

In Bernie Burkeholder's home in Lakeview, about 9 a.m. We are talking about the Food Pantry that Bernie runs at the Presbyterian Church, and the overall Food Bank/Share/Pantry system in Lakeview.

Ashly Stone: This is Ashly Stone I'm with Bernie Burkeholder on the morning of July 25 at 9:08 a.m. We're going to be talking about the food pantry that Bernie operates down at the Presbyterian Church. I'm going to start, Bernie, with just a really kind of broad question, um, can you describe how you operate down at the food pantry?

[Pause]

AS: If that's too broad then I can ask some specific questions.

Bernie Burkeholder: We set up the tables, um, and have to get that done weekly, because the space is used for other, other things during the week. Then uh, uh, I have to see that we have volunteers, and get substitutes, I have substitutes that come in. We open the door, they register, most of them have their orange card, and we register and then they go around, and there's a shopping.

[Background noise and chatter, Bernie's husband just walked in]

BB: and then it's, at the end, um, there's usually someone to help them carry their boxes out to the car. Sometimes they have to help a little bit when we're short. And that's, is that what you want to know?

AS: That's great. Can you talk a little bit about the relationship between the Presbyterian Food Pantry and the Food Share? The Lakeview, or Lake County Food Share.

BB: Ok. I started out as a, on the Food Share board as a representative of the First Presbyterian Church Pantry. Then we were given vote on the board, the Food Share board, and uh, then we needed a treasurer, and I took the treasurer job, so I worked two hats, really.

AS: Ok, are you still the treasurer?

BB: Hm?

AS: You're still the treasurer at the food share?

BB: Yeah, yes I'm still the treasurer of the Food Share.

AS: Ok, ok. Sounds like it keeps you busy.

BB: [laughs] Not, not really, we don't have a lot of bills, just mainly, mainly, telephone and all the regular monthly bills.

AS: Oh uh-huh, ok. And um, what about the relationship between the pantry and the Klamath-Lake Food Bank? Is it a direct relationship or does it go through the food share?

BB: No, we go direct. When I have questions I call Nicki, we have access, she's been very good about returning my calls or answering my questions or Dave answers. Um, I would say we have a very good relationship right now, there was a little roughness there when we were required to lock up our food.

AS: Ok. And now that works ok for everybody, the locking up?

BB: Yep.

AS: Ok, um, what is the process of getting food into the Presbyterian Food Pantry?

BB: The whole process? Once a month we go over to Klamath and we get food from the Klamath-Lake County Food Bank. Both USDA and non-USDA food. It's brought over here and put down in the warehouse in our room. Uh, Friday morning I usually go over to the pantry and see what we need. We set up the tables and see what we have left. We don't take the food back once it's over at the church, we store it at the church, we have small storage there. So we, we go down, make a list, and we go down to the warehouse and pick up the food and bring it back to the pantry, and put it on the tables.

BB: It, it's more work if we're direct but we've tried various ideas but we haven't come up with anything better.

AS: Ok, it sounds like it works pretty well so far.

BB: Yeah.

AS: And how, when you go to Klamath Falls, how do they decide how much food you get?

BB: I'm not sure of that, I've never, I sometime should go with Fields who picks up our food and see the operation. My understanding is, because Fields has to have an appointment over there, a day and an hour, that it's pretty well set out for us. And they, they have a.

[Rustling, BB pulls out invoice from her folder]

BB: See if I can find one here. This is what we get with our shipment.

AS: Ok. An invoice, I see.

BB: So I'm assuming that it's pretty well on pallets.

BB: If I've got too much rice, USDA rice, I usually tell Fields to tell them when he calls and makes his appointment no rice.

AS: Ok, so, just an idea, do you think the base the amount of food on the amount of cards at the, at the pantry?

BB: I think so, I think so, I wouldn't say for sure but. I've never seen Faith Center's invoice so I don't know. I do now that Faith Center has Rick Bremont, who runs the Faith Center Pantry, told me, he said did you get oatmeal? And I said yes, we got oatmeal. Well we didn't get any.

BB: And we had, we had quite a bit of oatmeal given to us, I don't remember, it isn't on that one, it's on one of the other.

BB: So I don't know, I said you can work that out with Nicki. Not my [laughing]

AS: Ok. So, does all the food come from Klamath-Lake Food Bank? Or do you get donations also?

