Focusing on the recruitment and retention plus the effective & efficient use of volunteers is of utmost importance in these days of high need and low finances. In 2010 Good Cheer wages increased by 1.2%, during the same time volunteer hours greatly increased, from 26,366 in 2009 to 32,737 this year – an increase of 24%. The number of volunteer hours donated is financially equivalent to more than \$685,000, or 20 full time staff employees.

By actively, strategically, and efficiently using community volunteers we are making the most use of this donated resource. The volunteer labor allows us the ability to utilize financial donations to more direct costs such as food. Ultimately, more needy people are able to receive food to support their family.

**The major steps we have taken to make sure our agency is making efficient use of our resources are:**

- Implementing a point system, and refining it when needed to ensure we can provide nutritious food to a growing customerele
- Creating a garden on food bank land to grow our own produce
- Utilizing volunteers to increase service while reducing expenses

This project is a “best practice” because strategically utilizing community volunteers allows us to provide a better level of service to the hungry in our community. In addition to allowing us to feed more people for a cheaper cost, this program is easily replicable for food banks throughout the region.

By increasing the number of volunteer hours you are also strengthening your team (your organization) and involving more individuals in your work. As an added benefit it also provides an opportunity for food banks customers that choose to give back to an organization that is also serving them.

**Top three answers when asked why do you volunteer?**

- To help others
- Good Cheer's mission (To create a hunger-free community)
- To use free time constructively

An example of a best practice is when you can increase your revenues by 12.9% while increase you expense by only 2.6%. That is bottom line numbers on Good Cheer's 2010 Profit & Loss Comparison over the previous year. The strongest contributor to making that possible was increasing the amount of volunteer hours by 24%.

*In 2011, 1.7 million Washington volunteers dedicated 218.9 million hours of service. Nearly 22 percent of all volunteers either collected, prepared, distributed or served food.  
(source: Volunteering in America)*



# Unexpected Partners: Working with Inmate Crews & Court-Mandated Volunteers

## Lewis County Food Bank Coalition - Centralia



Lewis County Food Bank Coalition (LCFBC) utilizes inmate labor from the county jail's inmate release program. These inmates work shifts at the food bank and must be supervised by trained volunteers. LCFBC picks up the inmates at the jail for their shift, and returns them to the jail at the end of the workday. "We decided to do it because the inmates are good workers, and most of our volunteers are older, and we're able to always know that we can have four pretty able-bodied people there all day to load and unload, clean, and help us with light maintenance in the warehouse. It's a matter of free, good, reliable, consistent labor work," says Bonnie Pedersen, Coalition Treasurer. For the inmates, the work provides an opportunity to get out and be exposed to a positive work environment. For some, it is their first experience of volunteering. They have been very good workers, and LCFBC depends on their contributions to keep their food bank running. When they moved, volunteers from the jail contributed professional skills such as painting and carpentry as well.

**What it Takes:** Inmate volunteers must be supervised at all times. The Sheriff's Department provides training to LCFBC volunteers who will be providing supervision, and it is important to follow the Sheriff Department's guidelines. LCFBC provides meals for the volunteers during their shift. Transportation must also be provided. LCFBC generally has a crew of four inmates come for each shift, so a volunteer usually picks them up using an LCFBC van. The first step is to establish a relationship with the Sheriff's Department or equivalent public agency in your area.

### Tips from the Field for Managing Volunteers

- Set clear expectations for volunteers. The Salvation Army (SA) in Anacortes has a written volunteer agreement that outlines expectations of volunteers, such as notifying SA in advance if they are unable to work a shift, signing in and out, attending training and protecting customer confidentiality. They also use a volunteer orientation checklist.
- Pay attention to group dynamics. At Bainbridge's Helpline House, the volunteer coordinators have noticed that volunteers stay involved and enjoy their work more when they feel they are part of a cohesive team. They watch for personality matches and try to group people that work well together.
- Convey your values and philosophy to volunteers during training. Helpline House has also developed written materials to help communicate their approach and values to volunteers. The following is excerpted from their handout about communications:

### What do we want to communicate?

- The interdependence of those in the human community ("No man is an island")
- The dignity and worth of every human being (Acceptance)
- The validity of asking for help (All of us have problems some of the time.)
- The need to give as well as to receive (Each has the ability to be contributing members of our community.)
- The recognition of the difficulty in making systems work
- The need for information, time and attention to solve problems and make choices
- The assurance that information shared will be confidential
- The role is of a concerned neighbor (Peer)

### What we can offer is time, attention, accurate information, connections and a way to feel worthwhile.

- Deal directly with the issue of hungry volunteers! Agencies develop different policies regarding having customers volunteer — some swear by it, and other believe it is best not to have individuals wear both hats. The most important thing is to clarify and communicate your organization's policy.
- At SA Anacortes, volunteers are given the agency's policy in writing, stating in part: "Volunteers are strictly prohibited from retaining food items for themselves. If there is a volunteer who is in need of assistance they are invited to fill out the proper paperwork during hours of operation. No individual will be denied food assistance, however, they do need to

follow the proper channels.”

- St. Leo's Food Connection (SLFC) Director Kevin Glackin-Coley comments, “The best thing and the toughest thing about working here is that we have volunteers from the community in need. It is what allows us to keep our doors open long hours, and it keeps the face of hunger right in front of us.” To recognize volunteers and also to reduce the temptation to take food during volunteer shifts, SLFC has instituted a shopping policy that anyone who works more than 10 hours per two week period can get an extra shopping period. However, they also make it clear that people can't do shopping as food comes in, taking what they want.

**Whatever your organization's policy, it's important to remind volunteers of the rules regularly, to reduce temptation and opportunity to steal food, and to ask people who violate your policy to leave.**

- Recognize and adapt to changing volunteer trends. With more baby boomers delaying retirement and more competing demands on people's time, food banks have trouble recruiting volunteers willing to work one or several shifts per week as has been customary in past years. Patricia King, Pantry Shelf Director comments, “When I first started, people were working every Tuesday or every Friday. It's been increasingly hard to get people to sign up for every week. I started asking people for one shift a month, and they knew they could trade their shift if needed. We attract more volunteers with this flexible system.”
- Celebrate! Recognize your volunteers in large and small ways. Social events such as an annual volunteer recognition luncheon, a birthday party for a long-term volunteer, or holiday celebration can help build community among your volunteers.

# Fresh and Healthful Options: Connections to Fresh Food for Your Customers

This section is an all-new addition to our 2012 Edition of this manual. Both the need and the opportunity for fresh foods in the emergency food system has been clear to Washington Food Coalition in recent years. In 2011 and 2012, in partnership with WSDA and Rotary First Harvest, Washington Food Coalition hosted the Harvest Against Hunger Area Summits as a launching point for efforts to meet this need.

## Summary from the Harvest Against Hunger Area Summits:

1 in 6 people in Washington struggle with hunger. Meanwhile, our state boasts 39,500 farms and ranches, with excess local food going to waste daily. More than a hunger problem, we have a connection and distribution problem. The Harvest Against Hunger Area Summits were designed to help remedy this problem.

Using funds from the WSDA Specialty Crop Block Grant, WSDA Food Assistance Programs has partnered with Washington Food Coalition and Rotary First Harvest to host four Harvest Against Hunger Area Summits across Washington to bring the emergency food community together with local specialty crop farmers and their commodity commissions. The summits helped these groups learn how their businesses intersect and potential options for growth.



