



# North County Community Food Bank 2012 Annual Report

North County Community Food Bank has never before experienced such a significant need for services. While optimistic, as incremental signs of positive change are being reported at the national level, local measures continue to lag behind in this troublesome economy. This is dramatically reflected in the organizations continued client enrollment growth. During these first ten weeks of 2013 alone, NCCFB added 79 new households, encompassing 293 individuals needing our help to meet their basic food needs. As American's, who would ever have imagined we would be facing the level of crisis that exists across the country, with so many individuals facing hunger. The many seniors, young adults, families, children, in addition to the increasing number of those struggling with homelessness, are silently suffering in communities across the nation just like ours. Clearly, the overall health, both physically and emotionally, within each of our communities suffers dramatically as a result.

During 2012, the NCCFB distributed just under 600,000 pounds of food to households in crisis within our serving area. Throughout the year we served approximately 7,500 households. Each month we serve between 450 – 675 client households.

The organization provides for those within the communities of Amboy (98601), Yacolt (98675), Brush Prairie (98606), Heisson (98622) and Battle Ground (98604) who are in need in North Clark County Washington. This was the second consecutive year the organization was faced with double digit growth in client enrollments, with a 12% increase over the total clients served during 2011.

The North County Community Food Bank provides daily services to an ever-changing client base. The faces of hunger can be found across all demographics and throughout the 5-day work week the organization assists an increasingly diverse population. NCCFB serves a growing number of single mothers with infants. We also assist domestic abuse victims bravely finding the strength and courage to flee their dangerous living situations. The NCCFB also partners with numerous agencies to insure the growing number of homeless individuals have an available safety net which can address their immediate food needs. Some of these clients wake each day struggling with untreated mental health disorders. The NCCFB increasingly interacts with our growing North County senior population, many of whom are suddenly impacted financially as well as emotionally once diagnosed with serious medical conditions. Costly prescription medication and treatment expenses while living on fixed incomes, Social Security, and Medicaid become far too burdensome for these individuals to effectively juggle and still afford nutritious food.

Perhaps even more telling in the local economy, lies with the growing percentage of previously working families in which both parents held well-paying jobs. Now these individuals are faced with unemployment or being underemployed in the area's desolate job market. Many of these parents have exhausted their unemployment benefits while actively searching for jobs. A growing number of these families have

already lost or are now facing the loss of their homes. While employment growth is reportedly improving, a significant percentage of impacted individuals are seriously under-employed and still in need of the organizations help to keep going. This is a common story heard throughout the area's Food Banks and pantries.

The organization seeks many opportunities to partner with others throughout the area, leveraging strengths, connections and forging creative opportunities to meet our client needs. We are continuously seeking ways in which we can increase community engagement and participation in everything we do. One key example of community partnerships is demonstrated in the success of the Annual School Readiness Program. The NCCFB partners with Battle Ground Adventist Community Services and many community volunteers to offer the Annual School Readiness Program each August. Teachers, churches, businesses, clubs, organizations and private donors come together providing backpacks and school supplies to K – 12 students in need. Many hours of behind the scenes work is handled by amazing volunteers. All of this hard work goes into making this single day event a big success for students as they begin their year of studies. During the 2012 School Readiness project, over 950 area students received their classroom supplies and backpacks.

The Battle Ground Community Garden was yet another creative long-term partnership benefitting the Food Bank and the entire community. The NCCFB, City of Battle Ground, area businesses, foundations, organizations, private donors, property and business owners alike, Gardener Center, and many wonderful volunteers, stepped up to assist Russell Brent, owner of the Mill Creek Pub in establishing this project. The gardens are located behind the Battle Ground Cinema in Gardener's Square, just off SW 9<sup>th</sup> and Scotton Way. A total of 35 planting beds were created, ten of which are already rented for the upcoming 2013 season. Each of the individual renters is required to donate one row of fresh produce from their garden beds to the NCCFB for distribution to our clients. "Land grant" scholarships are also available to clients who cannot afford to rent a garden bed allowing them to raise their own fresh produce as well.

NCCFB also partnered with Battle Ground ACS and the Clark County Food Bank to implement "Cooking Matters Nutritional Cooking" a free 6-week series of classes for our clients. A total of 15 participants enjoyed the weekly course learning how to shop, prepare and improve their family's health through nutritious home cooked meals. This program will begin again in April 2013.

In 2012 NCCFB was also a part of the Stuff the Bus Food Drive held in May, sponsored by the Public School Employees Union. This event was so well received that it will become an additional annual food drive which significantly helps the organization close the gap in our level of food donations during a very critical time of year for us as the Walk-n-Knock donations are depleted. The Rural Carriers Food Drive follows with another very successful food drive for the NCCFB.

Many other North County activities provided opportunities for the NCCFB to share our message and further communicate the serious need for volunteers, donors and community partnerships throughout the past year. A sampling of events in which we played various roles included: the Harvest Night Cruise-In, Battle Ground Harvest Day's, the Teddy Bear Poker Run, Yacolt's National Night Out in the park event, the Battle Ground Lion's Firework's booth, Rusty Grape Vineyard's Stompfest, National

Day of Service Fall food and fund drive, Hockinson High School production of Oliver, Battle Ground School District's Community Resource Fair, Battle Ground Arts & Alliance Art Show and Food Drive, Battle Ground Chamber Halloween Festival, Venersborg Food, Fund Drive and Plant Sale, the Boeing Employees Family Fair, North County Relay for Life, Clark County Fair, Lady Bug Bazaar, Yacolt Tree Lighting, the Bethel Community Gardens, and many others. Our appreciation is extended to the numerous individuals, organizations, businesses, foundations and outstanding volunteers responsible for our success in serving the growing needs of our clients throughout this past year.

In December, the 2012 Christmas Food Box and children's gift distribution touched the lives of over 400 families and 796 children. This is truly a grassroots community program. Groups such as the North County Lions club, Sacred Heart, United Methodist and, All Saints Church congregations, Three Kings Environmental, Wakes Driving School, Keller Williams Realty, Les Schwab, the Lewis River and Battle Ground Rotary, the Battle Ground Kiwanis and multiple private citizens all play vital roles in this tremendous program. The success it achieves through the magnificent efforts and hard work of all the students in the Battle Ground schools, area Scout Troops, the Battle Ground Jr. ROTC, the numerous Clark County Fire & Rescue and Clark County Fire Cadet Program volunteers, in addition to so many others are truly amazing. These collective efforts demonstrate a true sense of community; united in helping neighbors and friends throughout the area we serve experience a sense of true Christmas spirit.

The North County Community Food Bank clearly becomes a critical part of each of our client's lives; in turn they also become a key part of ours. The NCCFB operates Monday through Friday throughout the year with the support of a dedicated board of directors, 75 volunteers and two full time employees combining their talents and dedication to provide consistent motivation, empathy, basic assistance, and most importantly genuine caring without judgment for each of these clients. NCCFB provides food supplies, referrals to social service agencies in the area, information regarding resources specifically addressing the needs of each client, and emergency water utility assists for clients living in the Battle Ground city limits. The organization's aim is to assist our clients in reclaiming their lives and regaining a self-sufficient lifestyle. These are our true measurements for success.

As we look back at the 2012 year we extend our sincere appreciation to everyone for all that you've invested in each of our achievements throughout this past year. We are ever indebted to your generous support at every turn.

*John Idsinga, President*

*Elizabeth Cerveny, Executive Director*