

Food, Family, and Our Mission

A MESSAGE FROM CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, THOMAS REYNOLDS

My grandmother was extraordinary. She made the childhood days I spent with her so much fun. She taught me nearly every card game I know, she walked in the mountains with me pointing out dazzlingly beautiful plant species that covered the forest floor, and best of all, my grandmother was a baker. Her holiday sugar cookies were the most coveted items at the table. They sparkled with red, green, blue, and yellow granulated sugar. Shaped like crescent moons, candles, and fir trees, they were impossibly thin and crisp, and somehow they still melted with buttery goodness in your mouth.



Her sugar cookies signaled to me that holiday celebrations were here. The time for sled rides, breaks from school, uncles telling funny stories, and seeing long-distance relatives had arrived – all of it was so joyful.

Food occupies a deeply profound role in our lives. Beyond the essential caloric intake that keeps us energized and moving forward, food brings meaning. We have traditional foods that connect us to our ancestors. We have comfort foods that we turn to when life gets tough or a day doesn't go as we wanted. We have iconic foods that mark specific days, events or holidays. We have staple foods that tie us to our people – rice, teff, salmon, potatoes, bread, corn.

The goal of Northwest Harvest – our reason for existence – is for every single person in Washington State to have equitable access to nutritious food. We are not there yet.

Thousands of households across Washington are skipping meals, foregoing fresh fruits and vegetables because they are too expensive, and scraping by with just enough to make it work today while not knowing whether there will be enough tomorrow.

When we distribute food throughout Washington, we provide what we have learned households want – staples, fruits and veggies, rice and beans, and things that bring families together so meals have meaning and tie back to ancestors and homelands. I feel incredibly good about this approach to addressing hunger. And by caring about your neighbors, I hope you also feel good too.

My grandmother passed away several decades ago, but my sister has carried on the tradition of making outstanding sugar cookies at the holidays. When I enjoy my sister's cookies, I remember the walks in the forest with my grandmother and the card games she taught me and the love that will connect me to her until my last days.

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NOURISHING TRADITIONS

As the holiday season draws near, we are reminded of the profound role food plays in our lives. It is more than just nourishment—it's part of who we are. Food brings loved ones together around the table, creating memories and bonds that last a lifetime. It serves as a source of comfort, promoting wellness and vitality. It is community, connecting us with our neighbors and building a network of support. And it is identity, reflecting our cultures, traditions, and values.



Yet, for many in Washington, the joy of a shared meal is out of reach. This holiday season, we see a surge in the number of families turning to our Community Markets and partner organizations for help. Families like the one recently served by our partner, Saint Vincent de Paul Georgetown in Seattle. A non-English speaking family, new to Washington, visited the food bank seeking essential items, familiar foods, baby diapers, and access to other community resources. They shared their heartfelt gratitude for the support they received—from bilingual staff and volunteers who made them feel welcome, to the multilingual signage that allowed them to navigate the food bank with dignity and ease.

Sharing meals is at the heart of the holiday season, a time to celebrate traditions and create new memories. For many families like theirs, the holiday meal they receive from Northwest Harvest isn't just food—it's an opportunity to reclaim the comfort, connection, and sense of belonging that every human deserves.

Help us ensure that all families can gather around a full table this holiday season. Your support today provides the foods that families cherish, allowing them to create new memories together.

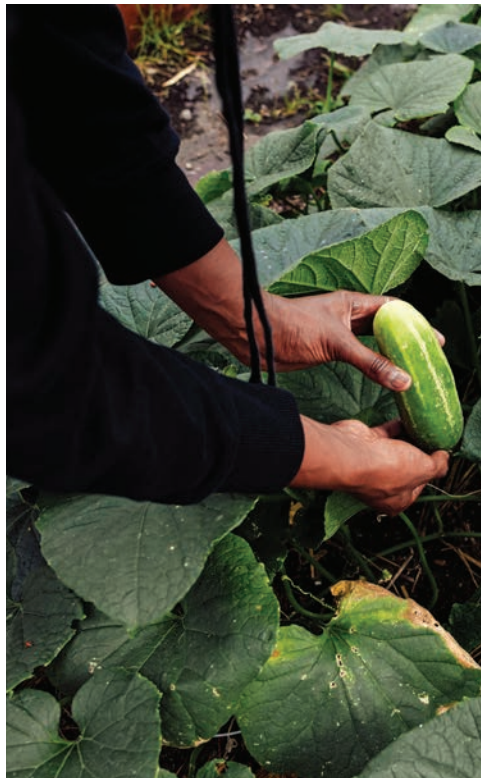
Food celebrates the diversity and cultural identities within our community. Your generosity ensures these stories continue, honoring vibrant traditions that tell unique stories of heritage and love. Together, we can preserve these connections and make sure every Washington family has the chance to share in the warmth and joy of a holiday meal.

