Reaching Out
THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF HOPELINK
FALL 2019

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The novelist Robert Louis Stevenson once wrote, “Don’t judge each day by the harvest you reap, but by the seeds you plant.” Such wise words. And a great reminder for each of us – especially during those times when our goals seem overwhelming. We all tend to look for the harvest as proof that we have made a difference.

At Hopelink, our work is guided by a vision of a community free of poverty. But in our work, as in life, we don’t always get to see the harvest. A family may turn to Hopelink in crisis; in need of food and shelter. Once they are stable, they are able to work with our staff on other needs – such as mapping out a career path, or creating a long-term plan of action for their family.

Every day, we are planting seeds. But once we have helped a family or individual gain stability and the tools to exit poverty, the harvest becomes their journey. We can only trust that we have planted the seeds that will help them grow toward their goals and dreams.

In truth, the difference lies in the seeds we sow every single day.

We know we are making a difference; that we are changing lives. For every letter or email we receive from a former client who is now stable, or thriving, we know there are countless others who found at Hopelink the necessary seeds for their own harvest.

In this issue of Reaching Out, you will meet Rev. Jim Eichner, whose dream of growing fresh fruits and vegetables specifically for food banks is now in its eighth year of feeding our community. He is making a difference.

You will meet a young family who will tell you that one of the things they most appreciate about Hopelink is being surrounded by people who truly care. Our staff are also making a difference.

And Queen Latifah, our special luncheon guest, has been making a difference her entire life – and not just through her music and movies. As a child, Queen Latifah shared her school lunches and collected pennies to help others; later supporting a number of causes dear to her heart. Earlier this year, she announced plans to build affordable housing near the community where she attended high school.

We are grateful for all of the ways you are making a difference; in the lives of those we serve, and in our community. Thank you for sharing this journey – and planting seeds – with us.

Hopelink CEO

Lauren I. Thomas

PRESENTED BY:

Elizabeth Ruth Wallace Living Trust

T-Mobile Foundation

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

AN AFTERNOON WITH

Queen Latifah

Hopelink’s 24th Annual Reaching Out Luncheon

REGISTER TODAY hopelink.org

Monday, October 21 at Meydenbauer Center, Bellevue

Donate online at hopelink.org
Doreen Marchione was the consummate collaborator; a woman for whom every single day was an opportunity to demonstrate one of her favorite quotes: “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”

425 Magazine once referred to Doreen as “the heart of Hopelink;” a description that aptly describes both who she was, and all that she accomplished.

When Doreen joined Hopelink in 1992 as President and CEO, the organization served about 20,000 people annually, with a focus on emergency services and crisis intervention. By the time she retired in 2006, the number of clients served annually had grown to about 50,000, and programs and services had expanded to include the longer-term support needed to exit poverty. Doreen also spearheaded the effort to build Hopelink’s Avondale Park housing facility, which today bears her name.

It was Doreen’s vision and belief in the power of community that brought the name Hopelink to the organization; a simple word that illustrates both the breadth of services she envisioned, as well as the importance of hope during difficult times.

Doreen was so much more than a great leader. She was a mentor, and a fierce advocate for those in need; a caring, passionate woman who wore her heart on her sleeve and lived her commitment to our community every single day.

“I was looking at what kept me here and I realized it was the children, and that someday the children would come back and say, ‘our lives changed when my parents came to Hopelink.’ And that’s happened.”

- Doreen Marchione

Doreen passed away on July 27, 2019. We are grateful for her time with us, and for the legacy of hope that will live on through her many, many accomplishments.

“Who’s Helping Hopelink”

Believe Seattle is the employee giving campaign launched by AT&T this summer. Hopelink was invited to participate in the campaign launch, and received a generous $20,000 grant in support of the End Summer Hunger Program.

TIAA Bank of Redmond got creative for an employee volunteer event; decorating and donating reusable tote bags for Hopelink food banks. This innovative drive provides a resource clients can use each time they visit Hopelink – not to mention a good supply of really cute bags.

