

ACCESS NEWS





Executive Director Letter



WARMTH SHELTER

Dear Community Members,

One of the things I am most proud of over the past year has been our organization's ability to be agile and able to respond to our community's changing needs. For example, with 1 in 5 people relying on ACCESS for food, our decision to relocate our food bank warehouse to a larger space was in response to the growing need our community has for food assistance.

Then, when the Governor issued Executive Order 23-02 in early 2023 declaring the homelessness crisis as a state of emergency, ACCESS was called upon as the lead agency and fiscal sponsor for the initiative in Jackson County. We are also one of a few agencies selected to create a total of 67 new shelter beds and house 133 unsheltered households through a variety of housing solutions.

Founded in 1976, we are well positioned to address our community's needs because of our longstanding collaborative relationships with state and local partners as well as the support of caring people like you. We are grateful for your continued trust and generosity.

With gratitude,

and Brogen

CARRIE BORGEN Executive Director

ACCESS NEWS BRIEFS

Kelly's Automotive Services Helps ACCESS Wipe Out Hunger

Kelly's Automotive Service held its annual Wipe Out Hunger peanut butter and jelly drive this February in support of ACCESS' Food Bank. They donated a total of 1,495 pounds of peanut butter and 920 pounds of jelly this year! Their continued support helps to feed our community in Jackson County.

ACCESS Moves Food Bank to a New Location

The ACCESS Food Bank is moving into a new, larger location this July. This move is crucial as we have seen a 44% rise in pantry visits just this past year. The extra capacity of our new location will help us serve the community more effectively by providing space for large donations we were previously having to turn away.

Learn more on page 4

Senior Fair Brings Community Together After 3-year Hiatus

The 2023 Senior Fair was a success! Over 2,000 people were in attendance, gathering valuable information and resources from the 80 senior-focused vendors at the event. The day was full of networking, community building, and entertainment. We already can't wait to see everyone again next year!

Learn more on page 10

COVER PHOTO: THE AYALA FAMILY POSES MINUTES AFTER FINDING OUT THEY WERE CHOSEN FOR A NEW HOME!

BUILDING COMMUNITY

Pantry volunteers from Dutch Bros!

Thank You Volunteers

We appreciate our volunteers so much! More than 700 helping hands serve through our ACCESS programs! They make our mission to feed, warm, and shelter our community a reality. We'd also like to acknowledge the many community volunteers, Oregon Department of Human Services staff, and our ACCESS staff and Outreach Team for their dedicated service to the Medford Severe Weather Shelter during a particularly long winter. The overnight shifts are long and demanding, but they are rewarding and necessary to keep the shelter open and save lives. Thank you to all our volunteers for the dedication you have shown to our community! Let us know if you'd like to get involved! Email us at volunteer@accesshelps.org

Volunteers of the Month

We have launched a new, fun way to recognize our most dedicated volunteers. Meet our very first Volunteers of the Month!

Benji Fargason volunteers packing food for children in the Rogue Powerpack Program every Friday. He also serves on our volunteer board!

"Volunteering at ACCESS is a highlight of my week. The staff are wonderful to work with and they make it such an enjoyable experience. Being a part of this community of volunteers brings a connection with others I've been missing and



brings up all the good feelings. I recently heard someone refer to things that are "medicine for the soul" and this is it." **Edith Abercrombie** has been volunteering with the Healthy Mobile Pantry program for two years and has given over 246

hours of her personal time to volunteering. She loves being a part of the volunteer community because it keeps her busy and she enjoys working with her peers each week. Her welcoming smile and fun-loving energy make her a joy to work with and we are so grateful for her dedication!



ACCESS Food Programs Pantry Visits Continue to Increase in 2023

Pantry visits hit an all-time high of more than 13,000 in March, as COVID Emergency SNAP benefits ended in February.

In March, pantry visits surged past 13,000, demonstrating how critical the ACCESS Food Bank is for the community, especially when household budgets are under stress. Our Food Pantry network helps ensure that families have one less worry knowing they will be able to put food on their tables.