Over the years, Washington food producers have worked with many hunger relief organizations to help combat hunger in our State. The Harvest Against Hunger Area Summits were designed to bring together these organizations to share ideas and insights about ways that farmers, processors, packers and hunger relief organizations can more effectively work together to alleviate hunger in our communities. Food banks, meal programs and other groups across the state are working to increase the amount of Washington-produced foods that are available, and they need meaningful connections with producers to identify opportunities that are both effective and sustainable. This innovation and collaboration is critical as the number of families facing hunger continues to grow in Washington due to the current recession.

Each of the Harvest Against Hunger Area Summits provided many unique insights and opportunities to see growth in these connections. We found that the opportunities to increase relations between local growers and local emergency food programs in mutually beneficial ways were seemingly endless.

At the Harvest Against Hunger (HAH) Wenatchee Area Summit in September, the issues of storage and transportation were highlighted as barriers to collaborate on and overcome somehow. The HAH Yakima Area Summit in January offered insightful discussion into the opportunity of one-to-one connections between small-scale farmers and local food programs. At the HAH Olympia Area Summit in February, ideas were shared on how emergency food programs can reach out and market themselves to local growers. Later in February, at the HAH Seattle Area Summit, discussions arose about educating youth on how to grow food, as well as ideas on how to make small-scale farming more economically viable.

It was also evident that certain issues and ideas continued to arise at each HAH Summit, no matter where in the state it was held. The utilization of Food Hub ([food-hub.org](http://food-hub.org)) to locate and connect with food sources had a large amount of interest. The development of materials and tools addressing liability as well as methods of donations to provide to growers was discussed widely. Understanding individual growers and the best way to tap into their production line is another discussion that was brought up statewide. In addition, the opportunity for emergency food programs to position themselves as a paying customer whenever it is possible was an idea that provided opportunity for long-term sustainability in these relationships. These ideas, along with many others, were clearly applicable in all areas of the state.

While this series of Harvest Against Hunger Area Summits proved to be incredibly useful and exciting, they most definitely provided more of a launching point than a finish line. The journey to connecting local growers with local emergency food programs is far from over. There is much work to be done to take the ideas from the Harvest Against Hunger Area Summits and turn them into practical, sustainable systems. The opportunities for the richness that could result from a food system that utilizes these ideas, however, is truly inspiring.

## Keeping it Fresh: Farmers Market Vouchers

### University District Food Bank - Seattle



University District Food Bank (UDFB) is lucky to have the well-established University District Farmers Market as a neighbor. The two organizations have developed a program which allows the food bank to distribute farmers market vouchers to customers. Customers are offered three \$2 vouchers (for a total of \$6) once a month from May through October. The vouchers can be redeemed at any vendor for fruit, vegetables, honey, fish or other foods. Vendors use the vouchers toward their stall fees, and the Neighborhood Farmers Market Alliance – organizers of the market – requests reimbursement from UDFB once a month. The program ensures that people who use UDFB have greater access to fresh, high quality and nutritious foods. “This is a way for us to make sure that folks are getting produce that is most relevant to their needs – produce that means something to them,” says Executive Director Joe Gruber. “It’s also a way for us to give back to the market and the vendors that support us with donations.”

UDFB sets a budget for voucher reimbursement each year, and monitors the rate of reimbursements throughout the year to stay on target. One of the tricky things about budgeting is that only about one third of vouchers issued are actually redeemed. Also, some customers may save up vouchers for several months before shopping. UDFB’s program has grown to \$8,500 in reimbursements per year, and about half the funds come from grants and targeted donations by organizations that love the program. Donations from Puget Consumers Coop (PCC) and the Kiwanis Club helped start the program years ago.

**What it Takes:** A program like this requires a strong commitment from the partnering farmers market. Talk to your local market’s organizers to find out if they are interested and able to support a program. The Neighborhood Farmers Market Alliance makes sure that its vendors are comfortable participating. Farmers and market organizers have to trust that they will be reimbursed quickly, and outreach will need to be done initially to establish that trust and willingness to accept vouchers. Also, make sure the people coming to your food bank want to participate. UDFB’s customers find the University District Farmers Market accessible, but other food banks have tried to replicate the program with lesser results, perhaps because their customers aren’t able to travel to the market easily on market day or because the voucher amount offered isn’t significant enough to warrant the trip. UDFB does make an effort to create a voucher that is hard to counterfeit (dark colored paper, changes color each season, and a special stamp on the back), although they haven’t had any trouble in this area. Design and printing of the vouchers is a minimal cost. Consider how you will market the program to customers, especially if they speak multiple languages.

## Getting Real: “Eat Real Food” Campaign

### Meals Partnership Coalition - Seattle



Meals Partnership Coalition (MPC) is a long-standing coalition of meal programs in the Seattle area. The coalition has evolved over the years from a network that provided a forum for support and information sharing among meal program staff, to advocating in the public policy arena. One of MPC’s most important programs is the “Eat Real Food” campaign which encourages donors and programs to donate and utilize local, fresh, whole foods. The campaign educates donors about the value of healthful foods and the dangers of irradiated, genetically modified, and other less natural and fresh food. Donors are then asked to buy local and “buy from the top of the bin rather than the bottom.” The campaign also encourages meal program providers to do such things as improve their standards by using whole grains, replacing yogurt with sour cream to reduce fat, and checking existing shelf items for adverse chemical ingredients.

**What it Takes:** In order to launch a similar campaign in your area, it helps to garner support from the whole community. Collaboration and relationship building in the non-profit, public and private sectors is necessary to make changes happen. MPC Chair Krista Grimm comments, “When you can get public and private agencies to come to the table, that’s when great things happen.”

## “V” — for Vegetable, for Victory

### Bellingham Food Bank - Bellingham



Bellingham Food Bank's (BFB) “Victory Garden Food Drive” encourages home gardeners to bring extra produce to the food bank. The home garden donation program helps BFB serve hungry people by significantly increasing the availability of fresh produce for customers. BFB raises awareness of the program and promotes local food security through distribution of simple brochures and promotional materials to local gardening businesses and community groups. In 2005, BFB received over 20,000 pounds of food donated by Whatcom County home gardeners. The Victory Garden program has substantially increased the amount of fresh produce donated to families during summer and fall months. “We didn’t decide to do it so much as it was done to us,” comments Mike Cohen, Executive Director. “We were receiving a lot of produce from gardens, and treated it like regular donations. Then the editor of The Bellingham Business Journal got interested, and he decided to give it a shape, a name and sponsorship. It’s a wonderful way to get fresh produce in and to involve another segment of the community in our work.”

What it Takes: Cohen stresses the importance of convenience for donors, and recommends that the receiving agency be open for donation drop-offs at least five days a week. You need people power to manage and sort donations, and the ability to distribute produce while still fresh. Once you have the logistics handled, it is important to conduct outreach to educate the community about the need for fresh produce. Remember that this message is counter to the usual one of “donate your non-perishables,” so you’ll be shifting messages and changing expectations. Garden shops, local events and farmers markets are good avenues to reach home gardeners, and local press and radio coverage will help as well.

## Bringing it Together: Lettuce Link

### Lettuce Link, Solid Ground - Seattle



The primary goal of Solid Ground’s Lettuce Link (LL) program is to connect people with limited incomes to fresh, organic, locally grown produce. A secondary benefit of the program is that it engages people in understanding and fighting hunger. They do this in many ways.

