How Hunger Affects Student Learning
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Cranky. Tired. Lethargic. Moody. Sick. Failing. These are just a few things that happen when students are hungry. 1 in 6 children in America faces hunger, all across the United States, in every community.

Being hungry has an enormous impact on a student’s ability to learn, so much so that food is a basic school supply, akin to textbooks and pencils. Kids who go to school hungry may suffer from inability to concentrate and often fall behind academically. Hungry kids are more likely to miss school because of illness, and more likely to suffer from depression and anxiety, and develop behavioral problems as teenagers. They are more liable to drop out before graduation, which leads to lower paying jobs and a greater probability of being food insecure adults.

Kids with empty bellies find it hard to focus. They concentrate more on making it to lunch than on math or reading lessons. Test scores plummet (one reason schools feed kids a healthy breakfast on standardized test days). Hungry students can exhibit behavior problems; they may become irritable or rowdy or get lethargic. Some miss class to go to the school nurse, complaining of stomachaches and headaches.

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A Message from Mary Fisher, WIN Founder

Over 11 years ago, I attended a Power of Hope event here on Whidbey, and learned there were over 60 homeless teens living in our community—some even trading sex for a meal and a place to sleep. Horrified, I asked good friends, Dorit Zingarelli and Jonni Reed, to help me make soup and take it to those kids, some who we learned were sleeping in the woods. WIN was born!

To get ideas for how to begin, we turned to Kathy McCabe McLaughlin, who was the Executive Director of the Good Cheer Food Bank at that time. Brainstorming led to abandonment of the soup idea to a focus on making ready-to-eat meals that could be easily distributed. With guidance from the Family Resource Center and Operation Sack Lunch, we honed in on a plan to distribute food somewhere teens felt safe and frequented, the South Whidbey Commons.

Within a year of meetings and planning, we were making sack lunches and were joined by long-time advocate for healthy and delicious food, Shirley Collins. Shirley’s expertise in the business world helped us give structure to our growing program. A small team of volunteers joined, all in shock that there could be so many children on Whidbey in need of assistance.

Over time, our work expanded to include ways to feed younger children, as well. Many community partnerships developed and WIN grew to meet the expanding needs of at-risk families, who struggle to provide nutritious food for their children.

I am heartened by WIN’s community of volunteers who come forward every week to prepare food for the unknown faces of our community’s youth, the bakers who make muffins and cookies to provide a lovingly made treat for these children, and the drivers who transport WIN meals all over the South end. I’ve heard from a few of the teens I’ve come to know over the years about how much WIN’s outreach meant to them— they recognize the care and act of love.

With much respect to our donors and volunteers and the community, without which this work is not possible. We are all in this together.

Mary Fisher
Des Rock ROCKS!

Des Rock ROCKS! An enthusiastic entrepreneur, owner and Head Roaster of Useless Bay Coffee Company in Langley, and among the wonderful chefs on Whidbey Island. Des’ creation, UBCC, is at the heart of Langley and is his very special work of art. From the building itself, to the lovely perennial and herb garden, wrought iron and metal work, art on the walls, the one-of-a-kind roaster, the freshly roasted coffee, the fabulous food, the live music. UBCC seamlessly combines a sense of place and a sense of purpose. A meeting place for all, a living room for many, a nurturing environment where Des fosters art, music, or any other passion you might have...deals get done here, plans get hatched, information is exchanged, fundraising ideas takes off like WIN’s annual event, Heart to Heart.

Eleven years ago, when WIN was just beginning, Des offered to host a gourmet dinner for potential WIN donors. With decorations created by WIN volunteers, UBCC was transformed into a wonderland of sparkling lights and Valentine-themed design. Guests gathered to hear the story of WIN and feasted on Des’ lovingly created meal. Folks contributed to the cause so important to our community and marveled at the generosity Des displayed. And WIN volunteers...were filled with gratitude for such a wonderful gift!

From that beginning, the Heart to Heart event has taken place every year, providing an evening of candlelight and feasting and an opportunity to support WIN. Des’ generosity makes it possible for WIN to “fill the pantry” each February and we thank him from the bottom of our hearts. “It’s for the kids,” Des says.

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One teacher explained her wake-up call: I often see children in my classroom who seem sleepy and unfocused. I usually asked them, “What time did you go to bed last night?” One day, I realized many of these kids were hungry, not tired. Now I ask, "What time did you last eat something?".

These realities have far-reaching consequences. Hunger affects long-term health, academic achievement, and economic prosperity—leading to a less competitive American workforce and higher national health care costs.

