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Green Bag News • November 2023

Did You Know?



With the holiday season upon us, it's the time of year many people start thinking about giving. With your help, we've been able to ensure our food pantry partners were stocked throughout 2023, and that's a very good thing. The [USDA shared data comparing food insecurity across the states](#) and Oregon had higher food insecurity than CA or WA. Thank you for all the work you do to help us ensure our neighbors don't go hungry.

As we're planning for 2024, we intend to be visible at more neighborhood fairs and events. If you know of anyone with canopy leg weights, resin patio armchairs, or a 6-person table they could donate, [please let us know](#). We'd love to put them to good use helping us find new donors and volunteers.

Here's what we've accomplished together!

October 2023

Food Donated: 18,961 lbs.
which makes: 15,810 meals¹

2023 Total

Food Donated: 90,039 lbs.
which makes: 75,033 meals¹

¹ The Oregon Food Bank calculates that 1.2 lbs. of food = 1 meal.

Meet Our Pantry Partners: SMYRC

SMYRC

Portland Food Project interviews Elaina Medina, Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, New Avenues for Youth & SMYRC

What is SMYRC and who do you serve?

SMYRC (Sexual and Gender Minority Youth Resource Center) is a program offered by New Avenues for Youth, a Portland-based organization dedicated to the prevention and intervention of youth homelessness. SMYRC is designed to provide a safe, harassment-free space for queer and trans youth ages 13-24. Our food pantry in the community center is one of many services we provide, including referrals to affirming mental-health services, gender affirming gear, hygiene supplies, and a clothing closet.





How frequently do you distribute food?

Our pantry is currently open 3 days each week, but young people who identify as LGBTQIA2+ can also make an appointment to access the pantry and address other needs. We serve 20-40 young people each day at our community center with 50% of them accessing the food services. Every Friday we serve meals for our youth, totaling 90+ meals each month.

We receive 900-1000 lbs of food every two months from the Portland Food Project (PFP) and Urban Gleaners. We used to get food from the Oregon Food Bank before the pandemic when we were cooking meals every day of the week, but with us cooking only once per week we rely on PFP for 75% of the food we distribute.

What makes SMYRC unique?

Our food pantry is set up for shopping. It's youth-centered and youth-led, designed to give them the agency to access so they don't feel they need to ask us for things. The pantry is set up in the kitchen and designed to be readily accessible.

What's it like working with Portland Food Project?

I've been with New Avenues & SMYRC for 9 years and we've been in partnership with PFP for most of that time. I appreciate the framework of the program, it feels really special knowing where the food for our pantry comes from. Those who have extra resources contribute in a way they can to support others in the community. It's great seeing how many people come to the drop offs, especially the young volunteers. It's fun seeing what community members load their green bags with. The days we're open after PFP food pickups are the most popular days and word spreads quickly. It brings variety back to the pantry. We approach food distribution with the mindset, "take some for yourself, but leave some for your neighbor and community." Young people who are interested and able are invited to come join us on pickup day. Our relationship with PFP is well known with our youth and we want them to know where the food is coming from. We want them to understand that it's from people who are choosing to donate in this way.



What would you like our food donors to know?

Our young people are really grateful for the donations and we love that the food is

interesting and not culturally dull. While the favorites are the fun items like the big boxes of cereal, mac & cheese, and ravioli, we love that we're able to make a lot of different types of foods. We have a strong Asian and Southeast Asian youth presence, which makes the fish sauce, rice wine vinegar, and curry we receive very popular. Other favorites include Premier Protein cereal, oatmeal, soft pouches of beans in some type of sauce, and the Trader Joe's mochi salted caramel brownies.

People load up the green bags with foods they love and that are comforting to them. A lot of the young people who shop the pantry are navigating challenging day-to-day moments, so the food is helpful in comforting them. We teach young people how to cook rice and help them create their own meals. It's great we can help them with quick meals, not just instant noodles (though they do love instant noodles).

I love that the PFP donations are unrestricted and get in the hands of the families and people who need it. That's how we approach it, letting us be another arm of this great work. It's having an impact.

Donor Profile: Ann Lopez

Back in 2013 Ann Lopez saw an article about Richard Nudelman, founder of the Portland Food Project. At the time, Ann lived near Richard and met him for coffee. Ann found the PFP concept appealing and decided it was something she could do, so she became a neighborhood coordinator. Ann now lives in Milwaukie and, with the help of her partner Chris, collects food from 25 donors in the Milwaukie Area. About half of the donors are neighbors who live in their large apartment complex. All the foods they collect are delivered directly to her local food pantries: Good Roots Food Bank and Northwest Housing Alternatives.



Ann and Chris are amazed at the generosity of their donors. During the pandemic, donations never decreased. One neighbor even has other residents contribute, often collecting up to 100 lbs of food each time. When asked what advice they'd give to other donors, Ann suggested people think about trying to put a meal together without a lot of

choices. How can you make it more nourishing? Cookies and sugary cereals are nice, but it's also important to think about how nourishing the food is and how easy it is to prepare. She and Chris have found that if they talk about PFP with their friends and neighbors and share how good they feel about the difference they're making – people usually want to know more.

[If you know any donors in the Milwaukie area who are interested in becoming neighborhood coordinators, let us know.]

SHARE YOUR SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE

Portland Food Project is a 100% volunteer-run organization. Contact us to volunteer today: 503.775.2110 - info@portlandfoodproject.org

We are currently recruiting neighborhood coordinators, steering committee members, and additional help with communications, social media, writing or photography/video.

We would love to put your talents and enthusiasm to use!

Mark your calendar now!

The final 2023 collection date is:
December 9th

Collection dates for 2024 are:
February 10th
April 13th
June 8th
August 10th
October 12th
December 14th



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