



Fairbanks Community Food Bank

HARVEST



Neighbors Helping Neighbors

Winter 2023

THE POWER OF EVERYONE DOING SOMETHING SMALL, the story of our local food bank.

There is inherent power in doing the little things. In fact, some of the most notable people who changed history knew this, even as they accomplished great and noble strides for humanity. We should pay attention to their words of wisdom.

“Long to accomplish a great and noble task, but it is my chief duty to accomplish small tasks as if they were great and noble.”
– **Helen Keller**

“Be faithful in small things because it is in them that your strength lies.”
– **Mother Teresa**

“Anyone who doesn’t take truth seriously in small matters cannot be trusted in large ones either.”
– **Albert Einstein**

We are reminded of the people in the famous story of Feeding the Five Thousand (John 6:1-14): In a crowd of 5,000+ people who gathered to hear Jesus speak, the problem that needed to be resolved was how to feed a famished crowd with food on hand. The adults believed this was an unsolvable problem. A boy, in his child-like faith, said he would like to share his lunch of 5 crackers and two small sardines. The adults felt that the only way to solve the problem was with a **BIG SOLUTION**. The “lad” made history that day by believing that big things could be solved through

the power of something small. **And after 41 years of collecting local surplus food from local people who SHARE, and giving that food to one food insecure neighbor at a time, we believe that, too.**

Leadership must prioritize long-term vision over short-term gains. The focus on big issues, from expired incentives to wage hikes, exacerbates challenges for businesses. Trust in small gestures is evolving, as seen in the 2023 Edelman Trust Barometer. It reveals a weakened social fabric

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due to deepening divisions. Economic anxiety, disinformation, class divides, and leadership failures have led us to a deeply polarized and precarious state. **The lesson remains clear: the power of small actions can shape the world. Together, as a team, we hold the potential to create lasting change.**

If there is tremendous power in just one person doing something small, how much more power is there when a group of believers collectively begin to work as a team? There is a spiritual law that we understand, that is commonly called **the Law of T.E.A.M.** **It means Together, Everyone Achieves More!**

Our setting today is not different than it was 2,000 years ago. We find a world ensnared in a vicious cycle of distrust, fueled by a growing lack of faith in the media and government. Through disinformation and division, these two institutions are feeding the cycle of distrust and exploiting it for commercial and political gain. And even some non-profits are not trusted.

Leadership must focus on long-term thinking over short-term gain. The focus seems to be on the BIG things such as expired charitable giving incentives, retroactive repeal of the Employee Retention Tax Credit, Government grants and contract challenges, increased costs of wages, inflation, gasoline, and for all businesses increased volumes of work, because there are fewer workers.

Trust in small gifts is changing. The 2023 **Edelman Trust Barometer** says that lack of faith in societal institutions triggered by economic anxiety, disinformation, mass-class divide, and a failure of leadership has brought us to where we are today — deeply and dangerously polarized.

- Only 56% of Americans say they trust nonprofits, down a statistically significant 3 points from 2020 (59%). Philanthropy trust edged down from 36% to 34% (same period).

This difference is not statistically significant, but the bottom line is that trust in major American institutions is low.

- Most alarming is that Americans now place more trust in for-profit companies than in non-profits, and nonprofits have about the same amount of trust as they have in politicians.

Trust is a noun and a verb: it refers to the firm belief in the reliability, truth, ability, or strength, of someone or something. Relationships must be built on trust. So, where is our child-like faith and trust in local nonprofits who have built community relationships?

But we are the good guys!" you may think. "Why don't our communities trust us? We're committed to making the world a better place!"

The Fairbanks **Community** Food Bank is a local non-profit, and we believe that we must be transparent, making it easy for our community members to "audit" this charity. We believe it is always important to clarify what success looks like for this organization. Donors need to know that their community investments are with a competent AND ethical non-profit who genuinely cares about our neighbors who are hurting. We also care about the practical and ethical concern of wasting good usable food which can be SHARED with those who need it, and we are one of the community solutions to that problem.

One of the issues all nonprofits have had since COVID is consistent employees. This local food bank is very grateful to say that most of our paid employees have been with us for many years — through thick and thin. During COVID we remained open six days each week to make sure that no one in the Tanana Valley went to bed hungry. We are so thankful for their consistent hard work and loving hearts for the people we serve. **WE ARE WHAT WE DO**, and these staff stories tell you what we do every day.



Alaska USA pyramid with Anne Weaver at the top!

