

# Food insecurity on the rise in Lane County

By Caitlyn May  
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When Mike Fleck started his tenure as Community Sharing's Executive Director a little over seven years ago, the food pantry was distributing an average of 450 to 500 boxes a month packed with staples like bread and other boxed foods. Four years later, distribution soared to 700 boxes, sometimes reaching as high as 900. It has never come back down.

"It's not unusual that we'll sometimes hit as high as 800, 830 boxes a month," Fleck said.

The boxes are aimed at combating food insecurity—one of the many services offered by community sharing including housing assistance. The most recent data released earlier this year by the Ford Family Foundation, in conjunction with Oregon State University showed food insecurity on the rise in Lane County but defining it can be difficult.

"It's anybody who is struggling to keep basic food on their table but I don't know that there is a metric for that," Fleck said.

Feeding America, a non-profit that works with food banks nationwide to provide support and supplies, cites the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) definition which classifies an individual as

being food insecure if they lack consistent access to enough food to maintain an active, healthy lifestyle.

While the definition could span a wide spectrum, the Oregon Center for Public Policy can place a hard number on the growing population of those struggling with food insecurity: 527,000 Oregonians in 2017 did not know where their next meal was coming from.

as food stamps, for three months in the span of three years if they do not meet certain work requirements that have been in place since the mid-1990s.

To receive assistance beyond that, individuals must work at least 80 hours per month, participate in qualifying education and training activities for an additional 80 hours per month or complete unpaid work through

dramatically. That doesn't necessarily mean there aren't problems because the need can shift between demographics," Fleck said.

"It could be that one population's need is increasing while another's is decreasing."

Community Sharing is the only designated food pantry in Cottage Grove but other services also work to combat food insecurity in town.

Each week there's a list of community dinners and earlier this year, the local Gleaners' program returned after being shut down by Food for Lane County — a non-profit food bank that serves all of Lane County.

The most obvious change to

the group is the dissolution of several requirements for "box night" when individuals can receive a box of food. Now, box nights are open to all individuals whose self-declared income meets requirements.

Meal sites throughout the week include the first and third Monday of the month at the local Methodist church for a cost of \$5. Tuesdays hosts a meal at the Trinity Lutheran Church and Creswell hosts a friendship dinner on Wednesday at the New Hope Baptist Church. On Sunday, the community center in Cottage Grove hosts Soup's On.

For more meal sites, check the monthly calendar in every edition of The Sentinel.

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— Mike Fleck  
Community Sharing Executive Director

The study, which was released last year and cites Oregon as one of the states lagging behind in the fight against food insecurity, puts 14.6 percent of Oregon's households in a state of food insecurity and 6.2 percent of households were labeled as experiencing hunger on a regular basis.

And soon, it may get harder to stay full.

"Typically, our clients are also on the SNAP program but new legislation, it's the ABAWD or Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents is what it stands for, they're taken out of the SNAP program," Fleck said.

ABAWD individuals, according to the USDA, can receive SNAP, also known

an approved state program.

Community Sharing does not have a background check requirement for those experiencing food insecurity. According to Fleck, the application process is one of self-declaration and includes a form that states the recipient will not sell or barter the food they receive from the pantry.

In the seven-plus years Fleck has been manning the operation, he's experienced two cases of fraud.

And while Community Sharing's numbers have gone up over the last four years, it's hard to tell if they're pace to becoming a crisis.

"Our box numbers have gone up but I wouldn't say

# Sheriff's office offers school bus safety tips

The Sheriff's Office would like to remind drivers of their responsibility to stop for school buses displaying red flashing lights. Because buses are large vehicles, the level of difficulty to see around them increases.

The outcome of illegally passing a stopped school bus is potentially devastating for children and drivers.

Law enforcement agencies continue to receive reports each year from bus drivers and other citizens about motorists failing to stop for school buses.

With nearly 6,000 school buses operating in the State of Oregon, motorists need to be alert.

Oregon law requires motorists to stop whenever the red lights on a school bus are flashing, regardless of the direction they are traveling. The law applies to any roadway with two or more lanes of traffic, including multi-lane

highways such as Highway 101.

The only exception to the law is for divided highways with two roads separated by an unpaved median strip or barrier.

In this case, only drivers on the same side of the road as the bus must stop. A painted median strip or a center lane used only for left turns does not create two separate lanes.

Where this situation exists, all lanes of traffic must stop.

When a bus is flashing am-

ber lights, motorists should prepare to stop. When the red lights begin to flash, motorists traveling in both directions must stop before reaching the bus and must remain stopped until the red lights are turned off. The same rules apply to church or worker buses equipped with amber and red flashing lights.

Please do your part to make our roads safe. Be aware when following any type of bus, that it may be making frequent stops.

Following these tips will help reduce the risk of traffic crashes and pedestrian injuries in our community.



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*Please join us for drinks and heavy appetizers as we learn more about Habitat for Humanity of Central Lane and raise the funds needed to complete Misty's home in Cottage Grove!*


**Thursday, October 25, 2018**  
**6:00 PM to 7:30 PM**  
**Remarks begin at 6:30**

Shady Oaks Plants and Produce  
77380 Hwy 99 South  
Cottage Grove, OR

**Event sponsored by Starfire Lumber Co.**  
Emcee: James Gilroy  
Update: Kellie DeVore, Executive Director

*This event is free to attend but there will be a request for donations. A generous anonymous donor has offered a match opportunity of \$5,000. Gifts of \$100 and above, or monthly gifts of \$10 and above, will go directly to meeting this match!*

Please RSVP to 541-767-0358 or  
linda.oxley@habitatlane.org

 **Habitat for Humanity**  
of Central Lane