

KETTLE FALLS FOOD BANK NEWS

The end of April brought the two-month Feinstein Challenge to an end as well. At the time of this writing, the total donation amount was not available yet, so that news will have to wait until the June issue.

Also at the end of April, the thrift store attached to the food bank was 'liquidated' during a two-day sale. All of the donated items the thrift store has accumulated have been either sold or donated to other organizations and/or projects. The room to the front of the thrift store space will be needed for storage as we embark on what we hope is the first of several remodeling projects. The immediate plan is to remove a network of false ceilings from the back 2/3 of the building in order to facilitate an upgrade to the rafters and a weatherization project. If possible, with grants and/or financing in place, we will continue from there to the remodeling plans we look forward to. Unfortunately, the thrift store that serves as a help to us financially and brings a joy to many who shop there will be closed for an indeterminate period of time.

On May first, the Panhandle Riders Motorcycle Club will arrive with donations, traveling from Post Falls, Idaho. This will be the 19th consecutive year for this motorcycle club and other regional clubs from Spokane. We will include pictures and news from this visit in the next issue of the Kettle Falls Focus. As always, the food bank looks forward to this visit each year. The food bank board and staff will be hosting a lunch for our visitors at the Kettle Falls Masonic Lodge.

The Kettle Falls Food Bank lost a member of its extended family on April 17th. Many who have worked at the food bank or frequented it during any time in the last decade will likely remember the smiling face of long-time volunteer Kathy. Sadly, she passed away after a short illness. She had so much to do with many aspects of the food bank operation; her presence will always be felt. When the food bank moved from the old site next to City Hall to the present site, she was there every inch of the way. She and I worked thirteen days straight during that transition period. I had to convince her that taking a break on that second Sunday was a good thing to do. She was responsible for much of the organizing in the food bank operations. We spent hours over lunch deciding exactly how to modify the guidelines on proper amounts of food to be distributed in each box handed out.

Kathy had an innate knack in finding the good in most people. She was honest and hardworking, and a stickler for neatness. The shelf that carries the canned food for the boxes was always a hodgepodge within categories; the soups were all together, as were the vegetables and fruits, but you never knew what you would get when you reached for a can. I can't imagine how much that must have driven her nuts! The first thing she did when we moved into the building we now occupy was to ask me if I minded if she made some changes (ever courteous). What she did was to organize it to such detail that a person could close their eyes and know what was being chosen. It remains that organized to this day, a testimony to her wisdom in simplifying things, making them much less complicated than they need be.

Working with Kathy was a dream come true. We got so used to it just being the two of us, that in short time, we fell into a rhythm of cooperation that needed few words. It stayed that way until she switched gears a couple of years ago to work with her daughter, volunteering at Westover Academy in Arden. She still came in to visit during the summer months and spring break, though.

Kathy's services will be held at Danekas Funeral Home on May 7th (Saturday) at 10 AM. On behalf of everyone at the food bank, I offer my deepest condolences to Kathy's family and close friends on their loss. She was one in a million, I'm glad I had the privilege of knowing her, and coming to love her dearly.

Plan Now To Reduce Food Costs

by Susan Urhausen and Carol Bezold

Time to plant a garden is just around the corner. Vegetable gardening is a great way to get a good variety of fresh vegetables on to your table for a relatively small cost. Planned right, a garden can cost little beyond your own sweat and hard work.

Planting a vegetable garden may be more important this year for area families than it has been in many decades. Recent funding slashes at the state level have removed some security blankets for many financially challenged local families. At the same time that the state is trimming back on aid to needy families, generally speaking donations to helping organizations is falling as well. The resources to cover all the needs of the scores of senior households, single parents households, unemployed and under-employed households are getting slimmer by the day. Growing one's own vegetables can offer at least two solutions to some troubles these families will likely encounter.

First and foremost, providing a wide variety of fresh vegetables from yard to table can take some heat off of the grocery budget. Secondly, extra bounty from a garden can be canned or frozen, extending the benefit of fresh vegetables to far beyond the summer months as it ripens. A third benefit could be the sale or bartering of the excess from the garden. Kettle Falls has an ever-growing Farmers Market on Wednesdays and Saturdays at Happy Dell Park. During WWII, Victory Gardens sprung up on nearly all available free space in yards from one end of this country to the other. I have seen pictures of gardens being planted in the strips between sidewalks and streets! A little history lesson here (thank you Carol); these gardens were planted at the request of the US government. The cost to ship fruits and vegetables was prohibitive due to gas rations, and the government wanted to save commercially canned produce to be sent to the troops. The American people answered the call and then some. Victory Gardens produced astounding amounts of food for home consumption, canning was in wide use by most families and resources were saved to provide canned products to troops during the war.

Another important benefit to getting into your own garden is my personal favorite.

This is an opportunity to forge relationships in this town that might normally get missed. If you want to garden and don't even know the first step, don't worry, there are many around who would love to help you. Melody Huntley, WSU Master Gardener, will be at the Food Bank Plant Sale, May 7, to answer your gardening questions, demonstrate a home-made cold frame and show you how to use raised beds. There will also be a sign-up sheet to request classes for any additional information you require.

If you used to garden, but are restricted physically, have no space now, or just don't have time, we just might have someone you can 'buddy' with. Teach a newcomer how to garden and share the bounty! If you have tons of space, but don't need it all, I'm sure we have apartment residents who would love to use a patch of land for a garden. Once you start building relationships, seed exchanges, organic gardening tips, companion planting suggestions and a wealth of other benefits can open up. Seed exchanges are one great way to keep the minimal costs of gardening down to zero. Seeds are also a valued commodity for barter and sale.

This August, Carol Bezold will offer three classes on food preservation. This is a successful series that she offered last year in Kettle Falls. You will learn how to preserve your abundance by freezing, hot water bath canning and pressure canning. Last year a class member, who was also a new gardener, canned 17 pints of pickled beets, 14 pints of carrots, 28 ears of corn, 2 gallons of grape juice, 7 quarts of vegetable beef soup, two batches of freezer jam, 7 half-pints of grape jam and turned a 14 pound cabbage into freezer cole slaw. Classes are sponsored by WSU, Horizons and the Food Bank, so they are completely free. All food, supplies and canning containers are supplied and you take home the food that you preserve. If anyone is interested in any aspect of gardening, please contact the Kettle Falls Food Bank. The food bank will keep a running database of all parties interested and do our best to refer everyone to the person(s) and/or resources needed to get something growing.

Kettle Falls Food Bank can be reached at 738-2326, Monday through Thursday from 9-3.



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