In June, Enatai Elementary School hosted their annual coin drive for End Summer Hunger, collecting and bringing in spare change. Together, the dedicated students were able to raise more than $2,300 to make sure their classmates have enough to eat over the summer.
Jay Farias, eastside local and owner of Woodinville’s Hopheads Taproom, asked if he could put his skills to use for Hopelink. In collaboration with Bosk Brewing, Jay created **HOPE-HEADS IPA**! On tap until November 30, $1 from each pour of this Hopelink-inspired beer will be donated to benefit Hopelink clients and programs.

Inviso COO Ken Lippe put his hair on the line for this year’s End Summer Hunger food drive. After reaching their $5,000 goal, Inviso employees celebrated by cutting the COO’s hair into a mullet.

During summer break, families that are able to use free- and reduced-price meal programs during the school year face additional challenges. How much will those extra meals cost? Where will the food come from? The **Windermere Foundation** understands this need. Grants from Windermere help children get enough to eat during the summer months through Hopelink’s End Summer Hunger program.

Tetra Tech of Bothell has turned passion into action with their End Summer Hunger food drive. These committed employees held bake sales, ice cream socials and an online fundraiser to gather food and funds for kids in our communities.

Anu Gopalam and neighbors from her Redmond community gathered school supplies to donate toward Hopelink’s Kids Need School Supplies campaign. Together, these Hopelink Heroes donated 14 boxes of miscellaneous school supplies, including graphing calculators.

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**Washington Federal Foundation**’s support for the community is amazing. Bank employees lead the volunteer charge to help Hopelink teach free financial education workshops on such topics such as debt, credit and budgeting. They understand that an income is necessary for clients to take the first steps out of poverty and have been making a grant to Hopelink’s Employment Services Program for each of the past four years. The Foundation also provided an additional grant to support Hopelink’s Financial Capabilities Program. **Washington Federal Foundation** lives up to their promise of “invested here.”

For the past few years, **FUEGO** of Redmond Town Center has collected backpacks for Hopelink’s Kids Need School Supplies campaign. This year, they went above and beyond! Staff collected and donated and Fuego generously matched the donation for a total of 62 backpacks.

**GET YOUR BUSINESS INVOLVED WITH HOPELINK**

For sponsorship opportunities, please contact:

**Pam Cabrera**
425.897.3718
PCabrera@hopelink.org

For food and fund drives, please contact:

**Nicola Salarpi**
425.897.3710
NSalarpi@hopelink.org
But for the family, living in a van on nights when the temperature outside barely reached the 40s was not a temporary vacation; one only a short drive away from hot meals and warm showers. It was a day-to-day struggle, where finding work and a safe place to live never took a holiday.

“When you’re living in a car, you’re thinking about so many things,” Alex said. “You’ve got to look for work, but you’re also thinking about paying for gas, and what are the kids going to eat? What am I going to wear for an interview, how am I going to take a shower to even present myself, and am I going to have a decent amount of rest?”

Meanwhile, Flor was able to find a part-time housekeeping job, which helped a little. But for Alex, the pressure to find work was constant.

“It was tough sitting in an interview and explaining how desperate I was to get a job,” he said. “I almost broke down in tears sometimes. I remember an interview once when someone asked whether I lived nearby, and I had to say, ‘actually I’m homeless. My wife and five kids and I are sleeping in our van.’ And then I would say, ‘I can’t tell you how badly I need this job.’”

In late December, church members paid for a motel room for the family, so they would at least be inside for the holiday. Near the end of their stay, they braced themselves for a return to the van. That’s when Hopelink called to let them know a shelter space was available.

“We were exhausted,” Alex said, “but everyone was so kind. They said, ‘here are the keys to your new home.’ And I thought – you have to use a key! I didn’t know we would have a front door – with a lock. I didn’t realize we would have our own rooms.