ACCESS Food Bank is Moving to a Larger Warehouse

If you have ever moved from one house to another, you know how many details are involved. Now imagine trying to move an entire warehouse from one location to another. Quite a challenge, right? For the ACCESS Food Program, it is a challenge we relish as we get nearer and nearer to moving into our new warehouse.

While the distance between our old warehouse and our new one is not that far, about four miles, the difference in our capacity will be breathtaking. Currently, we operate out of a warehouse with 5,000sf of dry storage, 800sf of cooler space, and 300sf of freezer space. Our new warehouse will double our storage, providing 9,800sf of dry, 1,000sf of cooler, and 1,000sf of freezer space!

This move comes at a great time as we continue to see the need for food assistance rise, with a 44% increase in pantry visits over the last year. Our Food Bank supplies food to over 30 pantries throughout the county, serving 1 in 5 residents annually. While we have always been able to provide enough food to meet the needs in our community, we have at times had to turn away large donations from community partners due to limited space. At our new location, we will no longer have this problem – there will be room for all donations that come our way.

We are also excited that, in addition to being able to

support our pantry system more robustly, we will have a greater ability to expand other programs, such as our Rogue Powerpack weekend food program for elementary students. With our ultimate goal of being in every elementary school in the county, we will need plenty of space to store food for this program to continue to succeed, and this new warehouse certainly has it.

For our many volunteers who help with repacking food or who come weekly to pack our Rogue Powerpack bags, we will have an expanded and dedicated space for those groups to work. Not only will volunteers have more space, but they will not have to set up and break down each time so as not to be in the way of warehouse activity – an added bonus!

While there are so many reasons we are looking forward to this move, above all, we are thrilled that we will have expanded capacity to serve our community even more fully, and that we will be better positioned to address food insecurity across the county. Thank you for all the support you have given us over the years in our old location and we look forward to seeing you and partnering with you in our new warehouse soon!





Rogue Powerpack Program is Growing to Feed More Kids!

The 2022/2023 school year was the first full year that ACCESS ran the Rogue Powerpack Program, which provides weekend food options for elementary students throughout Jackson County. We are delighted that we were able to serve 469 kids weekly, surpassing our goal of 450.

We heard from teachers, students, and caregivers about how much this program means to them, such as a first-grade student in Talent who says, "I love my power pack, I get happy when I can get it. I can share it with my family, and then we are not hungry." We also received a lot of positive feedback about the types of food we were able to pack, from beef sticks to fruit leather to shelf-stable squeeze yogurt.

Our goal for the 2023/2024 school year is to feed 550 students and add two to three new schools. Each bag

includes 15 to 16 ready to eat or easy to prepare items, yet only costs about \$8. We are grateful for the volunteers and donors whose contributions allow us to continue to expand this program.

If you would like to help as a volunteer, please email: volunteer@accesshelps.org. If you would like to donate, please visit: accesshelps.org/powerpack



Powerpack students sent us the cutest handmade thank you cards!



Food Program Shoutout

Thank you to Trevor at Profx Painting for donating his time to paint our new Central Point Pantry location and to Rodda Paint Co. for donating the paint when they heard why he was buying it. The pantry looks great, and our hearts are full. We love our community!

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All about Weatherization

The ACCESS Weatherization Program is designed to assist households in making energy efficiency upgrades to their homes through the installation of insulation, doors, windows, and various other energy efficiency measures. If a participant qualifies for weatherization, a specialist will conduct an energy audit to determine the best plan for the home, based on existing conditions and program funds available. Qualified participants will be able to have their home weatherized at no cost— Creating a safer home environment, all while generating long term savings.

The ultimate goal for this program is to help Jackson County residents address their immediate needs — as well as providing long term solutions — for reducing energy consumption and costs at home.

With these changes and upgrades, your house can stay cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter, resulting in lower electricity and gas bills.

SERVICES COVERED BY THE PROGRAM

- Ceiling, floor and wall insulation
- Energy-related minor home repairs
- Air leakage reduction
- HVAC repairs and heating duct improvements
- New energy efficient windows





Households that participate in our weatherization program save an average of \$360/year on their energy bills!

