

# FOOD MATTERS!

SUMMER 2021



## Rethinking our Health: Taunya Golden-David

Every Thursday morning Taunya Golden-David arrives at Mt. Olivet Baptist Church in North Portland. Volunteers help Taunya set up boxes and produce, helping to distribute food and other support to local families.

The Free Food Market, run by Black Mental Health Oregon, has been operational since December 2020 and they serve about 100 families a week. The community rallies together to provide support in every way possible, from food resources to emotional support and advice.

Taunya, the founder and CEO of Black Mental Health Oregon, saw the need in her community grow due to the pandemic, so she started collecting food boxes

and personally delivering them to families. One day she was inspired to ask her church for a space to support a distribution site.

“They allowed me to use the church parking lot and it’s right on the corner and it’s right at the light where people can see us. So, we get walk-ups, we get drive-thrus. We have a lot of people who come every week.”

Oregon Food Bank partners with Taunya to provide support and resources for food distribution. “The food bank is really big because every week they check in with me and we’re able to see what people like and what they don’t like. We’re able to put things in there that are healthier options.”

*[continued inside]*

# Building More Equitable Systems That Work for All of Us

*Hunger isn't simple.*

*Hunger is not just an empty stomach or an individual experience. Hunger is a community-wide symptom of not having enough – enough nutritious food, enough income, enough power, enough voice represented in decisions. Hunger is a symptom of barriers to employment, education, housing, healthcare and more. Hunger is a systemic challenge.*



*The good news is that the systems that have failed us — those that drive hunger and injustice in our communities — were created by humans. And that means we humans can change them.*

*We can build more equitable systems that are accountable to our communities. We can strengthen our safety nets to ensure all of us have access to affordable food, housing and healthcare. We can advance public policies that reject White Supremacy and instead help all of us thrive, no matter where we're from or how much melanin is in our skin. It is possible. We just do it one step at a time.*

*Here are some steps already underway this year:*

- *Oregon Food Bank has joined allies across the state in advocating for 'The People's Budget' — a community-led roadmap that invests in our safety nets, advances criminal justice reform and expands access to food and other essential resources;*
- *We are piloting new gift card programs to connect families with nutritious, culturally-relevant food while boosting locally-owned grocery stores;*
- *We're partnering in new ways with community leaders focused on true community health and well-being — from medical, to nutritional, to mental health needs; and*
- *We continue to lift up the undeniable connections between hunger, racism and other forms of systemic inequities.*

*All of these efforts are part of our systemic approach to ending hunger and its root causes — centering the experiences and expertise of people who have faced food insecurity in our own lives. As we all work together to emerge stronger from the pandemic, we've redoubled our commitment to equity, true justice and transformative change.*

*You're with us every day in this work; none of this would be possible without your support. And I thank you, from the bottom of my heart, for all you've done and will do to advance our shared vision of resilient communities that never know hunger. 🌱*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Susannah Morgan'.

Susannah Morgan  
CEO, Oregon Food Bank





## School Pantries Serve as a Community Hub

Oregon Food Bank is committed to addressing childhood hunger. We partner with schools and local non-profit organizations to distribute food to families and children year-round, even in the summer.

School Pantries provide food assistance to children and families at schools where at least 65% of students are eligible for free or reduced lunch. The schools serve as food distribution sites and also function as a hub where families feel welcome and safe. Oregon Food Bank's School Pantry program started as a pilot in 2011 in partnership with 6 schools in the Multnomah County SUN Schools Program. It has since grown to include 34 schools in Multnomah, Clackamas, Washington, Tillamook, Malheur and Wasco counties.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently announced it would extend universal free lunch through the 2021-2022 school year. Schools will be allowed to serve free meals to all children through USDA's National School Lunch Program Seamless Summer Option.

This is a critical step forward to support families as the economic challenges of COVID-19 persist and various forms of pandemic aid remain uncertain. We believe no family should have to sacrifice basic necessities to make sure their kids have nutritious meals at school. 🌱



*[Continued from front]*  
Taunya knows firsthand how advocacy and community connections help break the stigma around mental health. She was inspired to found

Black Mental Health Oregon after experiencing her own mental health challenges and the stigma she faced when seeking help. After witnessing a

friend's episode of psychosis, Taunya decided she could not let her friend struggle in silence the same way she did.

Since founding Black Mental Health Oregon seven years ago, Taunya has advocated for change around education and health. Their current campaign, "Rethinking our Health," centers food and nutrition education, financial education and mental health support. 🌱

# American Rescue Plan Brings Relief



This round of federal COVID-19 relief marks an incredible step in helping individuals and families across the country emerge stronger from the pandemic. Some noteworthy provisions include direct payments to families, extended unemployment benefits, \$10.4 billion to support agriculture — including \$5 billion for Black farmers — and \$350 billion in state and local aid to support vaccine distribution, schools and childcare assistance.

