

HELPLINE HAPPENINGS

Quarterly Newsletter of South Kitsap Helpline



Greetings from the Executive Director

By: Jennifer Hardison, Executive Director

Hello and welcome to South Kitsap Helpline's first official quarterly newsletter, Helpline Happenings! We are so excited to share with you all of the good work that is happening right here in our community around hunger-relief at our non-profit agency.

As you may know, our program has served our neighbors in need with help from our community since 1980. Need has remained consistent over the years and this year our food bank is on track to distribute more than 1 million lbs. of food here in South Kitsap locally. Thousands of local low-income children, adults and senior citizens rely on the food assistance our agency provides each month. That level of assistance wouldn't be possible without help like yours.

While hunger continues to remain a very complex issue, the great thing is that every single one of us can help to address it and make an instant difference in the life of someone struggling with food insecurity at any time. You don't have to wait to help. You don't have to be asked to help. On your own, you can pick up extra food when you are shopping and drop it at your local hunger-relief agency. You can donate online to help support hunger-relief agencies with the many other expenses required to be able to do this work on the front lines in your community. You can even use your voice and your vote to help advocate for local and national legislation that will make healthy food more accessible to ALL PEOPLE -- that's a big one! We all deserve food and with all of the wealth and resources in this country and in our individual communities, not a single child or adult should ever have to go to bed hungry. Not one.

On behalf of our South Kitsap Helpline Board of Directors, staff and volunteers, I would like to thank you for your support and for your generosity. I truly appreciate your partnership as we all work together to fight and end hunger and poverty here in South Kitsap.

"Hunger is not a problem. It is an obscenity. How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world." - Anne Frank

On the Horizon

We are excited to share that there has been a whole lot of behind-the-scenes work happening at the South Kitsap Helpline over the last two years. There's been some buzz lately and lots of questions so we'd like to begin to address those. We are indeed moving forward with constructing a new and VERY improved facility on our existing site! Land preparation for this should be able to begin early this summer!

Below is the information recently shared by the wonderful architectural team assisting us with this project, Rice Fergus Miller.

"The property that South Kitsap Helpline now owns was once a home to the Greseth family, longtime residents who founded the Port Orchard Nursery in 1949. The site housed their family home and the nursery including three commercial greenhouses. With deep respect for the site's history, we used the greenhouse as inspiration for the design of the new food bank. As a greenhouse nurtures plants, South Kitsap Helpline nurtures people. The new building's architectural expression uses simple forms and materials seen in common greenhouse structures and functionally provides a space for people to give, gather and grow. This 10,000 square foot food bank will house a new food market, operations warehouse and administration offices along with a community room that can be used for classes, clinics, and other programming to support the local community. Uniquely, the site will incorporate garden beds and a future greenhouse which will be used for growing and learning about food. The "Compassion Kitchen" is a space where someone can take home prepared meals, baked goods or a fresh soup made from excess donations and garden yields. Not only will the space provide food to fill tummies, but it will be a warm place to rest and will act as a teaching kitchen. RFM is proud to partner with South Kitsap Helpline on this very special and much needed community project."





The Mitchell's & Their Growing Legacy for Helpline

In late June of 2021, our Helpline team was very saddened to learn about the unexpected passing of a dear friend to Helpline, Jere Mitchell. Jere was our farmer and he first began growing fresh produce for our food bank on his property in Port Orchard back in 2004. Jere's farm was our only fresh produce donation source in town at the time. He was a trailblazer and single-handedly provided our food bank clients with countless pounds of delicious, fresh-from-the-earth produce each spring and summer. He did all of the seeding, planting, cultivating, and harvesting by himself for the most part (well, with the help of Lorgia, his lovely wife of 57 years of course!), even well into his mid-80s. Jere was a mighty force for a man who weighed all of 130 pounds and stood 5'5" tall.

On that June day when Jere's daughter Chela took her dad to the emergency room after his health took a turn, he was 4 days shy of his 86th birthday and was still very actively farming an acre of land to grow food for our food bank. Up until that day, Jere had been growing and donating organic fruit and vegetables to our food bank for more than 17 years. When he started growing for us, no one was donating home-grown fruits and vegetables to our food bank, let alone on the grand scale he was achieving. The food bank was always his home away from home.

Starting in April of every year, Jere delivered his produce to the food bank at least two days each week. He continued through October every season and averaged 6,000 lbs. or more seasonally. In that 17-year period, we estimate that Jere donated over 100,000 lbs. of fresh produce. Lorgia helped him to stay organized. She helped him purchase his seeds and start his seedlings every year. We understand before he was able to use our greenhouse to start his seedlings here on site, Lorgia would lose the use of much of her kitchen for months as Jere's growing seedlings took up every available kitchen surface! It is work that spanned the entire year. In his old tractor, Jere tilled the old crops into the soil starting in the fall. During the winter, together the couple purchased seeds and planned which crops to grow and seedlings to start. When spring came, Jere planted and then from spring through the fall he harvested and delivered all of the food he grew in his little red 1999 Toyota truck. He made so many trips back and forth from his farm to the food bank in that little red truck to provide healthy food to those who needed it.

Jere's hard work and dedication were unparalleled. For that, we hope to be able to honor Jere and his family with a legacy gift here when our new building is constructed. As part of the plan, along with our new building, our property will have a new greenhouse where we will continue to grow vegetable starts and flowers to be used for food and beautification here at South Kitsap Helpline. The Jere and Lorgia Mitchell Honorary Greenhouse at South Kitsap Helpline has a very nice ring to it, don't you think?





Peanut Butter Packs a Powerful Punch!

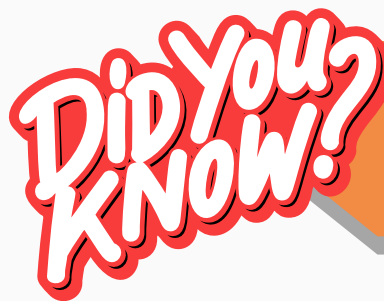
By: Jeannette Murphy, Director of Agency Food Programs & Operations



Growing up, most of us enjoyed a good peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Some of us still do! However, this is not always the case for the more than 12 million children who are experiencing food insecurity in the United States according to the United States Department of Agriculture. It's estimated that 1 in 5 children go hungry at some point during the year and 62% of teachers say there are children in their classrooms coming to school hungry during the school week.

Peanut butter is a superfood with seven grams of protein in one serving (more than any other nut) along with 30 nutrients and phytonutrients. If you want to pack a nutritional punch, peanut butter is an excellent choice. It is a great donation for our food bank and for those we serve because it has a long shelf-life which means it doesn't have to be refrigerated. Peanut butter can be eaten with a meal at the kitchen table or on-the-go as a quick snack. It can even be eaten straight from the jar!

Peanut butter is among the most requested food items at food banks and here at the South Kitsap Helpline, we can barely keep it on our shelves. While you are out buying groceries for yourself, we hope you'll consider purchasing peanut butter to help us better provide for our neighbors who seek our assistance. Thank you,



It takes 540 peanuts to make ONE 12 ounce jar of peanut butter!

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Your generous donation helps us provide healthy food and emergency resources to meet the needs of people in crisis in our community.

South Kitsap Helpline is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Donations are tax-deductible. Please contact our business office or your estate planner about donating stocks, IRAs, vehicles or other giving options.

