Fall 2023

FOOD, WARMTH, AND SHELTER THAT'S OUR MISSION! INSIDE, MORE ON WHAT WE'RE DOING TO **BUILD COMMUNITY**

ACCESSNEWS



DESIGNED IN-HOUSE • WRITTEN BY EMPLOYEES • PRINTED LOCALLY

Executive Director Letter



Dear Community Members,

As Jackson County's Community Action Agency, ACCESS is responsible for working with residents, non-profit organizations, businesses, and policymakers to address the challenges our community is facing. We partner with mayors from across the county to hear from them about what services their residents need most and look for ways to be responsive to each individual community's needs. Mayors report that the lack of affordable housing, homelessness, food insecurity, and barriers to services for Veterans and seniors, especially in our rural communities, are concerns for their residents.

To address some of these concerns we are developing outreach strategies for seniors who have transportation and communication barriers to services to ensure they know about programs they may be eligible to receive, like our energy assistance, weatherization, medical equipment, and food assistance programs.

Our mission to provide food, warmth, and shelter to our most vulnerable neighbors addresses many of the major concerns we face in the Rogue Valley. We strive to serve all those who need us no matter where they live in Jackson County to make our community stronger for all of our residents. We are grateful to all of you who make our work possible.

Sincerely,

CARRIE BORGEN

ACCESS NEWS BRIEFS

Sherm's Markets and ACCESS Team up for Hunger Action Month

September was Hunger Action Month! This is an annual month long national campaign to fight hunger. A special thank you to our community, Sherm's Markets and Rogue Valley Times for their support. ACCESS could not feed 1 in 5 residents without your help!

ACCESS Rogue Powerpack Program Expands

The Powerpack Program is serving an additional 100 students across 24 Jackson County elementary schools. This expansion was largely made possible by the additional space in our brand new Food Bank Warehouse. We can store more food and accommodate more volunteers.

Learn more on page 4

Kaleidoscope Pizza to Hold Annual Feed the Hungry Day

Our friends at Kaleidoscope Pizzeria & Pub have held their Feed the Hungry Fundraiser for the last 14 years, donating the equivalent of 707,264 meals! Join us to help Feed the Hungry on Tuesday, November 14th. 100% of the proceeds from dine-in and to-go sales will be donated to ACCESS Food Programs!



Pantry volunteers from Rogue Credit Union

Why should you Volunteer?

ACCESS relies on a large network of volunteers. Last year more than 400 people served their through ACCESS. Why should YOU consider volunteering? Volunteering brings the community together, helping people make new connections while making a difference in others lives. It's good for you too! Studies show volunteering can reduce stress and promotes optimism, making you a healthier and happier person.

We depend on volunteers and are so grateful to them for all their service.

Let us know if you'd like to volunteer. Email us at volunteer@accesshelps.org

Volunteers of the Month

The volunteers below are celebrated for the dedication and hard work they put into serving their community. Thank you volunteers!

José Ramos volunteers at the Medford Severe Weather Shelter, where he ensures the safety of individuals who may be at risk of heatstroke or frostbite during extreme weather conditions. This shelter is a vital resource within the community. Without the hard work of our volunteers, many unhoused people would be at risk.

"It's so gratifying working in the weather shelter."



Larry Tuttle is honest, dependable, kindhearted, and enthusiastic about the time he donates. Larry's willingness to

give his time and service over the years has been greatly appreciated. His support of our ACCESS Food Programs allows us to fulfill our mission and consistently serve our community. Thank you for all your hard work and dedication, Larry!



ACCESS Food Programs Thrive in New Expanded Warehouse

ACCESS Food Programs moved into their new space last July

The expanded space allows us to accept more donations and keep donations fresh longer. With this expanded space comes the ability to serve more people at our 30 pantries and students in our Rogue Powerpack Program

Rogue Powerpack Program Serves an Additional 100 students!

The ACCESS Rogue Powerpack Program (RPP) is now in its second full year, and we have started off strong by serving over 550 students in Jackson County! The program provides weekend food options to food insecure students, including popular items such as flavored tuna packets, beef sticks, and fruit cups.

This year, the program is operating in 24 elementary schools across seven school districts. For children who rely on breakfast and lunch at school to provide nutrition throughout the week, it can be difficult on weekends for them and their families, especially with the increasing price of groceries. The food students receive is kid-friendly and supplies approximately six meals and six snacks per weekend. By the end of the school year, we will have provided over 100,000 meals and 100,000 snacks to students!

