



(Courtesy photo)

Selkirk Volunteer Firefighter Organization members don't let snow prevent them from holding a food drive for Bonner Community Food Bank.

SUPPORTERS ARE FOOD BANK'S HEART

By DEBBIE LOVE
Contributing writer

The Bonner Community Food Bank would like to thank our amazing community for all of the support that we have received in 2017! We have had so many amazing “foodraisers” and collaborations throughout the year from organizations, clubs, businesses, and individuals! We are truly grateful to be part of something bigger than ourselves and grateful to be able to provide this service to our neighbors.

Funded solely through grants and private donations, the food bank provides supplemental food assistance to nearly 900 families in Bonner County in two locations, Priest River and Sandpoint. Each month, 40 new families seek assistance for the first time.

Unfortunately, those who may not be familiar with the food bank often times have misconceptions of who we serve. There are many reasons why people walk through our doors, often feeling embarrassed about a situation that is beyond their control. Our clients range from young families whose paychecks simply do not stretch far enough to senior citizens on fixed incomes averaging \$800 per month to proud military veterans, people with disabilities, seasonal and construction workers waiting to get back to work, and/or clients who have had unexpected medical issues or are injured on the job.

Those who are able to work but are not, are actively looking, as encouraged by the food bank.

Forty-six percent of our clients use our services less than five times per year — and only in times of crisis. With that said, between the two locations, the food bank received a total of 18,533 client visits in 2017.

New in 2017 is our community

FAST FACTS

Sandpoint Monthly Averages Assisted 2017

Family Households (HH) — 1,409
No. of Individuals in HH — 2,847
Children under 18 — 907
Adults (19-54) — 1,045
Seniors (55-97) — 902
Veterans — 197
New HH — 34
Homeless HH — 21

Priest River Monthly Averages Assisted 2017

Family Households (HH) — 135
No. of Individuals in HH — 265
Children under 18 — 71
Adults (19-54) — 97
Seniors (55-97) — 107
Veterans — 5
New HH — 6
Homeless HH — 2

garden which we are expanding in 2018. With the help of wonderful volunteers, we have five raised garden beds that not only produce fresh vegetables for our clients, but also serve as a learning opportunity for the life skills/culinary arts program at the Lake Pend Oreille High School. Students help with planting and maintenance, measure and monitor growth, and help harvest. In addition, with the help from Food For Our Children, we have provided weekend food bags to nearly 375 elementary students every week throughout the school year.

Also, we are extremely proud of our new location in the Priest River area, offering more food choices and elbow room for shoppers, staff and volunteers.

Last but not least, the Bonner Community Food Bank would not be able to function without the support and dedication of our donors and volunteers. They are the heartbeat of the operation and for that, we are truly thankful!

Debbie Love is the executive director of the Bonner Community Food Bank.