Ways to Give

The remarkable difference made by Northwest Harvest is made achievable thanks to individuals like yourself. Your financial contributions play a crucial role in furthering our mission. Please mail back the enclosed donation envelope, visit northwestharvest.org/donate, or scan the QR to donate to Northwest Harvest today.



Living Well Kent: Cultivating Community, Beyond the Plate



Farm Share is a support system that helps emerging farmers become profitable by supplementing household income. The farmers are part of a collective, gaining access to a network of members with varying levels of expertise.

“We help participants get to the business side of farming. Now you have this land, and you’re growing, but what do you do next? Food on a tree has a short life. Big companies will tell them donate it or give them very little for it—we buy it back from them.”

Providing food is one part of the solution to end hunger. Living Well Kent, an organization in South King County, knows it takes more than just meals to create a thriving community. Their mission to provide public spaces and initiatives that encourage healthier lifestyles and better living is rooted in their goal to see all King County residents become as healthy as possible.

“Food is life; it is safety,” says Ahmed Farah, food access manager at Living Well Kent. “Food is health, and true well-being requires more than what’s on the plate.”

Living Well Kent’s Farm Share program improves access to nutritious while offering residents an opportunity to learn organic farming practices on roughly seven acres of land. “Our community looks forward to this resource. Vegetables cost a lot,” Farah explains.

“You go to the store, and you have two choices: organic or not organic, and they’re similarly priced—both are expensive.”



The produce grown by these farmers doesn’t just stay on the farm. It’s highly sought after by the community, explains Farah. On Thursdays, when the food bank is open, people ask, “where is the kale? Is there swiss chard?”

He laughs a little at the popularity of the produce compared to an item like Halal chicken, which is usually the first to go on busy days. These items make a difference, especially in South King County, where many residents are immigrants and refugees. “Many of our neighbors come here [to the United States] because their lives were on the line. A majority of people we help are refugees—they can’t go back home,” says Ahmed.



Accessing familiar ingredients and cooking traditional meals helps them preserve their culture and feel a sense of belonging in their new community. “We see a lot of folks from Afghanistan, Africa, South America—many fleeing complex situations,” Farah explains.

“I know what they’re going through because I’ve seen it firsthand, I don’t want food to be their biggest concern.”

Programs like Farm Share that provide a resource boost to immigrant communities are unique to organizations like Living Well Kent.

EVENTS

WASHINGTON
WESTERN | CENTRAL | EASTERN

More events and up-to-the-minute details at: northwestharvest.org

SAVE THE DATE: 24TH ANNUAL HOME TEAM HARVEST – BUILDING COMMUNITY, ONE MEAL AT A TIME! | We are excited to announce that this year marks the 24th annual Home Team Harvest! From now through the end of December, KING 5 will highlight inspiring stories from our partner’s dedicated work and community collaboration throughout the Puget Sound region. Tune in for the live broadcast special on Sunday, November 24, 9-10am, PST.

Home Team Harvest is our annual food and funds drive which has raised millions of meals over the years because of your help. Last year, our community rallied to raise more meals than ever before. Help us break the record this year as we come together to raise 24 MILLION meals!

An estimated 1 in 10 Washington households are facing food insecurity. Northwest Harvest, and our partners at KING 5 recognize that it takes more than food to end hunger. Together we are dedicated to ending hunger by addressing the root causes of poverty AND getting food where it is most needed- to every county in Washington, working with a statewide network of 350 food banks, meal programs, and schools.

Hunger is not just the absence of food; it is the absence of justice. Join us as we partner with KING 5, Safeway, the Seattle Seahawks, Providence-Swedish, Kitsap Credit Union and WARM 106.9 to end hunger and address the root causes of poverty.