The Powerpack Program relies on weekly volunteers to pack the bags and deliver them to the schools. "This is such a special program to be a part of," says Danette Moss, who is back this year to volunteer. "I love knowing that I am helping kids have a better weekend and also that I am helping their families with their food budgets even a little bit. And it's a lot of fun to be part of the group each Friday that comes to the warehouse to pack!"

We heard from schools how excited students were that RPP was back this year. We are delighted to be serving so many kids, and we also know that there are so many more who could benefit from this amazing program.



Powerpack volunteers hard at work during the first pack of the 2023/2024 school year.



ACCESS staff and special guests cut the ribbon officially signaling the new Food Bank Warehouse is open for business.

New Mini-Mobile Pantry Hits The Streets

Our Mini-Mobile Pantry has a new look! Don't be fooled, though. Beneath the van's cheerful exterior is a serious working vehicle complete with refrigerator and freezer, both powered by solar panels on the roof, and shelves to store dry goods. The van, which was purchased through a Community Development Block Grant obtained in partnership with the City of Talent, was retrofitted to be a pantry vehicle and joined our fleet in June of this year.

The size of this van, which can serve between 25-30 families, makes it ideal for use by our Healthy Mobile Pantry staff in rural areas or in places where the larger Mobile Pantry truck may not be able to fit. It's also great for outreach events where the community can learn about all the wonderful programs ACCESS offers while receiving healthy food. Keep an eye out for us on the road and be sure to give us a wave!







Food for Hope Grocery Bag Drive 40th Anniversary

It's the 40th year of Sherm's Food for Hope Grocery Bag Drive to benefit our Regional Food Bank! We are so grateful for the support they show us each year. Donate by buying a filled grocery bag at Sherm's Food 4 Less or Thunderbird Market! Help us reach our goal of 10,000 pounds of food and \$30,000 to support local families struggling with food insecurity.

Donate online at www.accesshelps.org/foodforhope

Energy Assistance is Vital

No matter the time of year, energy costs for heating and cooling a home can be high. For some families, keeping the lights on may come at the expense of having food on the table. The ACCESS Energy Assistance Program aims to take the stress out of making those difficult decisions. Energy Assistance offers relief for eligible households towards bills for all energy types, including electric, natural gas, propane, oil, and even wood. This type of assistance can be life-saving in months of extreme heat and cold.

Who does the program serve?

The program assists low-income households by paying portions of their energy costs. These households include families and individuals such as veterans, seniors, and persons with disabilities. There is no requirement to be at risk of disconnection, so households just need to be income eligible.



ACCESS Furnace Program Warms Up

Having adequate heat in the winter can mean the difference between life and death. ACCESS is so happy to be able to help provide warmth to our neighbors. The Furnace Program can provide resources to fix broken furnaces as well as install new furnaces to keep peoples' homes comfortable in the winter. An A/C Program is also offered in the summer months.

"I am very grateful for all the help you have given me. You are my angels. I wouldn't be able to have the heat in the winter if not for your help. God bless you all," writes a thankful participant.

The ACCESS Furnace Program begins in November or December and continues until the weather warms up, typically around May.

With the cold winter season upon us and temperatures continuing to drop, there is a need for heat. If you or someone you know needs assistance installing or repairing a furnace, please call: 458-488-1363

THE IMPACT

"Thank you for all your help. Without it, I would have had a hard time choosing. between heat /air or medication and food. God bless you for your work and help."

• • • •

"ACCESS just weatherized our house. THANK YOU.
We are so appreciative for all the help you gave and are giving us."

• • • •

"Just a big thank you for all your services, and the new windows in my mobile [home] make a huge difference, summer and winter, plus all the other weatherization."

What does **weatherization** look like?

Air leakage reduction for doors & windows





Ceiling, floor, & wall insulation

Caulking & window improvements



If you need help with weatherizing your home, or know someone who does, please call (541) 779-6691 or visit our website at www.accesshelps.org/weatherization

Jackson County On Track to Meet Executive Order Goals

On January 10, 2023, Governor Tina Kotek issued Executive Order 23-02 (EO), which declared a State of Emergency due to homelessness. The EO provides funding to rapidly expand the state's low-barrier shelter capacity, rehouse people experiencing unsheltered homelessness, and prevent homelessness to the greatest extent possible. The state awarded \$8.8 million in funding to Jackson County to combat the homelessness crisis. In addition to EO funding, Jackson County was awarded \$1.4 million in Oregon Eviction Diversion and Prevention funds.