BB: We get donations. Somebody just moved away and we got quite a bit of odds and ends of canned foods and. Movers won't take any liquids you know in their van so we got quite a, I think we had fifty items so I use these, I have to inventory them before they can go out on our table. And then I write a thank you to the individual or sometimes it's a (?) or a group that gives us food. But most is individuals.

AS: Really? Ok, that's interesting.

AS: Um, we spoke a little bit yesterday about food drives, that create.

BB: Uh we we have had some for the Presbyterian pantry directly and we're just going to enter one in August for the Food Share. So we do both.

AS: Do you ever get fresh vegetables, or fruit, or meat?

BB: In the fall we sometimes do, we get carrots, onions, uh, I had two packages of radishes the other day. But it's not, not a common thing.

AS: When you do get them is it usually, where does it come from? Is it donations or is it through the food bank usually?

BB: No, it's all private donations.

AS: Private donations, ok. What about meat, do you ever get fresh meat from anybody?

BB: Yes, um, we've had fresh meat given directly to us by an individual rancher here, gave it right directly to the pantry. It was through Rotary I think, they worked with Karen Bunch, you probably met her. What the warehouse does, um, and I at the last board meeting kind of questioned it, is that they get donated animals. The Ministerial Association lately has been able to pay for the processing, otherwise the Food Share would have to pay for the processing. So the Ministerial Association paid for, covered the processing. So we're called up by the locker and we go get the meat, and then the Food Share divides it up. And I questioned at our last board meeting, it was being divided up a third to each one: a third to the Presbyterian pantry, a third to Faith, and a third to the warehouse, to stay in the warehouse for emergency boxes. And I questioned, because we're giving out, I don't know whether you've seen the ratio, but we're giving out almost twice as much as the other pantry. The Food Share does not give out a lot of meat. And I'm concerned that it's disappearing.

AS: Oh, ok, ok. So you'd rather see it split up according to how many people are at each pantry rather than.

BB: Yeah, as near as you can, you can't do it down to the last two pound package of hamburger but, you can, I think it would be fairer, but I didn't get very far with my suggestion, they still want to go.

BB: Because what Dave, you met Dave, and Barbara say, ok, the Food Share gets a third, when I'm out at the pantry, I can go get some at the Food Share. But, um, it isn't, I don't think we're ever down to the point where we have to go get it. It would be nice to have it but it's...

AS: Ok. So if you had it already would you give more to each person that came through?

BB: Well, we could give them a better choice of things. That, you know, you've seen what's in a Fresh Alliance meat box? Ok, some people don't want steaks, they don't want sausage, they want hamburger, cause they can.

BB: You'll find the people that come, particularly the oldre people, don't take the time to cook. I think they feel, we have a right to go to the store and pick up fast food boxes and stuff, which are expensive, more expensive than doing food from scratch. But they think they have that right too, and maybe they do. I don't, I'm just, you know, some people, they want, the like hamburger, easy, quick, fast.

AS: easy, you can make a lot of things out of it.

BB: And it goes around a family of five better than say a small roast or something.

AS: Right, true.

AS: So, what is the process that the clients go through when they come in each week to get their food? What kind of, I mean, they have to have the orange card.

BB: Well, they come in the door and register, and, uh, Bev usually talks to them. Bev is an old business person in town, she's been in business, she knows the town, she knows the people. And we try to be as friendly as we can and chat a little bit and sometimes you know situations and you ask about. Well, if they've had surgery, how they're getting along. We try to be more than just a handout, make it a little bit more comfortable. We've had people that have come and and then been very very, they go out the door with tears in their eyes for the gratefulness of the food. And other go out kind of angry, they've got a chip on their shoulder. And they think that they should, don't have to follow rules. And they, well we had one lady who said why don't you have Del Monte bean? And I had to explain to her that we give out what we get, what is given to us. So if you take a little time, most of these people will understand better. Then we had one lady who came in and every time we'd offer her something, ugh! I finally, when there was no one in front of her or in back of her in line, I took her, kind of took her aside and said you know, when my kids were growing up, if they complained about something on the table or on their plates, they had to eat it. If they just said no thank you very nicely, then.

BB: And I said, you influence people in front of you in front of you and back of you. If somebody at the table says something about Ugh, I wouldn't eat that, you know, do I want to eat that? Maybe I don't want to eat that either. So, she and I are on good friends, very good friends now. I'm a great person for explaining because I think you have to understand the situation.

