

Salvation Army Food Bank

When clients leave the Salvation Army food bank, they take something more than food with them. Nestled between the groceries that are so crucial to their health and well-being, lie small packages of love, hope, and dignity. The shoppers may not have been expecting such gifts, but the Salvation Army richly dispenses these blessings to all who enter the food bank's doors.

The food bank's mission is to share the love of Christ by providing Spokane residents with nutritious food that they would not otherwise be able to afford. Each year, community services serves more than 18,000 people, with the majority of them being food bank participants. Unlike traditional food banks which dispense pre-selected items to clients, the Salvation Army food bank displays its food items in a grocery-store fashion. This allows shoppers to peruse the store and choose their own groceries. In a small way, this distinct format restores dignity to the clients and helps foster independence and confidence.

But the true value of the Salvation Army food bank lies in its selfless volunteers. Take Suzanne Johnson, for example. After retiring from the banking industry, this grandmother of five began volunteering between 8 – 17 hours per week. Suzanne truly enjoys sharing Christ's love with every person at the food bank, especially when she receives hugs and warm smiles from grateful clients. She recalls when an elderly Russian couple came into the food bank needing assistance, but they were unable to speak English. Suzanne greeted them and patiently escorted them around the food bank, assisting them in selecting groceries. Suzanne's genuine concern for their needs transcended the language barrier. When asked why she volunteers at the food bank, Suzanne replies, "God loves everybody, and I should too." Before each shift, Suzanne prays that she may "see the clients through God's eyes."

The food bank's efficiency would not be possible if not for other volunteers like Bob Gregson. Bob has worked in the food bank's warehouse for three years. He unloads, sorts, and organizes the incoming grocery donations. Bob is a former lieutenant in the U.S. Army who served two tours of duty in Vietnam and most recently operated an organic farm in western Washington. He is a wonderful example of servant leadership, and his reason for volunteering is simple but not simplistic: he respects food and peoples' need for it. Bob became involved with the food bank when he "saw a need and decided to fill it." Without volunteers like Bob working behind the scenes, the food bank's operations would not be possible.

In light of today's economic problems, demand for the Salvation Army's services, such as the food bank, continues to grow. To continue meeting peoples' most basic needs, the Salvation Army needs your help. You can help by volunteering or making a financial contribution. For more information, please contact Leslie Rogers, Volunteer Coordinator and Development Associate at (509) 329-2721.