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

THERE AREN'T WORRS TO DESCRIBE HOW GRATEFUL THAT I AM FOR ALL THAT ACCESS DOES FOR SOMANY PEOPLE. THE ASSISTANCE THAT I RECEIVE ARE LIFE CHANGENG FOR ME, AS MY STRESS IS LESSENED SO MUCH BECAUSE OF THE FINANCIAL AID THROUGH ENERGY ASSISTANCE. THANKLYOU ALL FOR EVERYTHING YOU DO, YOU ARE ALL ANGELS ON THIS EARTH! 8

-THE ENERGY IMPACT-

"I'm very thankful for the help they've given me the last few years. The help always gave me a breather where I could get all caught up on other bills and groceries. God bless."

• • • •

"Thank you! As a 78-year-old senior I am not sure how I would heat my apartment each year on a limited income. Staying healthy is important! Appreciate the services!"

"I have never felt judged or disrespected when applying for help when I'm in need. All of those who have helped me through the assistance programs thru ACCESS, whether on the phone or in person, have treated me with kindness and courtesy. I am grateful for all they do. Thank you."

SUMMER HEATS UP

ACCESS Emergency Assistance Program Fixes AC units!

It's that time of year again, and as temperatures rise, the Energy Assistance Program is ready! We help fix and install air conditioning units in homes that are without them during the hot, unsafe summer months. To apply and to learn more about qualifying, please contact us at: **458-488-1324**.



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Governor Kotek Declares Homelessness State of Emergency

On January 10, 2023, Governor Tina Kotek issued Executive Order 23-02 (the EO), which declared a state of emergency due to homelessness. The EO provides funding to rapidly expand the state's low-barrier shelter capacity, to rehouse people experiencing unsheltered homelessness, and to prevent homelessness to the greatest extent possible. The EO took immediate effect and remains in effect until January 10, 2024. The state awarded \$8.8 million in funding to Jackson County to help combat the homelessness crisis.

ACCESS will lead the initiative as the lead agency and fiscal sponsor for Jackson County's Continuum of Care. The Governor's office gave Jackson County a specific set of goals to meet before January 10, 2024. In Jackson County, we will need to create 67 additional shelter beds and house 133 unsheltered households.

ACCESS also has a seat on the Jackson County MultiAgency Coordination Group(MAC). The purpose of the MAC Group is to oversee progress throughout the year to make sure that the goals set for Jackson County are reached. We feel very fortunate that ACCESS can foster relationships between our many partners by working together on this crucial project. In addition to the EO, Jackson County was awarded \$1.4 million in Oregon Eviction Diversion and Prevention funds. These funds will go directly to providing homelessness prevention services to 385 households in our community.

The homelessness crisis in our community is a complicated issue and although more is needed, we feel that this is a great first step. We look forward to working with our partners and providing wrap-around services to those in need.



Jackson County experienced a 132% increase in homeless individuals from 2017 to 2022

HOUSING BRIEF

ACCESS is your local Homeownership Center! We offer a variety of programs and services to help you on your journey to homeownership. Last year, we helped hundreds of participants realize this dream. Firsttime and first-generation purchasers are often eligible for up to \$10,000 grants and potentially forgivable loans of up to an additional \$20,000 to \$50,000 depending on the amount needed to close. For veterans, or those purchasing within Medford city limits, there is grant funding currently available to support your goal. Our First-time Homebuyer classes are offered both in English and Spanish, online or in person. Housing counseling services are available to all homebuyers, regardless of income or credit score.

If you are interested in learning more about how ACCESS can help you achieve homeownership, please visit https://accesshelps.org/homeownership or call us at 541-774-4305.

Family's Dream of Homeownership Comes True

The Ayala family had their first meeting with housing counselor Denise Lupton on October 15th 2019, and had big dreams of homeownership. They had no idea that three and a half years later they would be surprised with their very own brand-new home— but it didn't come without putting in the hard work.

