In This Issue:

4 | Message from the CEO

4 | Community in Action

6 | Community Van drivers switch gears; deliver food

8 | Redmond center solar panels

10 | Cover story

14 | Pandemic creates unique challenges

17 | Make lasting change

18 | Equity Matters

20 | Hopelink Harvest

22 | Hopelink Then & Now

Our Vision:

A Community Free of Poverty

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Cover Story

For Andrei and Evgeny, nothing was more important than keeping their kids safe, and keeping the family together. Learn about their 5,000-mile journey to a new life, beginning on page 10.
What's New

Fall weather and the promise of cloudy days for months to come may sound like bad news for the new solar panels at Hopelink’s Redmond center. Not so!

Solar panels still work even when the light is reflected or partially blocked by clouds – and they don’t actually function as well when it’s too hot.

Meanwhile, rain helps keep the panels operating efficiently by washing away dust and dirt. And – they’re already saving money!

Check out the solar panel installation at Hopelink Redmond on page 8.
Dear Hopelink Community of Friends and Partners,

For generations, my family accessed services like the ones Hopelink provides to this community.

I have vivid memories of walking with my great grandmother in Washington, D.C. to get food from a local food pantry. She would take her cart and wheel it down the street. I walked alongside her. We would return with frozen juices, milk and canned goods. In Memphis, I served with my grandmother while she volunteered at a local food pantry and was a recipient of the same services. My mother, a single mom, and I would walk just under a half of a mile to the bus stop to catch busses to work and school.

The services we received through food, transportation and economic assistance sustained us. They provided basic needs for our family while the gifts I had were being cultivated. I was smart and funny and had a vivid imagination. I was curious about the world around me and wanted to do well in this life. The services served as a scaffold for my family and me. They undergirded us as we worked to navigate out of poverty. My mother was able to become the first in our family to go to and graduate from college, and that created a new pathway for me.

I celebrate the knowledge, creativity, talents, gifts, ideas, imagination and aspirations of each of our clients. It is our pleasure at Hopelink to provide services that undergird those who reach out to us and their loved ones, as they navigate toward their hopes and dreams.

Yours in service,

Dr. Catherine Cushinberry
Hopelink CEO
Microsoft

Microsoft used their creativity and partnered with Hopelink to provide a personal touch to their donation. As a team, they met over Zoom to color a coloring sheet that was then digitally uploaded and printed on totes for Hopelink’s Redmond food bank – which were filled with fresh produce and given to clients. Food bank clients were able to reuse the specially designed totes during subsequent food bank visits.

Stray Threads Quilt Guild

Stray Threads Quilt Guild in the Woodinville area is a nonprofit organization dedicated to not only helping people learn quilting, but also donating the quilts they’ve created together to charities. Hopelink supporters for 11 years, the organization recently added to their history of in-kind drives with an online fundraiser. And after spreading the word with friends and family, they ultimately exceeded their goal in support of Hopelink’s End Family Hunger campaign.

Winshuttle

Partnering with Hopelink since 2009, Winshuttle used their network of employees, friends and family to fundraise online this year. Together they raised enough money for Hopelink food banks to purchase the equivalent of 191 boxes of food containing 4,024 meals for the community.

Nothing Bundt Cakes

On July 8, the community welcomed Nothing Bundt Cakes to downtown Kirkland. As part of their opening weekend festivities, Nothing Bundt Cakes donated 20 percent of their opening day sales to Hopelink. Leslie McBride and her team also donated coupons for cakes for Hopelink clients and volunteers – and dropped off a surprise Bundt cake for Kirkland center staff and volunteers.

The Sammamish Community YMCA

In response to a supply gap for hygiene items throughout the pandemic, the Sammamish Community YMCA partnered with Hopelink to gather needed hygiene products for Hopelink food banks. The organization committed to collecting the most-needed items, and held a drive-through, no-contact drop-off event at their building.

Evergreens tosses special salad to benefit Hopelink

In July, Evergreens restaurants collaborated with Chef Gabe Rucker – two-time James Beard Award winner and owner of Le Pigeon & Canard in Portland – to create “Cacio Me If You Can” salad. As the chosen charity partner for Washington state Evergreens stores, Hopelink received five percent of all Washington sales of the special salad.
Community Van drivers switch gears; deliver food

Fewer passengers during the pandemic spurs innovation
After a string of hot, smoky days, it’s a cool morning when Ron Huston heads out to deliver food to seven Hopelink clients in the Shoreline area. A break in the weather makes the task a bit easier, but that doesn’t really matter to him. Retired from a career in public service, Huston says he’s “wired to serve.” He has been a Community Van volunteer driver for two years.

