



WaFoodCoalition.org

Food for Thought

Washington Food Coalition newsletter / Fall 2024

No one in Washington State should go hungry

Executive Director's Greeting

It was great to see so many of you at the Washington Food Coalition conference earlier in September. We had an amazing turnout, and it was so good to connect with people. For those who attended, I hope you found the conference to be helpful through sessions and connecting with others.

In my rush to make announcements, I realized I forgot to share some important items.

1. We were thrilled to have so many SNAP - Ed educators at our conference this year. I hope you were able to connect with those working in your community. If you need more information about SNAP ED educators in your county, please contact Dana Cordy at dana@washingtonfoodcoalition.org.
2. Please complete the Overall Conference Evaluation, it was sent out through WHOVA. We would appreciate your feedback and your help on the conference committee next year.
3. We hoped you found sessions that helped you Bridge Your Gap. If you missed a session and would like to view the PowerPoint presentation from that session, they will be uploaded to WHOVA and be available for the next three months for you to view.

As was mentioned at the Conference, the WFC is going through a Strategic Planning process and would love your feedback on the work the coalition is doing and what we could be doing to assist your members. Please link here to the Strategic Planning Survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WAFC2024>

Those who complete the survey will be entered into a drawing to win a \$100 Safeway gift card.

I know we are coming upon a busy time of year. Please remember to make time to take care of yourself.

All the best,

Trish Twomey
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Our Mission: The Washington Food Coalition actively educates and networks with organizations that strive to alleviate hunger throughout Washington

Our Vision: The Washington Food Coalition is the unified voice for a strong emergency food system



WSDA Food Assistance (FA) team is overflowing with things to celebrate these days!

First, we want to highlight the immense gratitude we have for the work you all are doing day in and day out.

Hunger relief organizations in Washington continue to be reliable, consistent, and positive service providers in the lives of many people across the state. You've continued to show up for the communities you serve, and while the volume of service being provided has once again increased in the last year, we know that one reason for that is your commitment across the state to providing high quality services that meet the most critical needs of people seeking your assistance. We cannot emphasize enough the appreciation we have for this network of hunger relief partners who continue to improve and inform our work in WSDA Food Assistance.

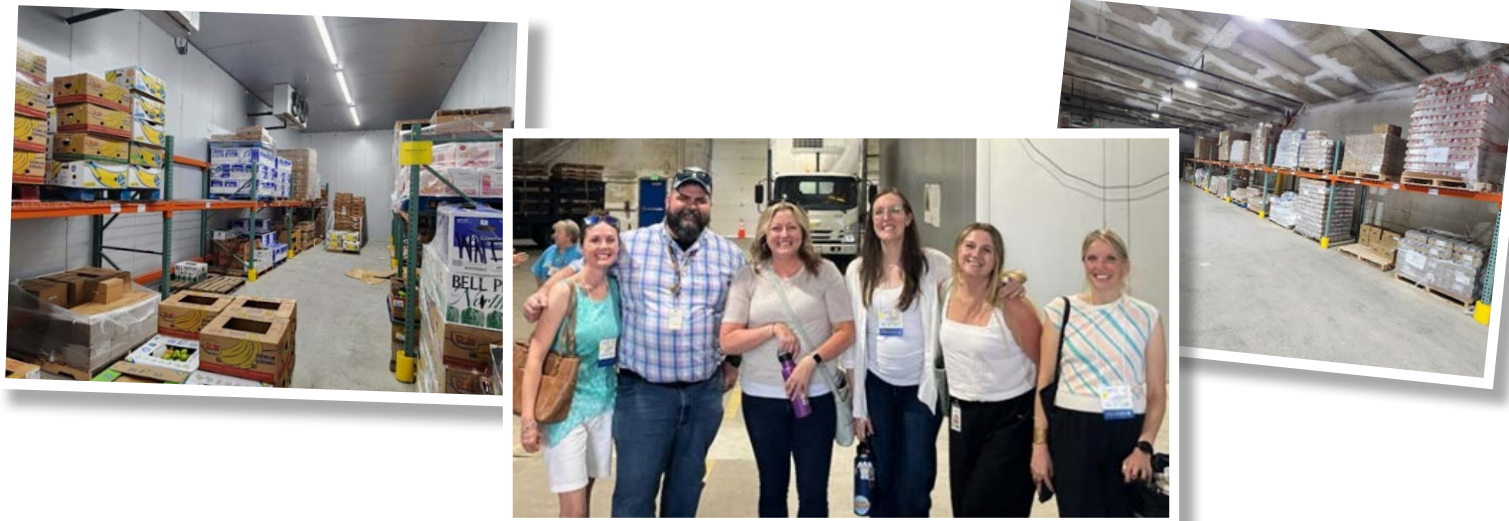
FA staff have been excited to hit the road and connect with so many partners in person recently! Staff have been conducting program compliance reviews in the last couple months, visiting sites including Tribes, Lead Agencies, and Sub Agencies to better understand the work they're doing and provide technical assistance to ensure that things are running smoothly both for the organization's staff and volunteers, and the people they serve.