On March 11, President Biden signed into law the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan, following passage in the U.S. House and Senate.

This landmark legislation brings significant relief to communities suffering effects of the ongoing pandemic, including an historic down payment on reducing child poverty.

The American Rescue Plan also invests in the Supplemental Nutrition Access Program (SNAP) and other key anti-hunger programs, including extending the SNAP food assistance boost through September, extending cash food assistance benefits (known as Pandemic EBT or P-EBT) into the next school year, adding funding to expand online food purchases with SNAP benefits and more. 🌱

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## Tell Legislators: Make the Investments We Need!

With just one month remaining in the 2021 Legislative Session, we invite you to join us in urging Oregon legislators to rebuild and Emerge Stronger.

1. We need to follow through on one-time investments that prioritize equity, racial justice and connections to nutritious food as federal pandemic relief winds down.
2. We need to pass longer-term measures that our communities need. It's not enough simply to return to "normal." Before the pandemic, "normal" wasn't working for too many people.
3. We need the legislature to support initiatives that help address inequities and the broader drivers of hunger and poverty — from the high costs of healthcare and childcare to instability in housing and food access. And we can't afford to slow down on efforts to reimagine public safety and keep everyone in our communities safe and healthy.



To learn more and to get involved, visit [oregonfoodbank.org/advocate](https://oregonfoodbank.org/advocate) 🌱





## Grocery Gift Card Initiative Addresses Food System Challenges

Hunger affects all facets of our communities — from mental and physical health on the individual level to economic stability and growth on the larger scale, the impact is tangible. While food banks are prepared to respond, food assistance programs are often unable to meet all of the cultural and dietary needs a family may have. Additionally, food distribution sites — like food pantries and produce distributions — are open with limited hours that often conflict with work requirements.



determine what, when and where they get food, and increase access to culturally-appropriate options at retailers. We believe people seek food assistance when they need it and are the experts on what items would be most helpful to their families. Grocery stores are the easiest way for people to access food, saving time and reducing stress.

To address some of these challenges, Oregon Food Bank has implemented a grocery store gift card initiative which will allow families and individuals the flexibility to

This also allows outreach to specific communities, like those impacted by disaster or communities that don't have easy access to a food pantry. In addition to the choice and agency they warrant, gift cards are versatile — they can be distributed at food assistance sites, through partner organizations or directly through the mail.



Last but not least, this program will stimulate local economies. Money spent at the local grocery store through programs like SNAP, Double Up Food Bucks or grocery store gift cards has a ripple effect. For every dollar we invest, we can expect to see \$1.79 in local economic activity. All around, this initiative will benefit both the clients we serve and the community at large.

To learn more about the Grocery Gift Card initiative and other supplemental food programs, visit [oregonfoodbank.org/programs](https://oregonfoodbank.org/programs) 🌱

# Businesses Can Influence Public Policies!

Oregon Food Bank is partnering with local businesses to end hunger through advocacy and civic engagement activities. Together, we will be a powerful voice to influence public policies that affect our communities.

Contact Yan Medice, Assistant Manager of Corporate and Community Relations, to learn more and join us!  
YMedice@oregonfoodbank.org or 503-853-8734.

## Thank You for Your Support!

**DANA  
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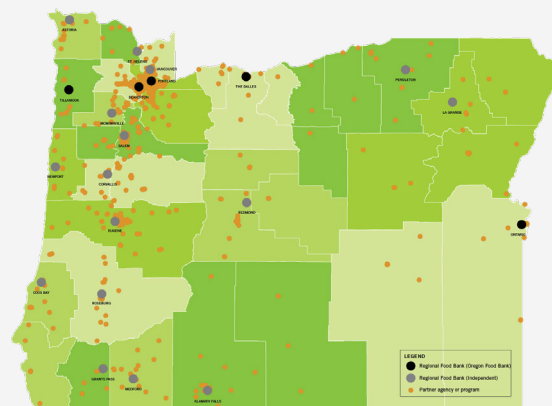
Thank you to **Dana Herbert Accessories** for generously supporting Oregon Food Bank through donations from face mask sales.

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Thank you to **Delta Fire** for your significant ongoing support of local hunger relief and commitment to our mission.

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## Food is Available to All Who Need It!



Our Network of 1,400+ pantries and meal sites remains open throughout Oregon and Southwest Washington — with many locations now offering contactless pick-up or delivery options.

If you or someone you know needs support, know that resources are available. From SNAP benefits to housing assistance, program expansions and new initiatives are underway to support families who are struggling in the wake of COVID-19.

Find food assistance sites near you at [OregonFoodFinder.org](https://OregonFoodFinder.org) — now available in 11 languages common to the Pacific Northwest!



[oregonfoodbank.org](https://oregonfoodbank.org) | 503.282.0555



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