One way is by encouraging and supporting urban P-Patch — Seattle’s community gardens — gardeners to grow extra and glean from their own garden plots to share with food banks. Last year, through the efforts of P-Patch gardeners 28,000 lbs. of fresh produce was distributed to over 30 participating emergency food providers. To do this, LL meets with gardeners each year, contacting them regularly through the growing season, and solicits

participation from emergency food providers. Emergency food provider participation rests in part on proximity to the garden and availability to receive donations. Depending on P-Patch location, gardeners will either work collectively or individually with emergency food providers. LL also provides the seeds, plant starts, and logistic support to help gardeners get started, which helps ensure programs receive desired items. “Ideally, we plant the seed with the gardeners, and then they develop the relationship with the food bank, shelter, or meal program. In some gardens, all I do is provide seeds, others need more support,” says Michelle B. Benetua, Program Manager.

Additionally, LL has developed a number of other innovative projects which increase public awareness about hunger and promote food security. Through the community fruit tree harvest project, volunteers glean fruit from neighborhood trees, which would otherwise go to waste, and donate to emergency food providers. LL encourages self-sufficiency by showing people how to grow their own vegetables, and by visiting local food banks multiple times with free seeds, gardening information and plant starts. These services are especially utilized by recent immigrants.

At Marra Farm, 4-acres of preserved historic farmland, LL has established a 3/4 acre Giving Garden where volunteers and elementary school children learn about sustainable agriculture by raising organic vegetables for the neighborhood food bank, Providence Regina House. Since the neighborhood has a large Latino population, the Giving Garden grows tomatoes, peppers,



cilantro, and tomatillos, in addition to other crops that grow well in Seattle. A major benefit of all of LL's projects is that they involve different parts of the community in hunger issues; engaging people who enjoy fresh, local food and want to share.

**What it Takes:** The main requirement to get a program like Lettuce Link started in your community is to identify an existing organization or individual to connect with different parts of the community. Participating in gardening events and service clubs is a great way to start.

## Linking with Growers

### Hunger-Free Thurston County - Olympia



Hunger-Free Thurston County is a focused coalition consisting of two local growers, Thurston County Food Bank, and the Gleaner's Coalition. The growers are Garden Raised Bounty (GRuB), a program that works with at-risk youth and promotes farming and gardening, and Left Food Organics, a program that employs people with disabilities in working a small farm. Both are well-connected with other local growers, including farmers, home gardeners and special projects such as the Kiwanis Food Bank Garden. The coalition was initiated by GRuB in conjunction with a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) grant-funded project, and designed to outlast the grant period. A major benefit of Hunger Free Thurston County is that GRuB hosts a growers meeting each winter that brings growers together and provides a forum for TCFB to say, "Please don't grow zucchini, we can use corn, winter produce, and other items." At the growers' meeting, everyone is encouraged to fill out a one-page commitment form that states how much they plan to grow of what plants for donation to TCFB. This helps TCFB know what to expect and make sure they don't receive too much of the same thing.

**What it Takes:** Hunger-Free Thurston County is a small, strategic coalition between growers, gleaners and emergency food providers. Be clear regarding the strategic goal of your coalition, allow the goal to dictate membership, and stay focused.

## Giving Gardens

### Marysville Community Food Bank - Marysville



We have a wonderful partnership with a local nursery, Sunnyside Nursery. The nursery has tied its years of doing business to an award offered to Giving Gardens donors. The nursery has been in business for 64 years. This year donors of garden grown fruits and veggies who donate 64 or more pounds to the Food Bank will receive a \$25 gift certificate for Sunnyside Nursery for 2013.

We have made wonderful connections with local high school horticulture programs as well as other nurseries who donate plant starts to the Food Bank. We offer these starts to customers to kick-start their own gardens.

Other clubs and groups have gotten involved in supporting the Giving Gardens program. The local Kiwanis are now tending a couple of pea patch plots to grow produce for us. We have a men's bible study group that helps maintain six plots that our Volunteer Coordinator (and Giving Gardens lead) manages, and we have Scouts troops and a school group that have gardens raising produce for us. And, we have a local business in town whose employees have tilled up a large section of their property and are raising veggies for the program.

All this benefits our customers in providing them fresh, locally grown food options.

## Farmer's Market Gleaning

### Broadway Farmers Market & Community Lunch Meal Program - Seattle



In 2010, Jewish Family Service (JFS) and Community Lunch, a Capitol Hill meal program, began a partnership to glean from the Broadway Farmers Market on Sunday evenings. The gleaning effort is part of an overall goal of increasing customer's access to healthy foods including fresh fruits and vegetables. A partnership between JFS and Community Lunch was necessary because gleaning happens on a Sunday afternoon and it is staff and volunteer intensive, sharing the responsibility made gleaning feasible for both organizations. JFS has one staff member, currently an AmeriCorps\*VISTA, who is responsible for organizing the volunteers for gleaning and being at JFS Sunday afternoons to receive the produce and ensure it is stored properly. The 2011 gleaning season brought 5,000 lbs of fresh produce into the food bank.

**What it Takes:** Successfully creating and maintaining a Farmers' Market Gleaning program has multiple steps and details. To maximize the impact of the partnership we have found the following steps helpful:

- 1) Identify a Farmers Market that is not yet partnered with a gleaning organization and make contact with them to gauge their interest in gleaning
- 2) Recruit dependable volunteers well in advance of gleaning days – and then recruit subs in case volunteers need to miss a gleaning day.
- 3) Get your materials ready! This includes everything from Farmer's Market Vendor Recruitment materials to volunteer procedures.
- 4) Plan your logistics. Who will go? What time? How will food get transported back to the food bank?
- 5) Nutrition! Some gleaned foods will likely be unfamiliar to food bank customers. Be prepared to provide recipes and information about what you have gleaned.
- 6) Communicate actively. With vendors, the farmers market organizer, and your volunteers
- 7) Documentation. To report poundage and for vendor and volunteer thank you letters.

Gleaning is more complicated than it may appear at first glance. As part of an AmeriCorps Vista project JFS compiled a gleaning guide to help other organizations successfully glean from Farmers Markets, including samples of forms and documentation. The Glean Guide can be accessed on our website at: [http://www.jfsseattle.org/uploads/pdf/JFS\\_MarketGleaning\\_Final.pdf](http://www.jfsseattle.org/uploads/pdf/JFS_MarketGleaning_Final.pdf)

## Healthy Food Gift Certificates

### White Center Food Bank - Seattle



Access to healthy, fresh foods in neighborhoods that are low-income is a well-documented issue. In meetings with the White Center Community Development Association (CDA) during early 2010, we determined that by working together we could improve access to produce for our clients while also assisting in the economic development of our community by creating the Healthy Food Gift Certificate Program. This program fulfills our mission completely as it a) minimizes hunger by providing greater access to healthy foods; b) nourishes an entire community – in collaborating with local markets and the CDA to put the program together a wide range of our community benefits economically while our clients are being nourished; c) the program nurtures self-reliance as it teaches clients where to find produce that is affordable, close-to-home while emphasizing that produce is an important part of regular nutrition; and d) our rich cultural diversity is embraced – by partnering with local, immigrant owned markets our clients can find produce that is familiar to them which their families want as part of their regular diets. Our clients are the fourth element of the project – prior to launching the Healthy Food Gift Certificate Program we met with client groups to ascertain their needs as to produce, determine their current access and barriers to obtaining produce.

Each WCFB household receives one \$5 Healthy Food Gift Certificate per month. A May 2012 purchase at one of our markets showed that \$5 would purchase 8.5 pounds of produce while \$5 at a mainline store purchased only 2.5 pounds. With each gift certificate redemption client households also receives a one or two pound produce gift from the market and any additional cash purchases are also tracked. Currently, our redemption rate is 76% - clients may use the gift certificates upon receipt or they may save them for larger purchases for holidays or special meals. This percentage equates to 85,000 pounds of produce provided in 2011.