During this review season, the team has noticed impacts of the infrastructure investments in recent years that are coming to fruition. This includes expanded cold & frozen storage, and vans & trucks which allow sites to access donations of foods they were previously unable to receive. The more often sites have been able to say "yes" to those donations, the more regularly they are being contacted for additional opportunities.

Another theme across the state was the incredible partnerships that have developed between hunger relief organizations and their local food producers through opportunities like the USDA Local Food Purchase Assistance (LFPA) program. Food Pantry staff and volunteers take pride in that food being distributed, and some sites have gone even farther to ensure clients feel connected to the source of their food by having a note on display identifying the source, which might be the farm down the road people drove by to get to their food bank.

The recent Washington Food Coalition Conference was another opportunity for FA staff to get face time with folks; including the chance to interact directly as a team as many of us work remotely, learning from our partners, and building relationships with the 275 conference stakeholders who attended. On top of the networking opportunities, FA staff were able to share a bit about the work we do within WA's hunger relief system. We hope those of you who went enjoyed it as much as we did!

Following the conference, we had the chance to share highlights with other staff at WSDA through our Division Newsletter. We take pride in getting to highlight the work you do and keeping other staff in the agency informed of the latest happenings in the world of hunger relief. In that newsletter, we highlighted the incredible project that Chelan Douglas Community Action Council (CDCAC) is undertaking to create a "new home" for CDCAC and provide a much-needed upgrade to the emergency food distribution system in their service area. Many people at the conference had



the chance to tour the new facility alongside a few members of our team!

Boasting massive cold and frozen storage, the new facility allows CDCAC to take large donations of fresh and frozen items they previously would have been unable to take. The dry storage is also a much-needed improvement and has room to store three times the amount of food, all while housing program equipment & vehicles and the CDCAC weatherization program as well.

CDCAC has created a new food pantry in the building as well, providing Wenatchee residents seeking food assistance with a wonderful and inviting space to access food!

Amidst the exciting work named above, we are in the process of closing out Federal Fiscal Year 2024 (FFY 2024) which means that our regional representatives and business operations team will be heavily engaged in one-on-one discussions with hunger-relief organizations to ensure a full spend-down of all federal funding ending September 30, 2024. At the same time, we will be issuing new federal agreements for FFY 2025, updating procedures manuals, state plans, and forms. In addition, we were just notified that we will be receiving another audit from the State Auditor's Office for two of our federal programs.

Opportunities to connect with Food Assistance in October:

- We host monthly WSDA FA General Focus Meetings. The next meeting is on October 22.
- Join the next Food Assistance Advisory Committee Meeting on October 24, from 10:00-11:30 am – just contact the WA Food Coalition for an invite!
- As always, you can reach out to us with general inquiries by emailing foodassistance@agr.wa.gov.