Paulo Medina, too, is driven by a desire to serve and what he calls a “heart to help.” But for him, getting involved with the Community Van program took a different route. At the beginning of the pandemic, Medina was in a car accident, and recovery began to take a toll on his mental health. For a time, he struggled to even leave his house. Delivering food gave Medina the chance to get to know the people he was able to help – which boosted his self-esteem and brought a smile back to his face.

When Marcia Tapps lost her job during the pandemic, getting out of the house and finding a way to help others became a priority. So when a Hopelink social media post recruiting volunteer van drivers piqued her interest, Tapps signed up. She appreciates the scheduling flexibility and also enjoys meeting people and knowing that she is serving her community.

Huston, Medina and Tapps are among about 25 regular Community Van volunteer drivers. That number has been reduced a bit during the pandemic.

Meanwhile, as the van program continues to support the community with food deliveries, it also has returned to scheduling regular rides at full capacity, following CDC and King County Metro COVID-19 guidelines in all vehicles. There are no eligibility requirements for the purpose of the trip or who can ride the Community Van.

Learn more about the Community Van program at: hopelink.org/community-van
Redmond center solar panels will save energy; save money

Hopelink’s flagship Redmond center opened in August 2018 with a commitment to energy efficiency; incorporating a number of design and building options that garnered a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) gold award in June 2020.

Earlier this year, Hopelink added solar panels to the mix, thanks to competitive grant funding from Puget Sound Energy’s Green Power and Solar Choice programs. The panels are expected to reduce Hopelink’s Redmond center energy costs by about one-third.

The Green Power and Solar Choice programs bring local solar projects to PSE’s electric service area, while also providing support to those in need through lower utility bills for low-income or Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities and the organizations that serve them.

As a grant recipient, Hopelink is aligned with PSE to solve several challenges at once: the installation of solar panels to support the expansion of cleaner energy and a healthier environment, lowering energy-related operating costs at the center and making the push to a more inclusive clean energy future.
Hopelink’s 26th Annual Reaching Out LUNCHEON
A LIVE VIRTUAL EVENT

Presented by:

Hopelink’s CEO, Dr. Catherine Cushinberry & special guest Hasan Minhaj

JOIN US FOR A Q&A DISCUSSION WITH

The event will include discussion of issues that disproportionately affect marginalized communities, as well as ways in which Hopelink has adapted to meet the needs of the community during the pandemic.

For details and registration, scan the QR code or visit hopelink.org/luncheon.
For questions, please email RSVP@hopelink.org or reach out to 425.897.3703.

There is no charge to attend, but guests will be asked to make a donation during the event.
Watching his sons wrestle with the family dog, Andrei is lost in thought.

“In Russia, our biggest concern was for our kids,” he said. “We worried that in the future, there would be some problem with authorities. Right now, I am absolutely confident that our kids will be OK.”

Today, life is good. But for Andrei and his husband Evgeny, the journey to become a family in their native Russia might have had a very different outcome.

Although they were already a couple at the time their sons – now 14 and 15 – were adopted, only Andrei was allowed to sign the papers. In Russia, even that legal status didn’t offer the family much protection.

“They had asked me why I wanted to adopt a child, and why I was unmarried,” Andrei said. “And several lawyers confirmed that the authorities could take the children away from me.”

In June 2019, their younger son complained of a stomachache and was vomiting. Andrei called the paramedics at midnight. An ambulance took the boy to the Pediatric Urgent Surgery and Injury Hospital, where a doctor found out the boy lived with his father, Andrei, his other father, Evgeny, and his brother. The doctor reported that information to the Russian Investigation Committee.

Then, the situation got progressively worse.
“An investigation officer decided it was bad for two men to have kids,” Evgeny said. “After the investigation, our attorney said we should leave the country – in the next one or two hours.”

That day, Andrei packed two suitcases, and he and the boys fled to Ukraine. When the family’s apartment was searched a few days later, Evgeny joined them.

Two months later, in 2019, the family came to the United States. They hadn’t planned to stay.

“We believed that things would settle down,” Andrei said. “That after this situation, everybody would forget about us, and we could go back home.”