The Healthy Food Gift Certificate Program uniquely pairs hunger relief and economic development. Nearly \$60,000 per year is invested in our local business community through gift certificate redemption and additional purchases by food bank clients at our three partner markets. By partnering with the White Center Community Development Association (which handles all administrative costs) the program is financially a sound fit for both agencies. All around, the Healthy Food Gift Certificate Program is a unique partnership that is highly replicable in other communities.

# Gleaning Resource Guides by Rotary First Harvest



Rotary First Harvest (RFH) is leading an effort to connect food banks, growers and volunteers around Washington State to fight food insecurity.

In 2011, RFH positioned 10 AmeriCorps\*VISTA in hunger relief agencies around Washington to bolster these efforts and either create or support programs that brought local surplus produce into these agencies. Each VISTA then documented their projects, progress, and lessons into a report at the end of their year-long term. These reports are so full of helpful insight, lessons learned, and best practices that we've included them in their entirety in this manual.

The reports can be accessed through an easy-to-use interactive online guide with downloadable sample files at [www.rfhresourceguide.org](http://www.rfhresourceguide.org)

## Gleaning Resource Guide #1: Pierce County Gleaning Project

At Emergency Food Network

By AmeriCorps\*VISTA Ellen Mickle

### History

Jesuit Volunteer started the Pierce County Gleaning Project (PCGP) in 2010 at St. Leo's Food Connection, (St. Leo's), a large food bank located in downtown Tacoma. In the past, Washington State University (WSU) Extension had run a gleaning program in Pierce County, but that ended in the early 2000s, making the PCGP the first organized gleaning effort in Pierce County in years. In late fall of 2010, the PCGP grew with the placement of an AmeriCorps\*VISTA gleaning coordinator at Emergency Food Network (EFN), a food bank distributor in Lakewood, WA. EFN has been part of the local community since 1982, supplying up to 80 percent of the food given out by the 67 food banks in Pierce County, and is working toward the goal of supplying its partner food banks with 60 percent fresh produce. With access to the resources of EFN and St. Leo's, the PCGP has quickly grown to help meet the needs of its county, in which 147,000 individuals visit food banks or hot meal sites every month.

In its first year, the Pierce County Gleaning Project was focused on an urban fruit tree harvest and gleaning the downtown farmers market. The PCGP expanded in its second year to include a larger fruit tree harvest in Tacoma, gleaning from farms as well as farmers markets, and a Plant a Row for the Hungry campaign for county gardeners. As the Jesuit Volunteer gleaning position at St. Leo's is no longer available, the PCGP is currently run by the AmeriCorps\*VISTA Gleaning Coordinator and PCGP volunteers. Through its expanded focus and numerous community outreach events, the PCGP is becoming an important part of its community emergency food system.

### Volunteer Relations

Volunteer outreach and retention have been the most challenging aspects of the PCGP. However, by employing the strategies discussed below, the PCGP has cultivated a dedicated volunteer base needed to expand its impact.

#### ► Volunteer Recruitment

The coordinator conducted general outreach by hanging posters, posting on volunteer websites, and getting stories in newsletters for like-minded groups. Additionally, the coordinator worked with volunteer centers at local universities and community colleges to post PCGP volunteer listings. The coordinator also tabled regularly at farmers markets

and made announcements at meetings for local organizations focused on community service and agriculture, such as Rotary clubs, neighborhood councils, local food policy councils, and fruit growers' associations. Also, the coordinator worked with the Jesuit Volunteer in Spring of 2011 to host numerous community engagement events, including starting a monthly gleaning discussion group at a local independent book store, hosting fruit tree care demonstrations, a food justice panel discussion at a local university, a cooking demo at the St. Leo's Food Connection, and even a film showing in partnership with the local food co-op.

→ **Volunteer Intake and Training (see photo here)**

As a result of these efforts, over 170 individuals have signed up to volunteer, and over 70 individuals have volunteered at least once. Volunteer intake consists of filling out an application online or on paper if in-person. Two fruit tree harvest training sessions were offered at public libraries in July 2011 to cover safety and technique (see training fact sheet here). Topics covered: how orchard ladders are designed for being on the grass and must not be used on hard surfaces, such as driveways, and how to pick an apple without damaging the fruiting spur. Volunteers who started later were trained onsite. Farm gleaning volunteers were trained at a local farm, which grows for food banks, before going to a farm to glean. Harvest training for the crop at hand occurred on-site at the farms being gleaned.

→ **Volunteer Retention**

To encourage volunteer retention, the coordinator regularly thanked volunteers by first name in Facebook posts, sent a mid-season thank you email, and hosted an end of season volunteer appreciation gathering.

→ **Volunteer Relations – Lessons Learned**

The coordinator found that making individual connections with folks who champion the PCGP was essential to building a core of repeat volunteers, and even resulted in building a relationship with a group of volunteers from a local rescue mission. The PCGP's decision to have a "low barrier of entry" for volunteers, including a one page application and subsequent RSVP-as-available model, guaranteed flexibility for volunteers, but also meant there were many one-time volunteers. The coordinator also learned it's not only important to ensure comfort of the volunteers by providing snacks, beverages, and access to bathrooms, but that every new volunteer benefits from a field orientation. Such an orientation included a brief rundown of the program's history, what impact they make volunteering for the PCGP, and a tour of the property if it is a farm, orchard, or garden. This tour was not appropriate or necessary for backyard fruit tree harvests.

## Donor Relations

For the PCGP, donors include residential fruit tree owners, farmers, and gardeners for the Plant a Row for the Hungry campaign, each with somewhat different protocol for outreach and retention.

→ **Fruit Tree Donor Relations**

"Registering" fruit tree owners has been interesting because most fruit tree owners the gleaning coordinator connected with were equipped to harvest their own fruit and uninterested in gleaning. To work around this, the PCGP produced postcard-style flyers designed for folks to share with their neighbors who have fruit trees that could benefit from gleaning. In conjunction with other outreach efforts, this has resulted in about a 100 percent increase in the number of fruit tree registrations. Tree owners can register online, on paper or just by calling their tree into the designated call-in number at the St. Leo's office to set up a harvest.

Registered fruit tree owners are tracked in a spreadsheet. To retain fruit tree donors, the PCGP coordinator made reminder emails or calls twice a year; once before the harvest season and once mid-way through to those who hadn't been harvested yet. To show appreciation, the coordinator thanked fruit tree owners in person or left a thank you note with the total pounds picked and where it was delivered.

→ **Farm Donor Relations**

The greatest challenge when approaching farm donors is assuring the farmer they will not be held liable if an accident occurs, or if there is an illness from consuming the gleaned produce. Our assurance is that liability for accidents is not an issue because all volunteers sign a liability waiver. No donor can be held accountable for illnesses that result from consuming donated goods, as specified in the Good Samaritan Law (see overview from Skagit County's Harvest for Hope here).

→ It's recommended to start with a few farm donors in the first year to build trust with the farmers. The best method to find farmers is through a personal connection or introduction. The PCGP was fortunate to have that connection and introduction through two individuals; the farmer at the EFN's Mother Earth food bank farm, and a WSU extension agent. The Mother Earth farmer helped PCGP connect with smaller scale, organic growers by inviting the coordinator

to speak at a spring meeting for Pierce Tilth, an organization of organic and sustainable farmers. WSU extension agents essentially work with their local farmers to apply agricultural knowledge gained from research at the University but also help community members connect with local farmers. The WSU agent informed the coordinator of certain larger scale farmers who may be interested in gleaning. The agent had the preliminary conversation with those farmers before inviting the coordinator to call them and follow up. As a result, the PCGP has built relationships with three local small-scale organic farmers and one large-scale commercial green bean farmer.