We look forward to continued partnership and conversation in the coming season. Thank you for all you do!

In community,
WSDA Food Assistance Staff

Food Purchasing Options

As you plan for your holiday distributions, I hope you realize there are many options for you to choose from. Several choices were exhibited at the WFC conference including The Weigelt Company, Charlie's Produce and Food Lifeline. They are offering items to purchase for the holidays. Also, please check out the resource page on the WSDA FA website to identify additional resources to procure food from. <https://agr.wa.gov/services/food-access/hunger-relief-resources/food-purchasing-resources>. These resource pages will assist you in finding farmers, food hubs and regional businesses that you may purchase food from.

If you need any holiday protein or grocery items for the holidays, please contact Shelby or Brian at The Weigelt Company. (Shelby@weigeltco.com or Brian@weigeltco.com) They have a full assortment of turkeys, chickens, hams and other protein products. We also carry a full assortment of grocery items, such as stuffing, canned vegetables, gravy, etc., everything you need for a complete holiday meal can be found.

As you may have seen at the conference, Charlie's Produce carries a huge variety of produce for any time of the year but, especially now, they offer a wide variety of holiday items. Contact Shawn Gardner, shawng@charliesproduce.com

Food Lifeline has holiday items available on its online ordering system, Order Up, Canned cranberries at \$34.13 per case of 24, Instant potatoes \$27.59 for a case of 12, Bagged stuffing \$21.55 for a case of 24, canned yams \$18.38 case for 12, chicken gravy \$20.50 for 48 packets.

Happy Holidays!



BRIDGING THE GAP

Washington Food Coalition Conference

Sept 18th -20th, 2024 • Wenatchee Conference Center

That's a wrap - 2024 WFC's annual conference in Wenatchee was one for the record books! 280 registrants and a record number of exhibitors, made it our largest event yet. This achievement wouldn't have been possible without our generous sponsors and dedicated planning committee.

This was my second time attending and my first year as the conference Committee Chair. WFC's Trish Twomey and our committee met twice a month via Zoom starting in spring with delegated projects between. Living in NE WA, one of the biggest challenges in helping to organize the event in Wenatchee, was selecting venues/vendors sight unseen—researching hotels, reception and dinner locations, caterers, speakers, etc. However, watching the conference come to life, was so rewarding!

The three-day conference flew by, packed with activities and learning sessions. On arrival, I went straight to our reception venue, the Hilton. After only relying on pictures, I was relieved to see the pleasant terrace setting, confident it could hold our last-minute guest increase to 200 people. That evening, I networked, learning about grant writing from those with experience. It was eye-opening discussing operations of different food pantries and hearing about life in other parts of Washington.

Thursday started with a group breakfast; I had the privilege of introducing author Stephanie Land, whom I hoped would be our keynote speaker since day one. She shared her story of navigating poverty and long-lasting trauma caused by hunger. Her insights were a powerful start to the day.

The sessions were lively, with smiling participants bustling between rooms, excited to share what they learned. In a session on AI, I was amazed to discover how it can be incorporated into food pantries and beyond.

Dinner that evening was at Ohme Gardens. Choosing an outdoor venue was risky but we were rewarded with beautiful weather and a glowing sunset. The serene grounds were the backdrop for a relaxed evening of networking and garden exploration. Friday was filled with additional sessions, networking, auction and more. Then we all headed back to our respective parts of the state, hopefully armed with new knowledge, friends, and inspiration.

The committee is always seeking members, more people bring fresh ideas! Interested? Please contact Trish Twomey. Don't forget to share your experience and pictures on the Whova app, available for 3 more months.

Hope to see you next year!