A Russian news article sent by a friend changed that. There was talk of starting an international investigation into their situation. The couple decided to apply for asylum and found an attorney through friends in Seattle.

Soon, everything began to change. They felt relatively safe in their new country, but knew the days ahead would bring daunting challenges. And they knew they would need help.

“We learned that it’s important to ask for help when you need it,” Evgeny said. “Sometimes it’s really difficult to ask – to say, ‘I need help,’ but sometimes it is necessary.”

Encouraged by a friend to reach out to Hopelink, the couple found the network of support they needed to help navigate their new journey. They signed up for the Bellevue food bank and learned about other Hopelink programs and services – including energy and financial assistance, help with rent and English for Work classes. And – for the ambitious Evgeny – an employment program.

Ironically, he was approved to work in March 2020, as the coronavirus pandemic began to decimate the job market. He wasn’t deterred. Soon, Evgeny’s work with a Hopelink employment specialist paid off.

“I applied for a lot of positions,” he said, “and I found a job in six months. That day, we had only $200 or $300 in the bank.”

Today, Evgeny is applying to the Foster School of Business at the University of Washington and has set his sights on landing a key position at a big tech company.

Completing the asylum application process is the next step in the family’s journey, and they’re hoping to meet with an immigration officer soon. Results could come quickly or take up to a year, but they aren’t waiting for the official paperwork to fully engage with their community.

One of the things that has surprised them the most about the United States is the sense of connection they’ve experienced everywhere.

“**In the U.S., you belong. There are a lot of people who care about you,**” Evgeny said.

“You belong to neighborhoods, to the city, to the region.”

That holds true for their sons as well, who were surprised their new classmates were so welcoming.

And the couple are grateful for the support their sons have received at school – including Russian tutors to help with their studies. Both have adapted well to their new lives, and both are now able to understand and converse in English.

Today, Andrei and Evgeny talk about their journey as a series of pillars building a new, stronger foundation.

Gaining asylum will be the first, they say, and both having good jobs and no longer having to ask anyone for help will comprise the second. Education is the third pillar, to help Evgeny advance in his career. The most important? That happened a year ago, when Andrei and Evgeny filed a petition with the state to add Evgeny as Denis and Iurii’s legal father. Now, the boys’ birth certificates bear both fathers’ names.

Their dream for their sons is that both will become an active part of society, and have their own, meaningful lives.

Meanwhile, as the couple plan a future they hope will include citizenship, home ownership and volunteering to help other immigrants, their son Denis has a more immediate – and fully American – goal: passing his driving test. Settling into a new life looks a little different when you’re about to turn 16.
Hopelink 21st Annual

Turkey Trot 5K

Presented by Amazon

November 21
Virtual race against poverty!

Hopelink’s Virtual Turkey Trot 5K Family Fun Run & Walk will help provide emergency services and holiday assistance to local families during the winter months.

Due to the rise in COVID-19 cases, the event will again be virtual this year.

Find out more and register at hopelink.org/turkeytrot
In the early days of 2020, few could have predicted the unimaginable havoc COVID-19 would wreak on the world. But as job layoffs continued and the death toll mounted, it soon became clear: “normal” would – and should – take on an entirely different meaning from here on out.

Now, a year and a half later, we’re starting to glimpse the beginnings of a return to some parts of that old, “normal” way of life. Vaccine rollouts and steady job growth have slowly spurred hopes of economic recovery. As of June 2021, the economy was up 850,000 jobs, and higher-wage workers began to swap sweatpants for blazers and head back to the office. Despite these perceived advances, however, one sector of the workforce has been largely left out of the recovery: workers in lower-wage jobs.

Workers in some industries face more hurdles than most

Early on, it was clear that workers in lower-wage jobs would bear the brunt of pandemic-induced job cuts. In 2020 alone, 80 percent of job losses occurred among the lowest quarter of wage earners. Lowest-wage workers lost nearly 7.9 million jobs, while the highest-wage workers gained nearly a million. Though jobs are making a comeback at rates better than expected, lower-wage jobs have been the slowest to return.

What’s more, the fallout isn’t distributed evenly across lower-wage workers, according to a study published by the Economic Policy Institute this spring. Certain sectors, as well as certain groups of people, have incurred far more damage. In King County, for example, residents filed 435,905 new unemployment claims between March 1 and July 11, 2020. As a result, the unemployment rate skyrocketed from January’s 2.7 percent to 14 percent in May.