“All we could do was give them hugs… no one had ever opened their doors to us like that. They said, ‘get some rest, and we’ll talk again in a day or so.’”

“And I remember I just stayed up that first night, looking at the room … and just thinking how blessed we were that Hopelink was there for us.”

There was a kitchen and a shower. Cooking utensils and food. Towels and shampoo. And after three months of living on sandwiches, the kids started looking forward to dinner.
Today, Flor is working two jobs, while Alex is holding down the fort at home. They are working with their Hopelink case manager to map out a future that will better sustain them if life tosses another curveball. And Alex – who developed a passion for cooking at the tender age of seven – is planning to work with a Hopelink Employment Specialist to pursue a career in culinary arts.

They will tell you that being homeless changed them. More likely, the journey from crisis to stability and toward a new, stronger foundation brought out the best of who they already were. Flor says that Alex has always had a big heart – something that never wavered when they were struggling.

“Even if it was our last $20, if Alex saw someone on the street who needed money, he would give it to them,” Flor said, beginning to tear up.

“He would say, ‘we’re going through this time where we don’t have anything, and we know what that’s like. Nobody sees you when you’re homeless.’ So he would just give that money to them. Even when we were homeless, he would give away his last dollar.”

A year ago, the days of being totally self-sufficient, having their own space and not thinking twice about ordering takeout and stopping at Starbucks gave way to buying coffee at a gas station – a habit they intend to keep as they plan their financial future.

“It got us through the day,” Flor laughs. “In the morning, we would pool our change to buy a warm cup of coffee at a gas station – for $1.69. When we were homeless, I think we bonded over coffee.

“Today, I will think twice about it. It may sound really good, but I will stop and think, ‘I want it, but I don’t need it … I would rather save that money. And if we have extra money, we set it aside; we save it – now that we know how tough it was. Homelessness made us appreciate everything; we don’t take anything for granted now.”

Looking ahead, the couple dream of owning their own home, so their kids have a yard to play in. And they are optimistic about the future.

“We’re hopeful,” Alex said. “We know that whatever challenges we have, Hopelink will be there for us, and we will be there for each other.”

“We are surrounded by people who truly care. And if it wasn’t for Hopelink and this program and all of the people here, we would not be able to get back on our feet. We were pushed back – time after time after time – and for Hopelink to reach out a hand and help us … that changed everything.”

You can read more Hopelink success stories at hopelink.org/success-stories
Growing Food, Nourishing Souls

Food Bank Farm is bringing fresher produce to local food banks.

Farmer’s markets are everywhere this time of year; popping up in parking lots, grassy fields and school playgrounds. For most of us, the local fruits and vegetables are one of the best parts of summer and fall. But for Rev. Jim Eichner, they are a reminder that not everyone has access to fresh, healthy produce – and he believes they should.

For years, food banks had a reputation for offering food that was either limited to cans or well on its way to a compost bin. Partnerships with stores through “grocery rescue” efforts began changing what was available a number of years ago, and more recently, gleaning from local farms and community donations have further increased the quality and quantity of fresh, nutritious produce.

But what if, Eichner wondered, a farm actually planted and harvested produce specifically for those in our community who aren’t in a position to shop for fresh produce in a grocery store or farmers market? What if food banks had the first pick of quality produce, rather than what is left over?

In 2011, “what if” became Food Bank Farm. A ministry of The Episcopal Church of the Holy Cross in Redmond, the farm grew out of a serendipitous meeting Eichner had with the owner of Chinook Farms, Eric Fritch. Shortly after Eichner shared his vision, Fritch offered not only 10 acres of Snohomish River Valley farmland, but also use of his farming equipment.

A short time later, the model Eichner affectionately refers to as, “We’ll grow it and we’ll give it away” was born.

Food Bank Farm relies on volunteer planting and harvesting crews to grow produce for food banks in western Washington – nearly one million pounds since the farm began. Eichner estimates the total value of the donated food to be about $1.4 million so far, but says the actual cost is only about four cents per pound, thanks to a steady stream of volunteers.