When building relationships with farm donors, it is helpful to remember that there are different ways to glean farms. The PCGP gleans farms in three different ways:

1. **Field Gleaning** – small scale farms, including Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs) and other farms equipped for outsiders coming onto the farm.
2. **Cull Gleaning** – small to large scale farms, a great way to get leftover market produce from a smaller farm's cooler, and to engage the larger-scale farmer by dropping off boxes for them to fill with non-market grade produce during the harvest.
3. **Farmers Market Gleaning** – great way to capture any excess produce, milk or bread from vendors at farmers markets featuring produce (and not predominantly crafts or prepared foods).

To retain farm donors, it is important to be consistent, bring trained volunteers, and take as little time out of the farmers' day as possible. The PCGP coordinator called the farmers once a week in the height of season to stay on their radar, and showed appreciation with verbal thanks, a donation receipt upon pickup, and an end of season thank you card including how many pounds they donated that year.

→ **Plant-a-Row Gardener Donor Relations**

To connect gardeners with their nearest food banks, the PCGP promoted a Plant a Row for the Hungry campaign – which consisted of giving out free seeds, plant starts, and information on where to donate, based on a survey of the 67 county food banks. The gleaning coordinator wrote letters to local seed producers for donations and distributed over 500 seed packets at all the Pierce County Library branches in the spring of 2011. Donated seeds that needed an early start were grown into 12,000 plants in greenhouses at local schools, farms, and a biosolids treatment plant – which cleans the city's sewage waste and produces a home gardening fertilizer from the solid waste. The plant starts were initially distributed at the Community Gardening Summit in spring of 2011. To get a snapshot of the overall impact gardeners make on alleviating hunger, the gleaning coordinator began working with key food banks to track garden donations on a monthly basis.

The most important part of developing relations with gardeners as donors, is providing a list of where you can donate small amounts of produce. Many gardeners simply don't know that they can walk into a food bank with their produce for donation, so surveying your area food banks to find which food banks are interested is highly recommended.

## Visibility

To get the word out about its broad, new project the PCGP used various “out of the box” approaches to reach a wide audience.

→ **Community Engagement Events (see photo here)**

Book club, pruning demo, cooking demo, panel discussion, film showing – you name it, there's a good chance we did it in spring of 2011. In addition to getting the word out to potential volunteers and donors, the greatest benefit from these events was connecting with community partners. Community members were recruited to provide the backbone of every event, by sharing their skills of pruning, cooking, and discussing their experiences with issues related to food waste and hunger. As a newcomer in a temporary position, the PCGP coordinator found it important to utilize the community's “capital” in terms of connections and expertise to build a strong foundation for a community-based project.

Finding those community partners takes a little research. For instance, when seeking individuals to lead fruit tree pruning demos, the PCGP coordinator first contacted the Master Gardener Program coordinator for Pierce County, who was able to contact individuals she knew who might be interested in leading the demos. As a result of these efforts, the PCGP has a strong network of community partners to continue these outreach efforts for the PCGP into the future.

→ **Local Media**

Issuing a press release to the local media outlets is often not enough to get into local papers. It helps to have a professional connection at the paper and a particular event on which to focus. In 2011, the local newspaper covered an orchard glean by the PCGP, partly due to promotion by the marketing director at the non-profit who oversees the orchard (see article here). Furthermore, there is the option of sending a letter to the editor in response to an article



about your organization, or a related issue they ran a story on (see letter response to afore-mentioned article here). TV spots at local stations are another way to get the word out. The PCGP coordinator had a segment with a local county-funded station (view here). Nurturing an organizational connection, like the one EFN has with Pierce County TV helped make this story happen.

To get into like-minded groups' newsletters, often the coordinator need only email the editor of the newsletter with a press release and brief description of why gleaning is relevant to that organization. This was the case with our articles in the Pierce County Conservation District and the Pierce County Solid Waste newsletter (view PCCD newsletter here). Many newsletters go out to hundreds of homes with folks who are interested in the very issues you work on, and are a fantastic way to publicize your work.

## Farmers Market Gleaning

In its first year, the PCGP gleaning coordinator tabled and gleaned a weekly farmers market in downtown Tacoma. It was a great way to outreach to local farmers and resulted in 7,300 lbs of gleaned produce, milk and bread for St. Leo's. In its second year, with its expanded focus, the PCGP found it necessary to connect each market with a food bank or hot meal site and encourage the organization to perform the weekly pickup. The downtown farmers market continued to be gleaned by a St. Leo's volunteer, while the two other markets were gleaned by volunteers from nearby food bank and a soup kitchen. There are three general steps to gleaning farmers markets.

1. **Drop off crates:** Before the market starts, and about 15 minutes before the area is closed off to vehicles, a food bank volunteer brings about a dozen milk crates and distributes them to the vendors with produce who might donate. Bread vendors tend to use their own sacks for bagging donations.
2. **Pick up crates:** (see photo here) At the end of the market, once the area is open to vehicles again, the volunteer can drive the van down the street, collecting crates from the vendors. When collecting crates, the volunteer asks the vendor if they're all done filling the crate, because many donations aren't determined until after the market closes. The volunteer thanks the vendors, and makes sure to collect as many crates as were distributed. Having a dolly to cart the crates from the vendors to the van helps.
3. **Wrapping Up:** Donations are tracked by volunteers for all markets in Google spreadsheet document created by the PCGP.

Suggestion: try to have one consistent volunteer from each site perform the farmers market gleaning, but provide the food bank with a document outlining the process, in case a different volunteer has to help. Also, designate one "emergency contact" (in this case, the PCGP gleaning coordinator) for the farmers market staff to call in the event that a crate is left behind or the food bank is unable to glean that day. Finally, plastic crates are better than cardboard in terms of sturdiness and telling them apart from the vendors' boxes!

## Backyard Fruit Tree Gleaning

Drawing inspiration from Seattle gleaning groups such as Lettuce Link's Community Fruit Tree Harvest and City Fruit, the PCGP coordinator organized a fruit harvest in five neighborhoods in Tacoma, based on neighborhood council boundaries. While the second year of harvesting fruit trees has reaped more than eight times its first year harvest total, it has not been without challenges. The PCGP gleaning coordinator has learned a lot about organizing a fruit harvest, following the 4 general steps outlined in Solid Ground's fruit harvest handbook *Gather It!*: Planning, Laying the Groundwork, Harvesting, and Wrapping Up.

### Planning

- Determine the scope of the fruit tree harvest. PCGP focused on fruit tree harvests in Tacoma, but did arrange harvests in Puyallup (a nearby city) and elsewhere when time permitted.
- With respect to goals, the PCGP decided to focus on community engagement more than harvesting sheer pounds of fruit.
- Types of fruit harvested included apples, pears, plums and cherries. Cherries and other highly perishable, hard-to-get fruits are not highly recommended. Many food banks are happy to get wormy or scabby "cooking apples," but ask food banks ahead of time and try to sort them from good apples. Apples that fall on the ground cannot be donated (due to the risk of salmonella contamination from animal droppings), but are great for volunteers to take home!