Sarah Hill

Committee Chair

lemonAID Pantry – Executive Director

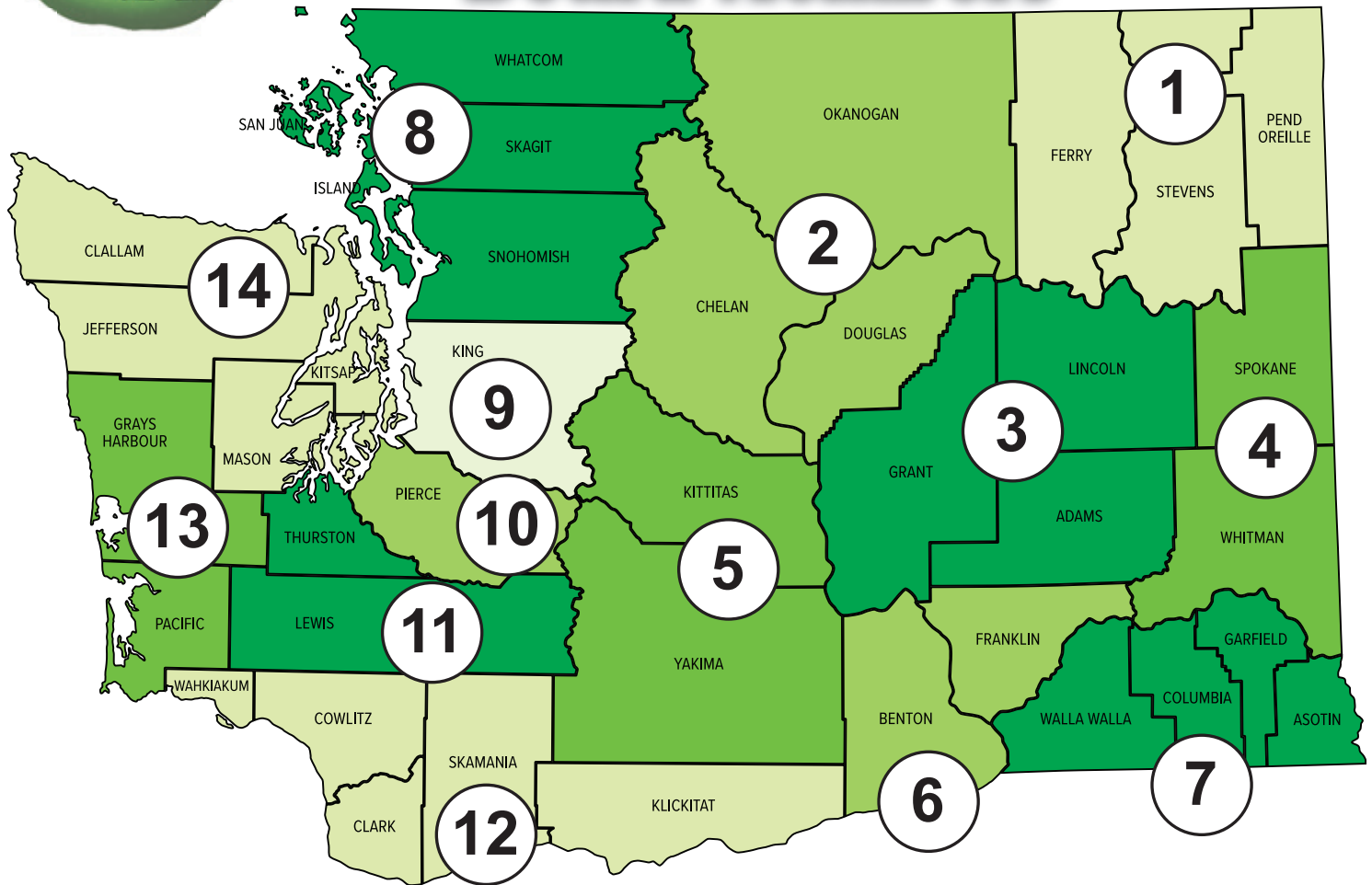
Hunters, WA





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