

09/20/2023

Dear Board of Directors,

My wife and I were recently hired by Sheryle Shandy to manage the Food & Beverage operations at the Billings Food Bank. We previously owned and operated a local restaurant and with our skill set we saw this opportunity as a great fit.

We worked for nearly three weeks in an attempt to re-open the cafe and reorganize the kitchen among taking on other priorities such as organizing the warehouse and assisting with daily food distribution for those in need. We were able to provide fresh meals to volunteers and staff, successfully managed a luncheon for city employees and catered a local memorial within our time there.

I previously had a good working relationship with Sheryle as we donated food often from our restaurant and helped out during Covid to distribute Easter dinners with our employees.

However, having worked the front desk directly with Sheryle while Felicia was out with an illness, I saw first hand the vitriolic and abusive treatment of each individual who came in for food by Sheryle. It was embarrassing, uncomfortable and frankly I felt my safety was compromised as she incites the mentally unstable into yelling and cursing. She denies a surprising amount of people a simple sack lunch for not having proper I.D. I have never been around someone who is so aggressively hostile to every person she comes in contact with. The lack of compassion is appalling. After two full days of witnessing this I realized I cannot be part of what is going on at the Billings Food Bank. We decided to resign effective immediately.

But it's not just the terrible treatment of the people we were supposed to be serving, its the overall neglect and rot happening within the building. As we brought on a crew of former employees, we were tasked with cleaning and reorganizing the warehouse, the coolers and freezers. What we all witnessed is food and donations, expired for years, just sitting there needing to be discarded. Yet some of it is put into rotation and handed out. There is literally tons of food items that are simply no good sitting on warehouse shelves. There is still meat in the freezer that has been there for several years!

Meanwhile people are denied food daily by the director of the operation. This makes no sense. This organization is grossly mismanaged. I left because morally I could not support what is happening in the confines of that building. I am reaching out to make you aware of the situation and I'm hoping there can be some accountability for dealing with how the organization is managed.

I implore you to spend a day in the building observing the daily operation and sitting at the front desk with Sheryle as she interacts with people during the hours of distribution. It would be an eye-opening experience.

I am not writing this to damage the Food Bank, I want the Food Bank to succeed in serving the community. I was excited to work for the Billings Food Bank and was hoping to help and make a difference in peoples' lives. Currently it is not serving a leadership role for its' population as the mission statement maintains.

In reading Google reviews about the Billings Food Bank, it is true what people are saying. In my view, Silence is Acceptance. I want to be an advocate for a marginalized community that doesn't get their

voices heard. People, no matter what background they come from, should not be treated as sub-human. Every person who walks through the door should be treated with respect and dignity.

I am sending this letter in hopes that change can come internally from the board instead of from an external source. I would like to also hear follow-up on plans to better manage the Billings Food Bank.

I'm writing this to simply hope that this ship can be righted. The Billings Food Bank has a ton of potential and is a much needed resource for the community.

Thank you for your time,

Ryan Johnson