

Help us serve vets

by Katie
Courtesy of Food for Lane County

Rob is a gentle guy, with a big heart and an easy smile. In 2003, his Army National Guard infantry unit got the call to go to war. Rob spent 14 months in Kuwait and Iraq. When he got back to the states, he was changed — angry, volatile and injured.

His wife saw the change in his personality and urged him to seek treatment. He received counseling for PTSD and medical attention for a traumatic brain injury at the Roseburg VA.

Rob is grateful for the help he received, but a disability rating left him feeling useless.

"I kind of shut myself away. I didn't feel like I mattered to society anymore."

That turned around two years ago when Rob began volunteering at Daily Bread in Springfield, one of 31 emergency food pantries in the FOOD for Lane County network.

"I just kind of fell in love with it. Being at the pantry I felt like I could be around people and function properly. Big word there — function. It boosted my self esteem."

"Many of the people we serve have some form of disability. I see other vets there. I can relate to them. I see that I'm not alone. It's all worth it when that one person comes through who's really hurting and they give you a hug saying 'you helped me so much.'"

The look of relief and hope I see on people's faces when they get to feed their families for at least another week — sometimes it brings me to tears. It's a wonderful thing, and I'm glad to be a part of it."

Rob's family is on a fixed income, so they get a food box. Did you know that more people in Lane County are working but still need help? We surveyed pantry users and found that

- 44% of households report some kind of income
- 80% say they are able to meet their monthly food needs with the help of a pantry
- 39% of households have watered down food or drink to make them last longer
- 82% say they did not have enough money to buy food in the past 12 months

Remember our veterans this November, especially those facing hunger and hardship.

FOOD for Lane County's hunger relief efforts are focused on providing food assistance and increasing self-sufficiency for our neighbors living on limited resources. Our mission of alleviating hunger by creating access to food is accomplished with tremendous support from our community and through a variety of innovative programs. We continually work to develop programs and services that respond to the unique needs of special populations, and we work to ensure that these services are delivered with respect and compassion. The entire food banking system is built on partnerships and collaboration. While FOOD for Lane County administers many of its own programs, we rely on our network of approved partner agencies to distribute the majority of the food we collect. All FFLC Partner Agencies are their own, independent, non-profit or religious organization. Most are staffed by volunteers and are great places to work and volunteer in direct service.

Helping children get the nutrition they need

by Katie
Courtesy of Food For Lane County

During the school year, Jennifer works in the kitchen at Harrison Elementary in Cottage Grove.

This summer she also worked for FOOD for Lane County as a Summer Food Program site supervisor, serving free lunches to children and teens.

When Jennifer was younger she needed our Summer Food lunches.

"My mom was a single parent and worked two jobs. She worked really hard, but it was still a struggle to put food on the table. During the summer I was responsible for taking care of my brother. We used the FOOD for Lane County free lunch program every day that we could.

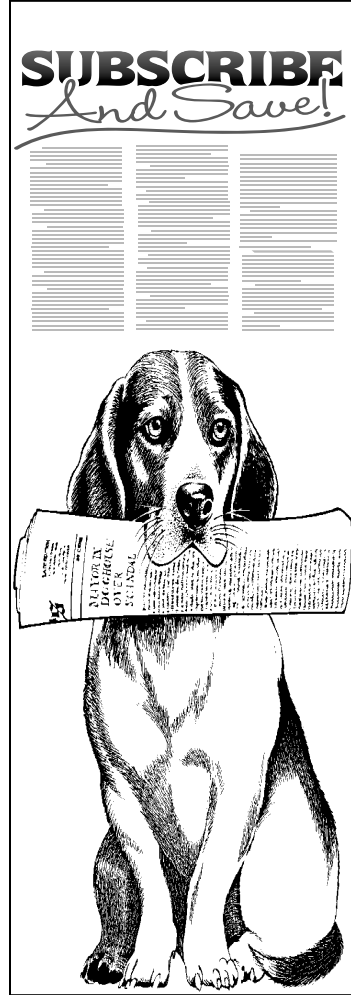
We relied on that program. I don't know what we would have done without it."

Our Summer Food Program is one way we are helping children get the nutrition they need during the summer when they are at higher risk of hunger. Too many children live in low-income working families struggling to make ends meet. More than one in four (25.3%) Lane County children live in food insecure households, and more than half (53.4%) of all Lane County children qualify for free lunches during the school year.

Jennifer sees childhood hunger at school and is helping to make a difference.

"I know a lot of kids only get one meal a day. That's a scary thing to think about. With this program I can reach a lot more people, and that makes me very happy. I enjoy being involved in something that's worthwhile."

It makes me feel really good about life. Jennifer loves being a mom. It's the most important job she has. "I hope my kids can be successful and happy in their life. I hope they don't have to struggle like I did. I will go without a meal before my kids go without. I'll make sure they have something to eat because that's what you do as a mom. That's what you do as a parent."



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