### Laying the Groundwork

- ...> Community fruit tree harvests essentially connect trees with people, so a large part of organizing the harvest is recruiting volunteers and fruit tree owners.
- ...> When volunteers sign up in person or online they indicate their interests (farm vs. fruit), whether or not they'd like to be a neighborhood coordinator, and which neighborhoods they are interested in gleaning. That way they'll receive updates only regarding harvests they may be able to assist.
- ...> Prospective coordinators were casually interviewed by phone before harvest season and met with the PCGP coordinator and the Jesuit Volunteer to learn how the harvest works and receive tools (handbook, 1-2 picking bags and 1 fruit picker).
- ...> Other volunteers were encouraged to attend one of two harvest training sessions at public libraries in July, to learn about the project structure, harvesting techniques, and safety.
- ...> Fruit tree registration in person or online is helpful for planning, but to make a harvest happen, the fruit tree owners call in to the St. Leo's office when the fruit's ripe. From there, the St. Leo's office staff shared information about the fruit tree owners with the gleaning coordinator, who passed the information along to the neighborhood coordinator to set up a harvest.

### Harvesting

- ...> Collect call-in information from your intake center. The PCGP chose St. Leo's as the call-in center because there is someone answering phones at the St. Leo's office during regular business hours, while the coordinator is away from her desk too often during harvest season to connect with donor calls.
- ...> Call the fruit tree owner back to determine a time to check the quality of the tree ahead of harvest, if time permits, and to schedule a harvest.
- ...> Email the neighborhood volunteers with the prospective harvest time.
- ...> Once enough volunteers have responded, the harvest is set and the coordinator or neighborhood coordinator drives the tools to the site, oversees the harvest, and donates to the nearest food bank, based on the list of Where to Donate. Helpful tools to bring include:
  - ◆ Orchard ladder – if you buy one, buy a 10 ft. ladder. A tall ladder usually works better even on short trees.
  - ◆ Fruit pickers
  - ◆ Picking bags or backpacks
  - ◆ Boxes – milk crates work well.
  - ◆ Box labels – It helps to make labels that say “Good,” “Cooking,” and “Ground” to binder-clip on your crates as you harvest to keep these types separate.
  - ◆ First aid kit
  - ◆ Water bottles
  - ◆ Eye protection

### Wrapping Up:

- ...> Thank the donor by leaving thank you notes for the tree owners
- ...> Record harvest totals and volunteer hours in a shared Google doc. Google docs is a great tool for collaboratively tracking harvest data, but is new to a lot of folks – it is recommended to provide a step-by-step on how to use any Google-based spreadsheet you create. See our tutorial [here](#).
- ...> Throw an end-of-season party to thank all involved!

## Plant Start Distribution

The PCGP gleaning coordinator worked with the Pierce County community garden coordinator to distribute plant starts in support of the Plant a Row for the Hungry (PAR) campaign.

### Seed Donations

- ...> Towards the end of the growing season (October in Pacific NW), start visiting local stores and writing letters to seed companies asking for donations of last year's seed. It helps to include your Employer Identification Number (EIN) in your letter to prove your organization's non-profit status and to allow the donor to deduct donations from their taxes.
- ...> Repack the seeds into smaller packets with your program's info on it.

### Seed Distribution

- Determine your target growers, and then find a natural partner to help you distribute seeds to reach those individuals. The PCGP targeted practiced gardeners, which are a diverse group of people.
- Because the EFN executive director has a connection with the leadership of the county library system, and because it covers the whole county geographically, the PCGP opted to distribute its repackaged seeds at the 17 branches of the county library system in the spring. To do this, the gleaning coordinator brought 17 beautified coffee cans full of seed packets and PCGP brochures for distribution.

### Grow Starts (see photo here)

- For seeds that need to be started early in the spring and transplanted, such as broccoli, onions, and tomatoes, the PCGP coordinator sought partners with greenhouses to start those seeds so they could be distributed at springtime events.
- Partners included two high schools, three farms, and Tacoma's biosolids treatment plant. The PCGP gleaning coordinator and Jesuit Volunteer organized volunteers to seed the plants in mid-late February at the high schools and the biosolids plant, while the farms graciously planted extra trays of the plants they normally grow.
- Seeding entails filling seed starting trays with moist planting soil mix, putting 1+ seeds on each cell of the seed starting tray, lightly watering the seeds in, and leaving the tray in a greenhouse to germinate. Volunteers at each site were responsible for watering and caring for the plants until maturity in late April.

### Distribute Starts

- To maximize publicity, find a big event to distribute the bulk of your plants at. Most PCGP starts went out at the Community Garden Summit organized by the community garden coordinator in late April. At the end of the half-day Summit, attended by the mayor and consisting of gardening workshops, gardeners were invited to take plants and encouraged to grow them for their nearest food bank.
- To promote this idea, the PCGP coordinator and Jesuit Volunteer handed out lists of Where to Donate to gardeners on their way out. While nearly 150 gardeners took plants home, there were several trays of veggie starts left at the end of the day.

### Wrapping Up

- Distribute remaining plants. Leftover plants were kept at one of the high schools until they could be planted in community garden food bank plots on a volunteer day scheduled during national AmeriCorps week. The few remaining trays were distributed to customers at St. Leo's.
- Recordkeeping for such a decentralized project is difficult. Depending on the community, tracking can be done by the gardener or the food bank, and the records can be kept in the form of donation receipts or in a log. Second Harvest in Spokane has great success tracking every single garden donation with its receipts, and Lettuce Link in Seattle works with the organized "P-Patch" gardeners, who track the donations in a log at each garden. The PCGP has started tracking monthly garden donations in logs at two food bank organizations, who cover a wide geographic area of the county and distribute 33% of the food given out by Pierce County's 67 food banks.

## Gleaning Resource Guide #2: Seattle Community Farm

### At Lettuce Link

By Americorps\*VISTA Mariah Pepper

### History

The Seattle Community Farm launched in 2011. The farm is run by Lettuce Link, a program of Solid Ground, which has been running an urban farm in the South Park neighborhood of Seattle since 1998. In 2009, Lettuce Link received money through the USDA's Community Food Project (CFP) grant to start a new urban farm. After a lengthy search for space, a partnership was started between Lettuce Link and the Seattle Housing Authority (SHA). SHA manages low-income and mixed-income housing developments throughout Seattle. A piece of land in the Rainier Vista re-development that was unused for years is now the Seattle Community Farm. Rainier Vista is in the Rainier Valley neighborhood in Southeast Seattle. The Farm got started with money from

the CFP grant, a Parks and Green Spaces Levy from the City of Seattle, and many other donations. Numerous groups have donated funds, materials, and labor to help establish the farm's infrastructure. Rainier Vista is a mixed-income housing development, and includes families speaking 56 different languages, so the farm is particularly focused on community involvement and how to equitably offer programs and services.



## Overview

The Seattle Community Farm (SCF) has many goals in the community: getting fresh produce to those who struggle to afford it, educating children and adults about growing and cooking their own food, and connecting people across cultural and linguistic barriers to garden together. The farm is maintained by volunteers and a few Lettuce Link staff members. Some of these volunteers are low-income residents who have signed up for a Work Trade, a program which allows them to volunteer in exchange for vegetables. This program is highly informal, and anyone

who has trouble affording produce can participate. The farm's remaining produce goes to the Rainier Valley Food Bank.

Besides recruiting volunteers, we engage people and groups in the community through various activities and events at the farm. We host field trips for schools and local youth groups throughout the growing season, and during the summer we run an educational gardening program in partnership with the Rainier Valley Boys and Girls Club. We also host groups from local organizations during work parties, such as the day treatment program for mentally ill adults from Asian Counseling and Referral Service.

We also get involved with other events and groups in the community, such as potlucks, cooking classes, and parties at the farm during the summer. Residents of the neighborhood enjoy walking through the farm and looking at all the beautiful plants. The neighborhood is incredibly diverse, our goal is to offer many kinds of activities so everyone can feel comfortable participating.