Anne Weaver, CEO, has been in the Tanana Valley for 44 years. She was a volunteer at Fairbanks Community Food Bank from 1990-2004 and became a paid employee from 2004 to present. She loves the mission of this local food bank. It is simple and straightforward: collecting local surplus food and sharing it with people in need. She says, "We have an amazing community full of people who know the value of sticking together in tough times!" Anne says that the people she gets to work with every day, from staff and volunteers, to our Board of Directors, to our donors and extended community, are what keep her here doing this great work. This food bank was built on a simple idea that has a continuing profound and positive effect. Listening to the crew talk about the family or the individual they served that day, the volunteers they spend the day working side by side with, or hearing them train new staff members by saying things like: "We want to take great care of these donations so the people who receive them get our very best!" are some of the best moments of Anne's days. She is thankful that each of these moments are regular occurrences here. Anne's hardest day was the day she thought we were going to have to close our doors because she didn't see how we could possibly afford to make it through COVID. But thanks to this community sharing their time and resources, here we are continuing to serve!

Rachel Howe is found at the front desk. She has lived here 27 years and worked here at Fairbanks Community Food Bank for two years. She loves working here because the environment is friendly and welcoming. Her kids love to "just drop by," and they bring their friends. We are able to help a lot of people with minimal information and paperwork. "Last fall, we had a wonderful elderly lady come in and ask about volunteering. She needed something very easy to do. She cried most of that first day, softly and to herself. Losing her daughter the year before turned her world upside down and she lost everything. Living at the Rescue Mission, she would push her walker over every day. We were able to watch as she sat there at the table filling out postcards, day after day, bringing in people and showing them what to do. Watching each day how she walked a little faster and talked to everyone that came through the door, with a warmth that she didn't have before. We got a call from her a few months later, and she thanked us for just allowing her to grieve the loss, which she hadn't been able to do in the last year. We don't just fill people's stomach.

Pam DeMerritt, Office Manager, has been in Fairbanks/North Pole 50+ years. She started volunteering in 2002 and became paid staff from 2010 to present. The thing she likes the most is serving the people. She loves working here so **she can make a difference in our community, one meal at a time**. She loves the mission statement we have had for 41 years. Her favorite things about her job? She likes it when the volunteers realize the difference they make when, in such a short time, they move a lot of food. She loves the packing of the Thanksgiving



Pam Demerritt with AmeriCorps.

boxes. That day, a lot of volunteers come and have fun packing and make a big holiday difference. What is the hardest thing she does in her job? It is always hard to say no to people, and sometimes that happens.

Phillip (Bo) Weaver is the Facility and Safety Manager. He has been in Alaska since September 1997, and was on the crew that built our main building. He was hired full time at this food bank in September 2013. The things he likes most about this food bank are that we are part of the Fairbanks community, and our volunteers come here to do something good. There is a sense of family here. Everyone sincerely cares about what we do and about one another. His “day at the food bank” story is that EVERY day a fun story walks in the door. One winter afternoon a couple of years ago, a young boy rang the bell and brought in food from his birthday party — he asked his friends to bring food to donate instead of giving him gifts. There was another time when a young boy brought in his allowance money that he had been saving all summer long because he wanted to make sure other kids at school would be



able to have food to take home. A special day was when our volunteers braved the ice storm and bad roads to come in to pack food boxes because “people don’t stop feeling hungry just because the roads are icy.”

Lori Wetherington, Bookkeeper, has been in Fairbanks 30 years. She has worked at this food bank for four years. She stays because she loves the work environment and the bookkeeping she does, and she knows it truly does help to support our community. She, too, just loves our mission statement and best describes it as **“We are a shining light for the people in need in our community.”** She loves the ANNUAL EMPTY BOWLS event because we have such wonderfully talented potters who build bowls for us all year

long. It is always exciting and there is great anticipation to see the new bowls for the sale, and she loves to be able to work that day, too. It is heartwarming. Her hardest day was the day we locked down for COVID, however we worked together as a team and grew stronger collectively.



There are so many stories of each of our staff members doing something seemingly small and insignificant, but when we all work together with our community, we have a T.E.A.M.

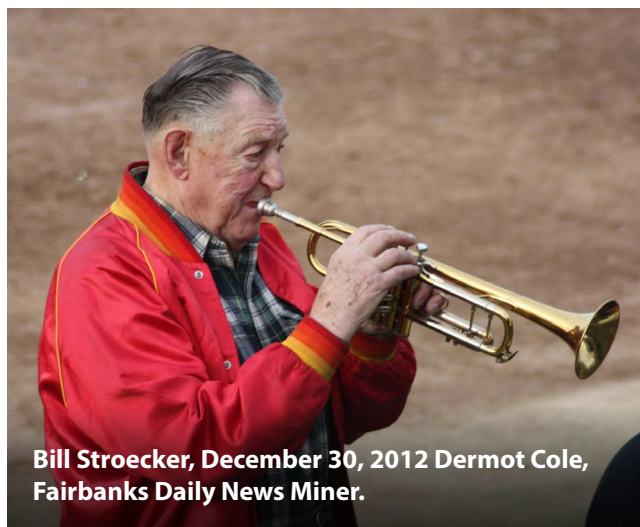
Each of YOU who VOLUNTEER, DONATE FOOD, and DONATE MONEY, are the people who help build TRUST in our community. Your investments may seem small to you, but we look at the bigger picture of **WHAT A COMMUNITY CAN DO, ONE PERSON AT A TIME**. Volunteers and donors are our ambassadors who tell their friends and neighbors that the small things they did today will have an immediate impact on our local neighborhoods.