ACCESS is the lead agency and fiscal sponsor for the EO initiative in coordination with Jackson County's Continuum of Care (CoC). Along with other locally funded organizations, we have made significant progress toward our goals.



Numbers reflect data as of October 17, 2023

What this mean's to me

I love that I have my very own key to a House. Access has blessed me in more ways I thought I'd never see. My hopes B dreams were fixed and all I wanted this year for my Hoth birthday was to have a place safe to live, well my wish came true. I have a boartiful apartment thanks to access an the staff members here at the Roxy. - Lisa and Nick

Testimonial of a Life Changed

To the left is a testament to the powerful impact rapid rehousing can have on the unhoused community. Participants Lisa and Nick were able to move off the streets and into a stable, safer place to live. "I don't ever want to be homeless again." Lisa writes in her thank you letter to ACCESS. These personal stories of success are a true indication that the Executive Order initiatives are making a difference here in Jackson County.

EXECUTIVE ORDER GOALS FOR JACKSON COUNTY



Rapidly rehouse **133** unsheltered households



Create an additional **67** new shelter beds



Provide eviction prevention to **358** households



Jorge and Fernanda outside the front door of their townhome.

CENTER FOR COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

From Homeless to Hopeful: Finding a Home After the Fire

Meet Jorge and Fernanda, a couple whose lives, like so many others, were forever changed after the 2020 fires. Jorge and his family lost their home during the fires when he was still attending high school. Living in a trailer with no running water and unsure of where to turn, his friends suggested he reach out to ACCESS for help in February of 2022. That's when Jorge was connected to his support champion, Sean Fletcher.

Sean assisted Jorge and Fernanda by providing guidance through the ACCESS Center for Community Resilience (CCR). The CCR specifically helps those who were impacted by the Almeda and Obenchain fires of 2020. The couple was able to secure transitional housing at The Jackson while they worked with Sean to set goals for budgeting and improving their credit. Knowing the journey would be difficult, Sean always ensured that there was room in the budget for the couple to have some fun and nurture their relationship as a team. Fernanda remembers Sean's goal-setting fondly and believes this was a key element to their success. "If it wasn't for him, we wouldn't have been successful. Now we have good spending habits and saving habits," Fernanda says.

As Jorge and Fernanda continued to reach their goals each month, Sean increased their targets. There were times when they struggled to see their hard work pay off, but Sean's unwavering support and belief in them kept them motivated. Fernanda recalls, "When we didn't believe in ourselves, Sean believed in us."

The CCR's Sean Fletcher celebrates the couple's hard work and success. "They have crushed all goals and stability plans we have made. They are such a blessing to work with," says Sean. The couple has worked through hardships and setbacks to get on their feet after the devastating Almeda fire. Thanks to their dedication toward their goal, they moved into a townhome on September 1st, 2022. A year later, Jorge and Fernanda are thriving with their new-found financial stability and are now working with the ACCESS Homeownership Center to become homeowners.

Building Community



14th Annual Mayors United: Building Community for All

On September 29, 2023, ACCESS hosted its 14th Annual Mayors United fundraiser at Bayer Family Estate in Eagle Point. It is always inspiring and humbling to see all our mayors, business leaders, and caring community members come together to share this special evening with us. Mayors United was a celebration of what we have accomplished together over the past year and an acknowledgment of those who made this work happen. As we reflected on small victories and major milestones, we appreciated the profound impact that our supporters continuously enabled us to have on our community.

We are incredibly thankful to everyone who supported this event and helped us exceed our fundraising goal by raising \$162,000 toward our mission to feed, warm, and shelter Jackson County's vulnerable populations. At ACCESS, we know that our work will never be complete. Still, as the night ended, we left Mayors United knowing that our mission will always be made possible through the support of our outstanding community.

A big THANK YOU to our title sponsor, Wells Fargo, and to all the sponsors and local businesses that helped make our event a great success.



End of Year Giving: Why Your Gift Matters

Year-end donations play a vital role in ACCESS' ability to serve the community. Like most nonprofit organizations, we rely on donations from individuals and businesses as well as on government and foundation grants. It takes many different types of funding to serve more than 70,000 people each year who need our help.

While grant funding is generally restricted to specific programs, donations provide the flexibility to cover unmet needs. Some donors opt to have their donations used where needed most. Other donors prefer to direct their gift to a specific program, such as our Food Bank. We are dedicated to honoring every donor's intent. Areas like our Food Bank and Medical Equipment Loan Program rely heavily on donations from the community, as there are not reliable grant funds to fully support them. It is only because of generous supporters like you that we can continue operating these critical services.