## Outreach

One of the goals of the Seattle Community Farm is to engage the community in growing and sharing food. Therefore, we only do outreach in the immediate neighborhood around the farm, rather than engaging with large groups from anywhere in the city. The immediate neighborhood currently consists of about twelve blocks of residences, with roughly 180 families, and the surrounding area is significantly larger. Because that neighborhood is so diverse, we have tried to do outreach in many ways so as to reach as many people as possible.

## Translation and Interpretation

In a neighborhood where there are immigrants and refugees who speak 56 different languages, it's important to reach people in their own languages. Following are a few of the lessons we've learned this year and recommended tips for using translation and interpretation services to do outreach:

- “Translation” refers to written materials, and “interpretation” refers to spoken interactions.
- Figure out which languages are most widely spoken, and offer services in those languages.
- Note that many people who speak regional dialects or less-widely spoken languages also speak a more common language.
- For example, many Ethiopian people speak Tigrinya in the home, but also understand Amharic, which is used for official business in Ethiopia.
- Translations of text or flyers are useful, although some immigrants may lack high levels of literacy in their native language.
- Translated materials are also good to give to interpreters so they have a reference in both languages.
- When making flyers in multiple languages, think critically about the size and placement of the translations.

- Putting the translations in smaller type makes sense logistically, but make sure the text is readable and eye-catching.
- Interpreters, especially those who live in the community, are great resources for reaching people in that cultural group. They are also good people to ask about what is polite in their culture.
- Interpreters already exist in both cultures in some ways, so they are often very good at explaining cultural norms that may be incomprehensible to you.
- Always allot more time for events when using interpreters. The same activity takes roughly 40% longer when going through interpretation.
- If people will be asking questions through interpreters, allot enough time to interpret both the questions and answers to other language groups (who didn't ask the question).

## Community Infrastructure

Every community has certain groups, organizations, or faith communities that attract a lot of people and hold public influence. Connecting with these groups to build and maintain good relationships is critical. In our context, we make sure to establish relationships with groups that serve all the major cultural groups in the neighborhood (i.e. East African immigrants and refugees, SE Asian immigrants and refugees, low income renters, and middle class and wealthy homeowners).

### Following are some good strategies and things to keep in mind when connecting with existing community groups.

- Someone probably has a list of all the groups of a particular type. For example, a non-profit or social service agency likely keeps a list of additional services offered in the community.
- Make sure not to assume that this list is comprehensive until you've done some investigating yourself. You never know when one group may have a grudge against another and won't give out their information.
- Visiting groups is a great way to network. You may not get any volunteers directly from these visits, but they help with visibility of the project, and relationship building.
- Visiting groups may mean participating in the activity they do, or giving a presentation on the project.
- Get to know well-respected community members. This is good "cultural capital" as they will know who else you should connect with.
- "Cultural capital" refers to the kind of status you hold in a community, and it's a good thing to think about when doing outreach. If you are well respected, and well connected, in the community, people will be more likely to participate in the programs you offer.
- Elders often have high status in groups organized around cultural affinity. They may be your initial contact to establish relationships within a cultural group.
- Be prepared for groups organized around a culture or religion different from your own to do things differently than you might expect. Engaging in their customs is a great way to show people you're trying to connect with them as people - a good way to start a relationship.
- This doesn't mean you have to adopt their culture, but figuring out which pieces are important to respect and uphold is useful.
- For example, most Somali immigrants are Muslims, and many of them place a high value women's modesty. As a non-Muslim woman, I am not expected to follow the same standards, but I try not to wear clothing (for example, tank tops) that is far outside their cultural norm.
- Make it a point to attend events in the community, even if opportunities to present the project or distribute flyers are limited. Talking to people in a more social context is often a better way to recruit volunteers and supporters.

## Volunteer Appreciation

Everyone likes to be appreciated for the work they're doing. Thanking volunteers also allows you to make a pitch for their continued involvement with the project. We sent thank you cards to our volunteers at the end of the summer with a reminder that the growing season continues through the fall. Thank-you cards are a good way to acknowledge volunteers individually and to show your appreciation for their hard work. Find something personal to say to each of them.

We also hold a Harvest Celebration and other volunteer potlucks. It's nice to get people together just to socialize, not work. Being a farm, cooking and eating together are natural ways of doing that.



## Donor Relations

Because we are a community farm and not a traditional gleaning project, we don't work with donors in the same close way as other gleaning projects. However, we do have several donors of money, skills, and materials with whom it's important for us to keep up good relations. Following are some ways to solicit donations and maintain good relationships with your donors.

- Donors such as garden supply stores or seed companies are obvious, but others require more creativity to figure out how they fit in. For example, a design-build firm that focuses on architecture projects helped us create tables for a community space where we can hold potlucks at the farm.
- Personal relationships really are the best way to get business done. Talking with potential donors about more than just your task can leave a good impression and make them more likely to donate.
- Make sure to place a dollar value on any in-kind donations you get (this is important for reporting purposes). This goes for labor as well as goods.
- Invite current, past, and future donors to come experience the project first-hand. We invite people to work on the farm as well as attend other events such as potlucks.
- Sometimes corporate groups want to hold a volunteer day doing hands-on work. While they're at your site, ask for monetary donations. Your ask will have more impact once they know first-hand what you do.

## Visibility

Especially for new projects, getting your name and what you do out to the public is vital. Outreach and soliciting donations will be much easier if people have already heard of you. Here are some ways that we have found work well to inform the community about what we do:

- Create a flyer template with a logo or design that stays consistent. People will begin to recognize the lay-out of the flyer before they even read the words.
- When attending community events, take every opportunity to introduce yourself and your project.
- If people don't know who you are, prepare a 30-second explanation that you can use in any context.
- Find out what websites potential volunteers, donors and/or supporters use frequently, and find a way to post your information on them.
- In Seattle, each neighborhood has a blog where people can post events. We use this to make sure people know what's going on at the Farm.
- Do be careful not to rely too heavily on social media and other digital media, as not everyone has ready access to a computer and/or feels comfortable getting their information that way.
- Get your events and information about your project into the local newspaper. Either write an article or opinion piece for them, or invite a reporter to attend your event.
- There are newspapers and newsletters of various sizes, and they all may be useful.
- For example, the Seattle Community Farm wrote articles for the newsletter that goes out just to the neighborhood residents, and we also invited reporters from Seattle TV news stations to our Grand Opening.
- Highlight your partnerships, and ask your partners to do the same. Put their name and logo on your website, flyers, or other printed materials. If people know and respect an organization you're partnering with, they are more likely to pay attention to what you're doing as well.

## Food Bank Gardening

Growing vegetables for a food bank is different than growing vegetables for anyone else, especially in regards to variety and quantity. Here is how we think about growing for the food bank:

- Figure out what kind of vegetables the food bank customers want.
- You can do a survey, a community meeting, or just ask the food bank staff what customers tend to select first.
- Be sensitive to the cultures of the people that frequent the food bank. As much as possible, grow things that the

majority of customers recognize and know how to cook.

- Quantity does matter to a food bank. Donating small amounts of several different vegetables is less useful than 20 pounds of one type.
- Variety is important, though, so try to grow vegetables food banks can't get through other sources of food.
- Time your harvests with the food bank's distribution schedule. Keep in mind that they'll need time to weigh, bag and set up the produce before distribution.
- Make sure you have a mode of transportation – don't leave it up to chance whether a volunteer with a car shows up that day.
- You should be responsible for recording the pounds you donate. The food bank is likely too busy to have that kind of capacity for record-keeping.
- We send the food bank a poundage report at the end of every month listing how much we donated. This saves them the work of weighing the produce, but they can still use the numbers for reporting.