But five sectors were hit especially hard at the peak of the pandemic: accommodations and food services, health care and social assistance, retail, manufacturing and construction – accounting for nearly half of all initial unemployment claims filed. Annual wages of workers in four of the five affected industries fall far below the King County average of $94,764, with accommodation and food service workers earning an average of $31,284 per year.

Given the occupational segregation prevalent in the American workforce, many of those working in the most affected industries are people of color. Throughout the course of the pandemic, Black and Hispanic workers have endured disproportionate job losses in comparison to white workers.
Early on, Black workers in King County lost their jobs at nearly twice the rate of whites.

Overall recovery has been slower for these individuals, too, and King County is no exception to this trend.

Many workers have turned to government assistance for navigating the still-choppy waters of the pandemic. But even though limited financial help is available, the crisis continues to affect workers in lower-wage jobs across Washington in a multitude of ways.

**For some, unemployment benefits are few & far between**

West Seattle resident Ivy Allen-Chang was working as a shipping assistant for a major diamond retailer when the pandemic hit. She managed to keep working during the early months of 2020, transitioning from the warehouse to the corporate side of the company late last year. But because the corporation had transitioned to remote work for the first time during the pandemic, Allen-Chang said she wasn’t provided the same training resources that would have been available had training been conducted in person.

“With the pandemic, the training completely swapped,” she said. “We were doing one week of training at home on Zoom calls, and they used to do two to three weeks of training on the floor next to experts and veterans. I’d never heard a call next to another person.”

Operating remotely with little training eventually led to a disconnect between staff and supervisors, Allen-Chang said. On top of that, she and her fiancé soon ran into health issues, for which she had to take time off. Thanks to the growing rift in her office, Allen-Chang was told that her time off hadn’t been approved — and she was suddenly terminated in July 2021.

“I still haven’t received paperwork that says why I was terminated, but I have been filing for unemployment since, and they’ve told me it takes at least 16 weeks for claims to be processed,” she said. “So I’m on week 14 of waiting.”

Last year, from April to October, claims took an average of 22 days to payout, and the heightening backlog is only adding to the state’s pre-existing unemployment struggles.

In the interim, Allen-Chang is taking steps to kickstart a career in real estate; networking with realtors and watching educational webinars to prepare for license exams. Without the funds to pay for professional training courses necessary to enter a new field, however, it’s difficult to make advances. Allen-Chang receives federal assistance in the form of food stamps, but she said she wishes there were more resources for people waiting on unemployment funds to stay afloat.

“At the unemployment office, they tell me I can go get a temp job,” she said. “Yes, you can go to those temp jobs, but you don’t know when you’re coming in on a pay cycle and you have bills to be paid.”

**Unemployment helps workers buy time for better jobs**

Other Washington residents have had better luck receiving unemployment funds. Such was the case for Justine Wells, an administrative assistant in Everett. As she searched for work during the peak of the pandemic, unemployment funds enabled her to hold off on reentering the workforce right away and find safer job opportunities.

“I was on unemployment for the entire stretch of not working. That really saved me,” she said.

Across the United States, a myriad of issues hold back the displaced workforce from reemployment – fear of contracting COVID-19 among them. Lower-wage jobs put workers at a far greater risk of contracting the virus, given that those workers are often face-to-face with the public for extended periods of time.

For workers like Wells, rethinking the jobs they can do safely — and for what pay — means putting pressure on employers to up their incentives. Workers want better working conditions, better pay and more flexibility for a decent work-life balance. Luckily, Wells was able to find just that. She secured a job at a salon in November 2020, then managed to find a remote position as an administrative assistant.

“I found a new job working from
home so that I could have a little more freedom and flexibility in my schedule, while also feeling more comfortable by being at home,” she said.

**Modern problems require modern solutions**

People working in the arts were particularly devastated by the pandemic. Creatives had to — well, get creative — in order to find the means to survive.

Hadrian Miguel is an artisan, selling handmade art, clothing, candles, soaps and accessories at local markets.

Before the pandemic, Miguel spent roughly 40 hours a week selling goods at markets and working a freelance gig at a local studio. When the pandemic shut down those revenue streams, he was suddenly out of options.