The farm began with only 12 volunteers in 2011; growing a total of 3,750 pounds of fresh vegetables. Seven years later – in 2018 – about 1,500 volunteers planted and harvested the weight of a railroad locomotive engine (250,000 pounds). The farm has a goal of donating 300,000 pounds of produce this year. The harvest is distributed locally to about 350 food banks, including Hopelink’s five sites.

Eichner, who grew up on a dairy farm in Wisconsin (and like many others, became a “displaced farm kid” as he got older) says that Food Bank Farm has given him the opportunity to combine farming with church work, offering the best of both worlds.

“It’s a very happy mid-life crisis,” he said.

Eichner is both gratified and amazed at how quickly the idea has caught on.

“People have really responded,” Eichner said. “If I need help, the help is there.”

“Sometimes I feel like I’m just trying to hang on while the train goes by.”

The train, according to Eichner, is part of “an evolution of fresh food in food banks.” That food banks – including Hopelink – have found a need for bigger coolers in order to store additional fresh produce is a good problem to have, according to Hopelink CEO Lauren Thomas.

Thomas – who has known Eichner for years – said, “his heart is truly that of a farmer, as well as a man of the cloth.

“Rev. Jim is truly bringing the community together, encouraging neighbors to help neighbors in times of need,” Thomas said. “It is so inspiring to watch him teach students about the planting and harvesting seasons, inviting community volunteers to plant, weed, and sow, blessing the farm tractors on Sundays and sometimes praying for rain.”

Eichner’s commitment to growing fresh, healthy food for those who rely on food banks may be the beginning of a revolution, but his mantra is a simple one: “When you feed the hungry, you feed your own soul.”

Photos courtesy of Food Bank Farm.
DO YOU KNOW SOMEONE WHO NEEDS HELP?

Below is an overview of Hopelink’s programs and a list of our service centers. If you know anyone that may need our help, please share this information and encourage them to contact us at their nearest center.

**FOOD ASSISTANCE**
Contact your nearest center

**ENERGY ASSISTANCE**
Call 425.658.2592

**FINANCIAL CAPABILITIES**
Call 425.250.3003

**FAMILY DEVELOPMENT**
Call 425.883.4755

**EMPLOYMENT SERVICES**
Call 425.250.3030

**TRANSPORTATION SERVICES**
Metro DART: 866.261.3278
Medicaid: 800.923.7433
Mobility Line: 425.943.6760

**ADULT EDUCATION**
English for Work: 425.250.3007
GED Classes: 425.457.9685

**HOUSING SERVICES**
Eastside: 206.328.5900
North King County: 206.934.6160

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The printing of this newsletter has a post-consumer recycled percentage of at least 30 percent.

- 8.5 trees preserved for the future
- 3,700 pounds of pounds of CO₂ prevented
- 30 gallons of water saved
- 3.6 million BTUs saved
- 30 pounds of solid waste not generated

Please visit Hopelink.org for full center hours and list of services at each location.

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**HOPELINK CENTERS**

**BELLEVUE**
14812 Main St.
Bellevue, WA 98007
425.943.7555

**KIRKLAND/NORTHSHORE**
11011 120th Ave. NE
Kirkland, WA 98033
425.889.7880

**SNO-VALLEY**
31957 E Commercial St.
Carnation, WA 98014
425.333.4163

**REDMOND**
8930 154th Ave. NE
Redmond, WA 98052
425.869.6000

**SHORELINE**
17837 Aurora Ave. N
Shoreline, WA 98133
206.440.7300

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**Our Vision:**

A COMMUNITY FREE OF POVERTY
For more than 48 years, your support has helped Hopelink expand its critical social services to at-risk families and individuals in our region. Our approach – providing stability and the skills needed to exit poverty – continues to move tens of thousands of people from vulnerability and crisis toward independence.