In 2019, they were credit challenged with little to no savings. With Jesus Ayala being the sole provider for his wife Flor and their two young children, saving would be difficult. With an action plan customized to them, they worked hard and eventually were able to save \$50 a month. They secured a credit card with a \$500 limit and got to work on improving their credit scores.

In 2020, ACCESS referred the Ayala's to a lender, but with the increasing uncertainty of the pandemic and Jesus' company laying people off, the decision was made to put off the meeting. As the pandemic progressed, Jesus was forced to work part-time. The family met with Guild Mortgage, who couldn't qualify them until Jesus returned to work full-time.

By October 2020, more of the unthinkable occurred against the backdrop of a major pandemic. The Almeda Fire raged through the Rogue Valley, only making it more difficult to find available, affordable housing. Due to limited funding, they were added to our waitlist. For the following two years, the Ayala family would continue to check-in with ACCESS on available funding. They were patient and positive and spent the time saving their money and working on credit.

Finally, at the beginning of 2023, Hayden Homes' non-profit First Story, reached out to ACCESS asking to partner in helping them identify a family that would qualify for their brand-new First Story home. The First Story mission is to help families in need achieve the dream of homeownership. As it turns out, the Ayala's fit the criteria perfectly.

Jesus, Flor, and their two kids were invited to ACCESS for what seemed to be another routine meeting but were greeted with the big surprise that they were selected to live in the new Medford home, with no down payment and a zero-interest 30-year loan.

We are thrilled for the Ayala family as they embark on the journey of homeownership. They worked so hard to get here. Thank you to First Story for helping us provide this deserving family with such a great opportunity!





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Building Community Help Us Stock Our Shelves!



The ACCESS Food Bank is moving into its new warehouse location in July, and we need your help to Stock the Shelves! Our warehouse distributes food to more than 30 food pantries throughout Jackson County. With 1 in 5 people relying on ACCESS for food, we have seen an unprecedented increase in the number of visits to our food pantries since January, with March seeing more than 13,000 visits. A pantry visitor shared, "We literally ran out of everything the day we visited the ACCESS food pantry. You saved our lives....We really appreciate you."

We need your help to Stock the Shelves so we can meet the increasing need in our community. You can make a difference by donating food or funds to the ACCESS Food Bank. Your donation stays local and every \$1 will provide four meals to help those struggling with food insecurity right here in our community.

To donate, go to **www.accesshelps.org/donate** and designate your gift to the Food Program.

Senior Fair is about Connection



Thank you to all those who attended our Senior Fair on April 4th. More than 2,000 people were in attendance where 80 vendors, ranging from healthcare providers to senior living communities to local nonprofit organizations connected with and provided valuable resources and information to seniors and their families. "I'm so glad the Senior Fair is back. I look forward to connecting with the community at this event all year long!," said a happy attendee. A special thank you to our major sponsors Jackson Care Connect and NewsWatch 12. We'll see you all at next year's fair!

If you're interested in being a vendor at next year's fair please contact Rose Miller at rmiller@accesshelps.org

Upcoming Events

19th Annual ACCESS Golf Tournament

Teed Up for June 26th!

The ACCESS Golf Tournament is one of the longest standing charity tournaments in the Rogue Valley. We are so thankful for the generous support we receive from local businesses that sponsor the event and play in the tournament. It's always a great time for the 144 players and raises much needed funds so we can provide food, warmth, and shelter to our neighbors in need. **A special thank you to Boise Cascade, our Title Sponsor, for their support!**



14th Annual Mayors United Helps Build Community

Plans are coming together for this year's 14th Annual Mayors United event. The event brings together Jackson County mayors, business leaders, community partners, and donors in support of the ACCESS mission. Funds raised through sponsorships and the live and silent auctions directly support our work.

If you are interested in sponsorship, contact Kellie Battaglia at 458-488-1240 or if you would like to support ACCESS through an in-kind donation of an item or service for our auction, contact the Donor Support line at 458-488-1220 or email donorsupport@accesshelps.org.

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Partners and donors who make it possible for ACCESS to build community.

Thank you!

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