“My main fear was trying to be safe and not get COVID - that was first and foremost,” Miguel said. “The next thing was work:

**How was I going to provide for myself? How was I going to be allowed to continue to work based on all the federal and local guidelines?”**

He quickly realized he’d have to boost sales via his online store to make ends meet. But at the pandemic’s onset, people rarely shopped for anything other than groceries and disinfecting supplies.

“I had to pivot my business and try to find ways to make some sales, and doing that, I had to turn to making masks and hand sanitizers,” Miguel said. “The problem was everyone was hoarding all the alcohol, which is a primary ingredient for hand sanitizers.”

Undeterred, Miguel turned to distilleries in the area, who’d switched from making gin and vodka to cranking out large batches of alcohol for medical applications.

With his alcohol source secured, Miguel was finally able to create the hand sanitizers that helped keep his business afloat.

“It was almost instantaneous,” he said. “As soon as I made masks and hand sanitizers, those became my number one products.”

Though his new project was able to make up for some of his lost income, it still wasn’t enough. Miguel applied for unemployment, which he was granted, and also received two artist grants that helped keep him running before the markets began to reopen.

“I do feel like I was taken good care of,” Miguel said. “The grants were a big savior for my business.”

**The pandemic isn’t over. Now what?**

If anything, the pandemic has put lower-wage work under a microscope, exposing issues in our economy that policymakers have long brushed aside. And while emergency unemployment funds kept many from financial ruin, avoiding economic and humanitarian disasters like this in the future will require us to reexamine how we approach work altogether.

**Key to an economic rebound isn’t just creating more jobs, but creating better quality jobs that both provide for employees and keep the workforce robust.**

Lawmakers can enact policies that encourage career mobility, address systemic racism and inequity and ensure basic economic stability to strengthen workforce systems and improve job quality.

Employers can work to provide employees higher pay, stable hours and competitive benefits. Until workers earning lower wages are provided for in the way that higher earners are, more people will become at risk of slipping through the cracks of an already imperfect social support system — especially when emergency funds can take more than 16 weeks to be deployed.

Throughout the pandemic, many have taken to the internet to express nostalgic desire for things to just “go back to normal.” But do we want to return to a world that has normalized stagnant wages, low pay and little upward mobility? Or do we want to create a new normal; one that provides for all of its people, and leaves no one behind?

As we head into the third year of battling a global pandemic, the choice is ours.
Ready to make lasting change in our community? Join us!

From volunteering in a Hopelink food bank, to making a monetary or in-kind donation, to hosting a food or fund drive, there are many ways to help Hopelink build a stronger community.

**Monetary Contributions:** Financial contributions help change lives! Supporting Hopelink with a donation enables us to put your money to work immediately – and you can even prioritize a program or service that you would most like to support.

**Volunteer:** Volunteering at Hopelink is a fun and rewarding experience, with many different opportunities to choose from – including working in a food bank, tutoring adult students and “gleaning” with Hopelink Harvest. Join us!

**Fundraise:** Creating your own fundraising campaign is a fun and innovative way to help support Hopelink programs. By hosting a fundraiser, you can engage your friends and family in your unique fundraising activities to benefit your community. And we’ll be here every step of the way to help you!

**Food Drives:** The generosity of our community makes it possible for Hopelink to ensure that tens of thousands of families have food on their tables all year round. Interested in hosting your own food drive? We can help!

**Business Partnerships:** Through a variety of activities, event sponsorships and donations, businesses of all sizes play a key role in helping families who are experiencing low incomes make lasting change in their lives. Working together, Hopelink’s business partnerships also help raise the profile of our business partners in the community.

To learn more about how to get involved with the Hopelink community, visit [www.hopelink.org/take-action](http://www.hopelink.org/take-action) or call 425.869.6000.
In this issue, we speak with Alanah Dillard to help us unpack how communities of color display exceptional resilience as they overcome systemic barriers exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic. Together, we learn about the concept of resilience through a trauma-informed and equity lens. Alanah Dillard’s life slogan is, “Everywhere you go you take you with you; be the best you can be!”

How do you define resilience?

Resilience is the ability to mentally, emotionally, physically and spiritually access a sense of hope in times of despair and adversity. You have to continue to cultivate resilience daily, often, and be willing to shift your approach to build upon it, depending on what you may need at the time to promote wellness and hope.