As you plan your end of year giving, we want to take this moment to emphasize the importance of your gift. We are immensely grateful for the continued support we receive, and it brings us joy to offer services that meet a wide variety of needs. On behalf of ACCESS and the community we serve, thank you!

Donate to ACCESS here: www.accesshelps.org/donations

SPREADING HOLIDAY SPIRIT

Give the Gift of Smiles with

Senior Shoeboxes

Our Senior Shoebox Project is up and running! For the past 30 years, ACCESS has held our beloved Annual Senior Shoebox Project, a tradition which delivers shoeboxes filled with household goodies and whimsical gifts to seniors in our community.

There are a variety of ways that you can join the fun and help deliver smiles this holiday season:

- Nominate a senior to receive a shoebox
- <u>Donate</u> a shoebox full of goodies before November 20th
- Volunteer to deliver shoeboxes during the week of December 4 - 8

To learn more, please email donorsupport@accesshelps.org







Holiday CHEER at Greystone Court!

The holidays are coming up fast, but don't let them fly by without a visit to Greystone Court! The spectacular light display starts in early December, and ACCESS staff (along with Santa Claus) will be collecting food and cash donations nightly from December 21-24 between 5:30 – 9 pm to support our Food Bank.

A special thank you to the Greystone Court residents, who bring joy to the community each year while also collecting food and funds to feed those in need over the holidays. Come on out and join in the holiday cheer! See you there!



THANK YOU

A program for **All**Contibuted to by **YOU**

The Durable Medical Equipment Program (DME) is open to all, regardless of income. The program supports our entire community with any medical equipment needs. Many of these needs are temporary, such as crutches or wheelchairs, for surgery recovery and some may be more long term, such as hospital beds. The equipment is on loan for no charge for as long as you need it with no end dates. We know that medical issues can be stressful and unpredictable, and we are so happy to offer this resource to our community. The DME is entirely reliant on donations of new and used equipment. Last year, we loaned out 5,279 pieces of equipment, saving our community over \$1.5 million in medical equipment expenses. This program is made possible through the support of our caring community.

"I can't thank you enough for your Medical Equipment loan program. My husband was recently diagnosed with mild dementia and completed rehabilitation. My son and daughter-in-law offered to let him stay with them during his transition home, but they did not have the necessary equipment to make him comfortable. Last week, ACCESS provided the hospital bed and bedside table, which were in excellent condition."

If you or someone you know is in need of medical equipment, or if you would like to donate a used piece of equipment, please call: 541-690-3972

GRANTOR SPOTLIGHT



AllCare Health has been a 100% locally owned and operated healthcare provider in the Rogue Valley for 25 years. The organization is deeply invested in the health and well-being of our community. Along with their quality healthcare, they also support other local organizations that are doing the work the work to provide wrap-around services to our community. AllCare has shown incredible support for the ACCESS Food Program by helping to fund our Rogue Powerpack Program, which feeds school children over the weekends, our Cooking Skills Education Program, Food Share Gardens, and our very important Mobile Food Pantries. Additionally, AllCare has generously supported ACCESS by sponsoring our annual Mayors United fundraiser. In fact, since 2017, AllCare has provided close to \$100,000 in grant funding and move than \$25,000 in sponsorships to ACCESS. We could not do our work without corporate partners like AllCare.

ACCESS EMPLOYEE SPIRIT

















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Thank you to the partners and donors who make it possible for ACCESS to build community.

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UPCOMING CLASSES —



Financial Literacy Course 2024 Schedule: February 21 | May 15 | August 21 | November 20



Homeownership Course 2024 Schedule:

February 10 | May 11 | August 10 **Spanish: January 27 | March 14 | May 31**

To register for classes or find more information visit www.accesshelps.org/education

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ACCESS is committed to being a responsible steward of all donations and gifts. The support and trust of our donors is of utmost importance.

Unless directed to a specific program by the donor, donations received are allocated to programs serving the needs of our community: food & nutrition programs, the medical equipment program, housing programs, energy assistance programs, and wildfire relief. Many programs are funded by grant funds, with donations

allowing ACCESS flexibility to meet the unique needs of our program participants. In 2022, under 10% of ACCESS expenses were overhead costs!

ACCESS earned the highest level of recognition by both Candid (formerly Guidestar) and Charity Navigator, so you can feel confident that your gift to ACCESS is going back into your community.



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