Students deserve a successful school experience and ensuring they are not hungry goes a long way in fulfilling this promise made to each student.
Take Only What You Need...

You may have seen one of our self-serve refrigerators while visiting the Good Cheer Thrift Stores. The sign on the door of each fridge reads: THE FOOD HERE IS FREE FOR THOSE WHO NEED IT, PLEASE TAKE ONLY WHAT YOU NEED. Inside are sandwiches, fruits and vegetables, bagels and cream cheese, hard boiled eggs, trail mix, granola and milk and other healthy items.

There have been a number of locations for these fridges (formerly free vending machines) over the years. Good Cheer Thrift Store in Langley has been the home of one of the sites for many years and last summer when we made the decision to close our location behind the Clinton Progressive Hall, Good Cheer Two generously offered us a new home just inside their front door.

These sites have their origin in the founding concept of WIN - having ready-to-eat, healthy, free food for homeless and at-risk teenagers to access. These days, the sites benefit more than just teens - a laid-off parent struggling to make ends meet, a grandparent who is caring for their grandchildren, a young adult with mental health issues.

Why Ready-To-Eat?

A ready-to-eat WIN lunch ensures that a child who may be left home alone while their parent works or a homeless teen with no means of preparing or storing food can have a nutritious meal.

A Positive Meditation

Betty Freeman and her husband Dan stock the self-serve sites daily. Betty shared this with WIN years ago and it still rings true for her today. “Dan and I enjoy this daily mission to fill the fridges with nutritious food. For us, it’s a kind of positive meditation on how fortunate we are. We’re glad to be able to help.

Early on, we decided we could not control or judge who used the sites, and to imagine ourselves in the place of the people who need to use them. By offering a variety of nutritious foods, we feel we’re helping people make good choices for themselves and their families. Whatever else they choose, eating this food may be the best thing they do for themselves in a day. I can’t help but feel that besides providing good food, we are also letting people who may be discouraged know on a daily basis that someone cares about them.”
WIN Volunteers

Every month, dozens of volunteers contribute an average 280 hours of their time to WIN to prep, assemble and deliver WIN meals. More volunteers bake treats from home to bring to the WIN kitchen and a dedicated group from the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of W.I. spends their Monday mornings rolling bean and rice burritos and making trail mix for our self-serve program. Volunteers are the heart of WIN and we welcome you to join us! Visit our website at whidbeyislandnourishes.org for more information.

I have been involved with WIN since its inception 12 years ago. I have been continually amazed at how much it has grown and developed over the years, from a small group of inexperienced volunteers making sandwiches, to the professional organization serving those in need of nutritious meals. I am so happy to be part of it.

- Gillian Beattie

This is my 8th year volunteering with WIN. I have worked on both Wednesdays and Thursdays; I have made some wonderful friends who have become a vital part of my life both as part of and outside of WIN. I believe I have received more from volunteering than I have given; volunteering with WIN has brought enjoyment and fulfillment to my life.

- Louise Abbott

I learned about WIN the evening my band was hired to play music for the annual fundraiser several years ago. While I had heard about the organization, it was hearing the stories, meeting the volunteers and learning about the tremendous need in our community that motivated me to volunteer my time.

- Kristi O’Donnell

One Less Plastic Bag

In 2019, we made the switch to paper bags for the sandwiches that are distributed to kids enrolled in our “backpack” program. This switch will help keep over 8,000 plastic sandwich bags (weighing around 45 pounds) out of the landfill. We’re not able to be totally plastic free in our programs, but we’re working to reduce our overall plastic footprint.

Thank You to our Newsletter Sponsors!
YOU CAN HELP!
Your support nourishes the most vulnerable members of our community. With your help, we can continue to give young people the nutrition they need to grow to their full potential.

MAKE A CONTRIBUTION
Use the attached donation envelope or make a contribution online at whidbeyislandnourishes.org.

HOST A FACEBOOK FUNDRAISER
Use a birthday or anniversary to raise money for WIN and educate others about food insecurity and its impact on young people.

USE AMAZON SMILE
Did you know that the AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the purchase price of eligible products to WIN every time you shop? Every item available for purchase on amazon.com is also available on AmazonSmile (smile.amazon.com) at the same price. Visit smile.amazon.com or contact us for more information.

Save the Date
Whidbey Island Nourishes Summer Frolic
September 14th, 2019

Please join us for our annual summer fundraiser on September 14th, 2019 at Dancing Fish Vineyard. Tickets on sale soon!