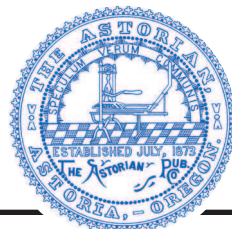


# OPINION



# THE DAILY ASTORIAN

editor@dailyastorian.com

Founded in 1873

**KARI BORGEN**  
Publisher

**JIM VAN NOSTRAND**  
Editor

**JEREMY FELDMAN**  
Circulation Manager

**JOHN D. BRUIJN**  
Production Manager

**CARL EARL**  
Systems Manager

## SOUTHERN EXPOSURE



R.J. Marx/The Daily Astorian

The sugar and flour aisle.

## South County Food Bank meets the need

The need is ever growing, Darren Gooch, executive director of the Food Bank said on a recent tour of the building in Seaside.

The food pantry's mission is simple, Gooch said — to provide three to five days of nutritious emergency food to low-income families living in Clatsop County.

While guidelines suggest “low-income,” anyone entering the Food Bank is welcome, he said. “You don’t have to provide ID, and we’ve never had to turn anyone away.”

Gooch described a growing need, with an average of 250 households served monthly, and 618 individuals.

More than 40 homeless people were served monthly by the food bank in 2018.

For those residents who may have not experienced the need to visit the food bank, Gooch said volunteers try to make the experience inviting.

“Nobody wants to be here,” he said. “I try to make it fun. I don’t want them to feel bad about being here.

I’ve had a lot of people shake my hand and say, ‘This has been a really good experience. Thank you!’ And they’re OK with it.”



R.J. MARX

The South County Community Regional Food Bank is one of several partner agencies to participate in Clatsop Community Action, the regional food bank.

That in turn is affiliated with the Oregon Food Bank and the United States Department of Agriculture Emergency Food Assistance Program. Other partner agencies — about a dozen in Clatsop County — include Helping Hands Re-entry Outreach Center, the Cannon Beach Food Center and St. Vincent De Paul in Gearhart.

Partners place their orders with Clatsop Community Action, but they also help each other, Gooch said.

Cannon Beach Food Pantry serves clients on Wednesdays, and any leftover food will be delivered to Seaside’s food bank when they serve on Thursdays.

The South County Food Bank receives food from individual donations, local food drives and restaurants or bakeries. Donations are accepted as long as they come in the original packaging.

Big-box stores like Fred Meyer, Natural Grocers, Safeway and Walmart, among others, participate in the food bank’s Fresh Alliance Program.

When Gooch received a donation of 100 dozen eggs from Natural Foods in Warrenton, he was unable to use them all, so after his driver picked them up, he called other local pantries to ask, “Does anybody need eggs?” The food bank subsequently delivered dozens of boxes to partner agencies.

In January, the food bank received almost 17,000 pounds of purchases or donations — about 8½ tons of food.

Pick-ups take place every other week, Gooch said.

Monday crews do shelf stocking and product rotation.



R.J. Marx/The Daily Astorian

Darren Gooch and Maureen Casterline at the South County Food Bank.



R.J. Marx/The Daily Astorian

The South County Food Bank in Seaside.

### LIMITS ON WILD FISH, GAME

The regional food bank picks up any fish left at the hatchery or illegally caught after processing. Elk and deer may only be delivered if processed to the stringent regulations on game animals.

Everything is weighed as it comes in, with volunteers supervised by site supervisor Jenny Knight — the food bank’s one paid employee — to maintain a running log of every donation.

Patrons can visit the food bank on Tuesdays and Thursdays once a calendar month. The food bank opens at 1,

although staff tend to open earlier.

A visit starts with a food distribution booklet breaking down nutrition guidelines. Volunteers “err on the side of giving more” to customers than the guidelines suggest.

Gooch led me on a tour down the aisles, from the breads and pastries from

Safeway to the fresh fruits and vegetables from Costco.

Among other items, the protein aisle offers dried and canned beans, canned fish and peanut butter.

“It’s an allergen for some, unfortunately, but it’s a great source of protein,” Gooch said. “It’s one of those things especially among our homeless population they can take a spoon and open it up right up and start eating it in the parking lot or where they’re traveling. It’s an important staple.”

Grains, flour, corn meal, pasta, rice — even cultural items like masa flour — are available. Sugar is highly sought after.

Cereal is a main component of most visits, with an emphasis on nutrition and variety.

Canned tuna, fish, sardines and clams are “highly sought after.”

Take a turn to the next aisle and you’ll find what Gooch described as a “very modest, small snack section.”

“We do provide snack foods to break things up and give people extra,” Gooch said. “Everybody likes a treat now and then.”

The food pantry’s “other” category includes soups, chili, ravioli, stuffing, mashed potatoes and gravy packets.

While ramen and cup noodles are “not super nutritional,” Gooch said, they are foods important for those struggling to find the right appliances. “You can usually find something that can get some water boiled,” he said.

Dry powdered milk and fresh milk are available; for those with a dairy intolerance, rice, almond, coconut or cashew milk is usually available.

Providence Seaside Hospital provides nutritional supplements like Boost.

Juice is available and highly sought after, either fresh, frozen or concentrate. What about waste?

Dented or outdated cans are considered potentially dangerous and go straight to the dumpster, Gooch said. Post-dated breads and vegetables go into recycling bins for chickens. “We go through the produce with what’s called ‘gleaning,’” Gooch said. “We pull stuff that’s bad. That goes into a barrel.”

Chicken farmers pick up the organic debris.

“Everything has a life cycle,” Gooch said. “Food is grown in a field, processed, to the store, and then back to the earth via the chicken or the pigs.”

With the Roosevelt Drive building fully paid off, the South County Food Bank is in a “better place financially” than ever as an organization, he said.

Volunteers are always wanted, with a need for stock people, driving and shopping assistants to walk patrons through.

The No. 1 physical need now is refrigeration, he added, with “geriatric” chest storage cases and units subject to break down or obsolescence.

“At holiday time I lose turkeys because I have no place to store them.”

R.J. Marx is editor of the Seaside Signal and Cannon Beach Gazette, and covers South County for The Daily Astorian.