Most public programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Program (SNAP) and Special Supplemental Program for Women Infants and Children (WIC) remain unavailable to immigrants or have extremely limited eligibility. In an article published by Immigrant Food, a 2020 survey by the International Rescue Committee found that 59% of immigrant households reported not having enough food to eat. That number increased to 78% if one or more undocumented family members lived in the house. Living Well Kent manages an impressive amount of acreage and a greenhouse abundant with fruits and vegetables—ripe tomatoes, enormous rows of basil, squash, and watermelon. However, none of that would be possible without tremendous effort from staff and volunteers. “Running the food hub and the farm can be a challenge sometimes, but that’s why we lean on our community a lot. It has been great the last couple years, and every year there’s more and more people.” Living Well Kent illustrates the powerful connection between farming, food, and community.

If you are interested in helping support one of their many programs with funds or volunteering, please visit their website at livingwellkent.org.



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Interested in learning more about working for Northwest Harvest? Check out our job openings at northwestharvest.org/careers

PLANTING SEEDS OF HOPE: THE POWER OF LEGACY GIVING

If this year has felt like a rollercoaster, you're not alone! One thing that has remained steady is the incredible support from our donors. Many are exploring impactful ways to leave a lasting legacy through estate planning. We would like to share the inspiring story of one of our long-time donors who embraced legacy giving with intention and purpose.

Susan had been one of Northwest Harvest's committed donors for many years. When she began planning her estate at Washington Trust Bank, she discovered how charitable planning could align with her personal and financial goals. Through her estate, Susan was able to donate appreciated real estate, set up a lifetime trust in memory of a dear friend, and ensure that charities close to her heart—like Northwest Harvest—would benefit from her generosity for years to come.

In 2019, we received the first gift from Susan's estate. This August, we were honored to receive an additional \$1.8 million after the estate sold assets. Susan's estate distribution now totals an incredible \$3,050,000. Susan's story illustrates the enduring impact of legacy gifts on organization's like ours.

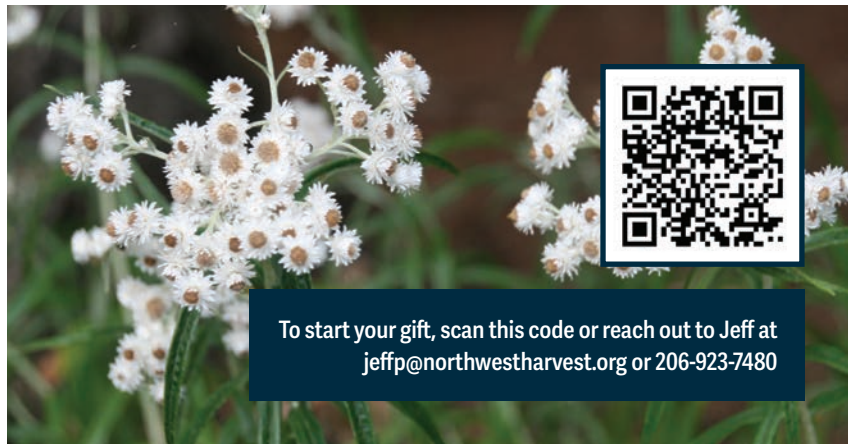
Legacy gift planning provides a meaningful way to achieve your financial goals, enjoy potential tax benefits, and make a profound difference on the causes you care about most. If you're interested in learning how you can leave a legacy gift to Northwest Harvest, like Susan did, please contact Justin Vierela, Director of Community Philanthropy, at justinv@northwestharvest.org or 206.923.7485.

Perennials: Nurturing Year-Round Growth

The strongest of plants persist through many growing seasons, blooming or bearing fruit time and time again. Just like these plants, Northwest Harvest grows opportunity through dedicated supporters called Perennials - our essential group of recurring givers.

Recurring gifts allow our supporters to make smaller gifts throughout the year. This steady growth sets us up for a lasting future. You can choose the frequency of your gift: weekly, monthly, quarterly. Once you start your gift, you can make changes to it anytime, such as increasing or decreasing the gift amount, pausing a month, or changing the date your gift is processed.

Perennials are important to our work; we'd love to have you join us!



To start your gift, scan this code or reach out to Jeff at jeffp@northwestharvest.org or 206-923-7480

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