## Education

This season we hosted a garden class at the farm, with an instructor from another organization. That class was for adults, and we also run an education program for kids. That program has two components; the summer program, run in partnership with the local Boys and Girls Club, and field trips. During our first year, we hosted one class from the Boys and Girls Club for an hour and a half-long session every week throughout the 8-week summer program. Field trips to the farm typically last an hour or two (depending on age), where they participate in garden and nutrition-related activities. While the program's components differ in scale, they are based on the same theories and visions, so the following thoughts apply to both.

- Consider the group's cultural and language backgrounds.
- If you're cooking food, cook a dish that most people will recognize and be excited to eat.
- There are lots of great children's books that feature food from various cultures. Find one that the kids can relate to in your group.
- If there are multiple cultures represented, look for a children's book in which the characters learn about each other's food, such as *The Ugly Vegetables* or *The Sandwich Swap*.
- If there are non-English speaking kids in the group, be sure to accommodate their communication needs.
- If they're coming from a school or other program, they likely have teachers or leaders who can interpret for them.
- Many garden tasks, such as harvesting, can be done with gestures and only a few words. With a non-English speaking group, focus on physical activities that will work for everyone.
- Plan activities in which kids get to share about their family's cooking traditions. If you can, incorporate the vegetables they talk about into a subsequent lesson.
- Base the curriculum on the goals of the program.
- For field trips, ask the leader ahead of time if the group has specific topics or educational goals you might address.
- For a longer program, decide on a focus and incorporate something related to that focus in each lesson.
- For example, your goal might be to give children an understanding of what plants need to grow. Each lesson can focus on one thing, such as water or soil, which is necessary for plant life.
- Tailor the garden work to the age of the kids. Be sure to consider what kind of previous garden experience the group has had.
- Note that around middle school age, some kids are able to do delicate tasks such as thinning, while others don't have that focus and are more suited to larger tasks, such as raking or digging.
- You can ask the group's leaders to split the kids up according to what kind of task they will succeed at.
- Kids often don't quite understand where their limbs end and the rest of the world begins. Make sure to emphasize rules regarding where to walk and what they can touch before doing anything in the garden.
- Kids are a great way to reach their entire family. Inviting youth groups to the farm can be an effective outreach tool.

## Partnerships

Because the Seattle Community Farm is so focused on community engagement, we look at partnerships with neighborhood organizations and groups as essential to our work. We have found three types of partnerships that are worth exploring:

## Similar Goals and Programming

- If there are organizations doing something similar, why bother competing? Collaboration can allow you to support one another, exchange ideas, and possibly co-sponsor events or classes.
- This reduces the chances of volunteer recruitment becoming a competition. You may even find it useful to recruit volunteers together.
- Our example: The Seattle Community Farm works with a loose coalition of food and anti-hunger organizations in the area. Sometimes we co-sponsor events or gather to brainstorm ideas.
- One example is the garden classes for adults we sponsored during the summer of 2011. Another organization provided an instructor for the classes, while we did the outreach and provided the venue. We split the costs of translation and interpretation between our two organizations.
- If you're grant funded, make sure all the grant requirements are still being met and that other organizations are not taking over your responsibilities.

## Physical Proximity

- Organizations that are in close physical proximity make natural partners because you probably already interact frequently.
- Your physical proximity may also mean you're serving the same customers or recruiting from the same group of volunteers, and a partnership can enhance everyone's experience with both organizations.
- Our example: The Seattle Community Farm has formed an unofficial partnership with Habitat for Humanity because they're building a house next to the farm. We might not otherwise have had access to them, but it has been incredibly helpful.
- Habitat's AmeriCorps team built a tool shed for us as part of their annual service project.
- Some projects on the farm, such as building our fence, could count for Habitat residents' sweat equity time.

## Serving or Working with the Same People

- Organizations that provide services or opportunities for the same group of people, even if those services are very different from what you offer, can make good partners.
- If the organizations have a relationship it will be easier for people who are served by both of them.
- Our example: The Seattle Community Farm works with Neighborhood House, which provides case management, runs a Head Start pre-school in the neighborhood, and provides space for local cultural organizations and youth groups to promote each other's programs and do outreach together.

# Gleaning Resource Guide #3: Plant A Row for the Hungry

## At Second Harvest Tri-Cities

### By Americorps\*VISTA Nathan Finch

Plant a Row for the Hungry (PAR) was launched in 1995 as a public service program of the Garden Writers Association. Garden writers encouraged their readers/listeners to plant an extra row of produce each year and donate their surplus to local food banks, soup kitchens and service organizations to help feed America's hungry. In 2002, the Garden Writers Association Foundation was established as an independent nonprofit to administer and expand Plant a Row. PAR provides focus, direction and support to volunteer committees that promote herb, vegetable and community gardening at the local level as well as coordinating with the local food collection systems and tracking the volume of donations being donated to food pantries.

The Plant a Row program was introduced in the Tri-Cities in 2010 as part of the Harvest Against Hunger produce recovery effort. The program has been embraced by the community in many ways. Some of which have broadened the reach from its original conception. Now, not only are individuals planting extra vegetables in their backyard gardens, but schools, churches, neighborhoods and city parks are also getting involved. Using plants and seeds donated from within the community, these gardeners are able to grow extra vegetables to donate to the food bank nearest them, or to Second Harvest, making use of their distribution system. In the first year, this simple grassroots solution saw donations of fresh fruits and vegetables exceeding 25,000 pounds. With further program development and education, the PAR program could double the pounds donated and expand the growing/donation season becoming a year-round source for fresh produce.

## Volunteer/Donor Relations



Unlike typical gleaning programs, PAR participants fill both gleaner and donor roles. As with gleaning from commercial operations, PAR has its own liability considerations, though much simplified. The same laws that protect commercial donors apply to individual donors. The Federal Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act protects all food donors and gleaners from criminal and civil liability.

With the liability issue covered, the focus turns to program development and donor recruitment. For this, marketing materials are needed for recruitment and a tracking system to measure the program's impact. Spreading the word is obviously important, but of equal importance may be tracking donations. These numbers will be useful for reporting or when applying for grant funding

to expand or maintain your local or regional program. Examples of marketing and tracking materials may be found in the appendices.

PAR participants will be community members actively gardening or those interested in getting into the hobby. In either case, the most effective way of reaching such individuals is to develop outreach materials, like brochures and posters and strategically place them where you know gardeners will congregate, like nurseries, garden centers and garden clubs. This will be your primary direct recruitment method.

It is important that the message you take to the public be as simple and clear as possible. The idea is simple, "Grow food for your neighbors in need", but the logistical framework must be communicated to ensure quality donations and continued participation.

- ...► When, where and by whom will donations be received and recorded?
- ...► How much fresh produce can be held and for how long?

The fewer restrictions you place on participation, the more successful your program will be. For those who request further guidance, such as, "What should I plant?" have materials prepared based on the local food bank's needs.

## Visibility

Once you have a clear mission to use when recruiting gardeners here are a few ideas for getting the word out.

**Garden centers:** Establishing a relationship with local garden centers provides an excellent platform for promoting Plant a Row where gardeners are purchasing goods in preparation for and maintenance of their gardens. Some ways garden centers have promoted the program have been displaying posters and brochures near seeds and vegetable starts and checkouts, and in some instances even stapling PAR information to customer's receipts. Other local businesses have donated vegetable starts as a way of bringing in more business and increasing PAR visibility in the community.

**Media:** PAR was started by the Garden Writer's Association, making contact with this group is a logical place to start. Contact the Garden Writer in your area by looking for their column in your local newspaper or online. Taking your message to local radio and