Rooted in our resilience is arguably our innate interdependence on familial kinships. It’s through generations of collective dance, song and rhythm in African American communities, storytelling in Native American communities, food and music for Latinx communities and spirituality for Pacific Island communities that have given us decades of “practice” for such a time as [the pandemic].

We know from Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs is that when shelter and food are unsteady or compromised, then all other aspects of life – mental endurance for example – also are affected. In other words, when our physiological and safety needs are unmet, in addition to facing the realities of systemic racism and the perpetuated beliefs that keep us, collectively, all in that defeatist place with internalized oppression – and knowing that the system was not built for BIPOC to succeed, well - it’s just exhausting to say the least.

The pandemic did a few things. In addition to exposing the exacerbated racial inequalities in our systems – particularly pertaining to accessibility of basic human needs – it also revealed just how much “practice of resilience” communities of color had prior to this pandemic.

When the stakes are higher (like a pandemic) we/BIPOC people are able to more readily access a variety of protective factors to keep us prevailing and “getting it done” because we so commonly have had to.

Sometimes, yes, to our detriment at times, but more for the survival of our legacies.

Why do communities of color tend to have such high levels of resilience?

For people and communities of color, the concept of resilience (act of prevailing by accessing a level of empowerment, self-determination and sense of inner strength or endurance despite internal or external hardship and adversity), is not new to our ancestorial history, lived experience or current existence; we have historically been “here” before. Over decades and centuries of affliction, we have transmitted methods of healing that have directly correlated with our brain’s neuroplasticity and aptitude to endure.

For communities of color, hard-fought resilience shines during global pandemic

Equity Matters
perhaps through faith, a higher power or intentionality with ourselves. The unfortunate arrival and continual impacts of the coronavirus have afforded us the opportunity to recommit to our inner selves.

Laughter - enjoying one another’s company in whatever new way it comes. Laughter triggers the release of endorphins, the body’s natural feel-good chemical. This chemical promotes an increased sense of wellbeing, positivity and relief of physical and emotional pain.

Entrepreneurship - starting a business, passion projects, monetizing hobbies, simply creating! Using courage to step out and try something new or revive something that was shelved and once tucked away.

**Your favorite tips and tricks to build resilience?**

Gratitude - sticky notes around your house, in your car, computer screen, phone. Go to bed with a gratitude recording while you sleep.

Meditation - a state of relaxation (empty the mind as eastern theology and practice would have it) and more of a western frame which is more to access the inner self. The harmony between the two is what, in my experience, has created a sense of hope and positivity (coupled with prayer and journaling).

Strengthen and establish your tribe or emotional-social network. A group of folks from a variety of walks of life who you trust to speak to, who you trust to speak into you, to support you in your resilience and life journey.

Exercise, healthy food and water.

Soul care - building resilience and self care are complementary to one another. I want to also expand the concept of self care to soul care (coined by Astrik Price). Moving from coping or doing things to just “feel better” to the need to thrive and heal.

Setting healthy boundaries and managing your energy (giving credit to my mentor Debrena Jackson Gandy)

To cancel plans or say no to an invitation is okay! And even to accept someone else’s no and decline to hang out. Again, getting and giving to those life-enhancing, life-enriching activities that illuminate your inner joy and confidence.

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**About Alanah Dillard:**

Dillard, LMFT, ACS, MHP, CMHS, is a clinical supervisor and licensed family and marriage therapist. She also is a program director with the YMCA; overseeing a local foster care residential treatment center.

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Tell us what you think!

Do you have a question about something you’ve read in this issue? Or an idea for a topic you’d like us to cover in a future issue?

Let us know at ReachingOut@hopelink.org.
Freshly picked broccoli – not picked, exactly, but hacked apart with a sturdy (and sharp) harvesting knife – has a subtle, sweet scent that doesn’t linger. Unless you’re in an SUV filled with crates of broccoli gleaned just minutes ago from a local farm, and on their way to a Hopelink food bank. That’s fresh. And it’s just one illustration of the ways in which Hopelink Harvest is feeding the local community.

Hopelink Harvest got its start nearly 10 years ago, in November 2011, as Sno-Valley Harvest – a collaboration between Hopelink, Rotary First Harvest and AmeriCorps’VISTA. For the next three years, the program was managed by an AmeriCorps’VISTA volunteer based at Hopelink’s Sno-Valley center in Carnation. During that time, the program collected more than 109,000 pounds of produce from local farms; through gleaning, donations of harvested produce and direct purchases from partner farms. In 2015, the program became Hopelink Harvest.

