

## Billings Food Bank Message – October 2023

Recently, a few members of the public have chosen to cast the Food Bank in a negative light. We have been surprised by this response to our efforts to help our neighbors in need. The Billings Food Bank is a private, non-governmental charity and has been helping to meet the need for food security in our community for over 40 years. We are one of the few regional agencies engaged in food distribution that does not receive government funding. We are wholly supported by community donations.

The Food Bank helps about 10,000 individuals a month. We have a standard box, geared to family size, which we give out one time per month. This is meant to be an emergency supplement, never meant to meet all of anyone's needs on an ongoing basis. Since other agencies are also providing food, we ask that folks pick one agency to use. We feel that this will help ensure that all those in need get, at least, some.

In addition to the box which is regularly available and contains shelf-stable food, we offer perishable goods which we have been given. These are often donated to us as they are reaching the end of their usefulness. We offer them to folks, as available. They may take them or leave them. Regrettably, some of this food may spoil before it can be consumed. However, often it allows us to offer things not always available, such as meat, milk, bread and produce. We do our

best to ensure that all food distributed is good quality and useable at the time of distribution.

We demonstrate accountability for all food distributed by requiring those who receive food to register and present:

- 1) A photo ID;
- 2) Proof of an address (ID, utility bill, etc);
- 3) Last four digits of a social security number for all members of the household receiving the food;

We do no “means testing” and we do not share your personal information with others. We make every effort to serve all of our clients with dignity. We welcome all who come to our door.

The Food Bank is now gearing up for the holidays. In non-Covid times we have served a meal in house. Now it is more common for these to be delivered or picked up. Those who have the means to prepare a Thanksgiving or Christmas meal can sign up to pick up a box of “all the fixings”. Again, we rely on the generosity of the community to be able to provide these gifts to our neighbors in need. I ask that you consider helping us to do so.

We will continue to be an old and faithful friend to our community.

## The Board of Directors - Billings Food Bank