The Fairbanks Community Staff says THANK YOU to all who share their great stories with us, and with our community. This is the place where neighbors really do help neighbors, and it costs very little to SHARE what we have with others in our community who need our help.

If you trust us, please support us. No support is too small, and all support of volunteer time, donated food and donated dollars is needed, 12 months of each year. Please remember that community builders like Bill Stroecker also gave us a legacy gift through his Foundation because of his love for our community. Golden Heart Foundation in Fairbanks sets up donor advised funds, too.

If we have lost your trust in any way, please call Sam (907-388-4961) or Anne (907-456-6500) and tell us how we can make it right. We hope to be around another 40+ years, too.

A message from Sam (Community Development Director) and Anne (CEO)



Bill Stroecker, December 30, 2012 Dermot Cole, Fairbanks Daily News Miner.

“ This foundation has tremendous potential for improving the quality of life in our community ... Stroecker’s decision to create this entity was a gift to his hometown unmatched by anyone else in the history of Fairbanks. ”

Dear Friends of this local food bank,

We cannot thank you enough for your partnership. As we continue to respond to the long-term effects of the COVID 19 pandemic, support from people like you gives us inspiration.

From the rising cost of living to global supply chain issues, the past few years have been incredibly challenging. That is why we are especially grateful for your unwavering passion for the continuing support of a program to make sure that no one in the Tanana Valley goes to bed hungry.

In this special newsletter about the Legacy Society, we hope you’ll enjoy learning more about Bill Stroecker, a faithful supporter who made a huge impact by including us in his will. Bill is a true hunger hero, and he made such a difference by leaving a legacy of generosity for generations to come. As you all know, we receive free food and give it away free, and that is not a banker’s idea of a good business plan — but Bill made the difference for us.

Fairbanks is full of remarkable leaders. On December 30, 2012, Dermot Cole wrote in the Fairbanks News-Miner about the Foundation which was created by Bill Stroecker. “This is good news and it is the first visible step of transforming the legacy of Bill Stroecker into a long-lasting entity that will benefit a host of good causes in our community ... the Stroecker Foundation is likely to become the most important charitable foundation in the Fairbanks area. Stroecker, a lifelong Fairbanksan, was a leader in the banking industry for decades, a talented musician, and an outdoorsman who was active in many parts of the community. He died in November 2010 at 90. In his will, he mentioned dozens of groups he wanted to support in his foundation.”

Fairbanks Community Food Bank is one of the recipients of those Bill Stroecker Foundation funds. Through thick and thin, no matter what the government is doing, or the

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Our Mission Statement

The Mission of the Fairbanks Community Food Bank is to collect local surplus food in the community and share it with local people who need it.

Board Members 2024

- President:** Gene Therriault
- Vice President:** Trevor Hanson
- Secretary:** Patty Walter
- Treasurer:** Hollis Hall
- Genevieve Bell
- Ray Bronson
- Derek Dickinson
- Nancy Hanson
- Chad Hutchison
- Bob Hajdukovich
- Uriah Nalimak
- Marisa Sharrah
- Ron Wall

Staff Leadership Team

- Anne Weaver, CEO
- Samantha Kirstein, Community Development Director
- Gail Ballou, Attorney

Contact Information

725 26th Avenue
 Fairbanks, Alaska 99701
Phone: (907) 45-SHARE (457-4273)

The Difference Your Donation Makes

We will keep you fully informed about the difference your donation makes, and we ask you to consider 5% for the Fairbanks Community Food Bank as you prepare for the next generation in your estate planning.
Thank you.



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weather, or earthquakes, fires or floods, or COVID — the Stroecker Foundation continues to make a donation to this food bank every year — and to other local charities, too.

We are deeply grateful for Bill’s generous legacy. It will provide needed funding for this food bank. We will always receive free food and give it away free, that has been our mission since 1982, and we have been successful in that mission for 41 years. Thank you, Bill Stroecker, and your team of Foundation trustees for your continuing support.

You can join Legacy Society donors who have shared their hope, volunteer time, dollars, and food with this food bank and have made a lasting impact. If you have questions about the many planned giving options available to you, please contact Sam and Anne at 907-457-4273. Neighbors like you can give back to your community today, tomorrow, and for years to come. Thank you for everything you continue to do for our neighbors who are facing hunger.

If you’re interested in volunteering, give us a call today at 907-457-4273 or visit www.fairbanksfoodbank.org to sign up!