For Harvest Program Supervisor Elena Lavrushin, the hands-on trips from farms to Hopelink food banks are among the best parts of her job.
“I love that we’re getting fresh produce to people,” Lavrushin said. “There are days when the truck is full of vegetables and I’m driving it to a food bank, and I think, ‘I’m getting paid to deliver fresh organic produce to people.’ I want to pinch myself.”

Last year, 15 regular volunteer gleaners plus a handful of others collected nearly 300,000 pounds of fresh produce from six partner farms. The pandemic put a stop to group gleaning events in 2020, but they returned this summer.

Through a partnership between Hopelink and Harvest Against Hunger (a program of Rotary District 5030), Lavrushin – who learned farming through an apprenticeship in her native New Jersey – also is able to buy fresh produce from local farms. Harvest Against Hunger’s Farm to Community program is designed to build relationships between local, small-scale farms and food banks, but it also enables Lavrushin to tailor her purchases.

“I purchase based on food bank demographics,” she said. “And I try to choose the foods that are culturally relevant and most appropriate to each area.”

She also enjoys buying produce that may not be available through gleaning excess crops, such as fresh tomatoes.

“You get this beautiful, lovingly grown giant tomato,” she said. “Think about how that makes a person feel.”

Last year, the Harvest Against Hunger partnership enabled Hopelink Harvest to purchase 23,000 pounds of produce from local farms.

Lavrushin also is on a mission: to help ensure that everyone has access to fresh, nutritious high-quality food.

“I think it’s a human right,” she said, “but some people can’t afford it, or they live in a food desert. We’re changing that. We’re getting fresh food to people who might not have access to it otherwise … one crate at a time.”
In 1971 – during the recession that would give birth to Hopelink – getting back to work was a priority. But for the laid-off workers helping each other find jobs, ensuring their neighbors would not go hungry was essential as well.

Hopelink’s first food bank opened in October 1971 in Woodinville. Eight years later, the organization moved into its first permanent building in Bothell.

By 1982, Hopelink had opened food banks in Kirkland, Snoqualmie Valley, Bellevue and Redmond, and in 2006 began serving Shoreline.

Early on, food distribution was basic; mostly pre-packed bags of shelf-stable foods. Later, rows of volunteers stationed behind long tables began to offer a greater variety of food, as well as some fresh items. Hopelink’s earliest food banks – and the items available – looked nothing like those of today, with their freezer cases, produce bins, well-stocked shelves and signage in multiple languages.

The most dramatic change began in 2009, with the opening of the first grocery store-style food bank at Hopelink’s Kirkland-Northshore center. The new design enabled clients to pick up a grocery cart on their way in and shop for what they needed – taking time to read labels and choosing the foods their families preferred.

By 2017, all five Hopelink food banks had been converted to the new model.

In the 50 years since the fledgling organization began providing food, the Hopelink food program has continued to grow and adapt to the needs of the local community: revamping food banks to ensure that clients feel welcome and respected, providing a good variety of food that is fresh, nutritious and culturally appropriate, offering fresh produce gleaned from local farms and reaching out into the community to deliver food through the Hopelink Mobile Market.

And in 2020, Hopelink reconfigured its food distribution program to ensure safety during the pandemic; ultimately providing a record 6.4 million pounds of food.

Then & Now: Hopelink Food Banks
Hopelink Programs

Below is an overview of Hopelink’s programs and a list of our service centers. If you know anyone who 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

**FAMILY DEVELOPMENT**
Call 425.883.4755

**FINANCIAL CAPABILITIES**
Call 425.250.3003

**FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**
Contact your nearest center

**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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### Hopelink Centers

#### REDMOND
8990 154th Ave. NE
Redmond, WA 98052
425.869.6000

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

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

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

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

#### Hopelink.org | 425.869.6000
Your support helps serve nearly 65,000 people in King and Snohomish Counties every year, providing services that help individuals and families find stability in crisis by meeting basic needs for food, shelter, heat and transportation, as well as support for those working hard to build a path out of poverty through adult education, financial capabilities classes, help finding a job and family development support through comprehensive case management.

Thank you!

In the next issue:
Learn about the new “One-Call/One-Click” project that will make it easier to find and reserve travel in the Central Puget Sound area, using a variety of platforms – including a call center, website and apps.

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