AS: Yeah, ok. Um, I remember you, you talked before about how you had changed the process as far as the way the tables are set up and letting people kind of do their shopping. Can you, can you talk about maybe how that's changed how people get their food and how.

BB: I think they like it better. They like it better. Uh, I think we've had a couple of comments, not a lot. And the tables are arranged so they can slide the box around. They don't have to carry it around, they can slide it around, and at the end of the table where somebody usually can help them take it out. Cause even if you get somebody who's 25 years old, they may have a back problem. Whereas some 65 year old man may be able to carry that box out without any problem at all. It depends. We would like, I would like to do something more than what we do, and I haven't quite figured out how to do it, is maybe to have coffee and cookies or something like that. Maybe we could start once a month or something, but then, then that attracts people.

AS: So everybody would come.

BB: Everybody would come that Friday, it's a burden on us.

BB: When we, if we should run out of things, I've found that, I'll say, well I can run down to the warehouse and get it, but they don't want to wait that long.

BB: You know it takes, it would take me a half hour to get down there, unlock the door, get, sign out the stuff and get it back to the church so.

BB: I try to have things, uh, so that where at the end of the day we have a can or two of this left, we aren't completely out.

BB: I try run the pantry as if I were on the other side of the table.

AS: Ok, try to run it so that you would be comfortable and happy. That's a good philosophy.

BB: Treated as a human being and uh, it's what, that's what, you know, that's the church background, that's my faith background, because we're all God's children.

AS: Do you, about how many people come in each week to get food.

BB: Let's see, what would I say. Fourteen. Fourteen, fifteen.

AS: Ok, does that number vary at all from week to week, or seasonally?

BB: It varies, but I haven't been able to find out why it varies.

AS: Ok, does it vary seasonally for example, are there more people during the holidays?

BB: I haven't, I don't. We've had some months that I thought we'd have a lot more people than we do. I haven't found any relation in that.

AS: Ok. Um, what about the, the people who come in, do notice any kind of characterization, such as ethnicity, family size, whether they're local or not from the area, employment status?

BB: We usually know pretty much family size, the registration slip you tell how many are in the family, and Bev usually alerts, she's sitting near and the table close by and she'll alert this is a family of five.

AS: Ok, and then in that case do they get a little bit more food?

BB: And then we kind of pass it down.

AS: Ok, then in that case do they get a little bit more food?

BB: We try.

AS: Ok, if it's available?

BB: Yeah. If I've only got fourteen cans of tomatoes, then I only give them one cause I want to have a can of tomatoes for the other people too.

BB: That's an issue that, that kind of bothers me a little bit about how you are fair to people.

AS: Right, because it's different for a person, a single person who comes in and get a box.

BB: Somebody comes in and they're a single person, the person in front of them has had, said they have a family of five, and this person doesn't always understand why.

AS: Mm ok, I see, they don't understand why they.

BB: Why they should get more than.

AS: Ok. Do you notice, is there, most of your clients are they small families or large families, or does it just vary a lot?

BB: I think it's a pretty broad spectrum. I think we do have more single people and two couples than we do large families.

AS: What about as far as work status goes? Are most of the people unemployed, or have, maybe if they've been laid off.

BB: I don't know.

BB: I would say that a good majority are unemployed for health reasons or age.

BB: Usually, uh, if we get somebody new they, somebody's come in, and they, they will usually say I lost my job, or something.

BB: But that's really, since Klamath gives out the orange cards, that's really not our, our privilege to know.

AS: Ok, so it's up to the clients whether they want to tell you or not.

AS: Um, what about within the church, do most of the people, or any of the people who come through belong to your particular congregation.

BB: No.

AS: Nobody at all?

BB: Well, I should back up, we have had a couple, but it's been very rare.

AS: When, when that happens, and somebody in your church needs a box, do they usually come to the food pantry or do they usually go to the pastor to get an emergency box?

BB: No, they come to the food pantry.

AS: They come to the food pantry, ok.

AS: And what about the volunteer, do they come from the congregation.

BB: Mostly. But we do have a very faithful gal who's been, who belongs to the Church of the Latter Day Saints who comes over. Um, you've met Jan Wright, she comes over and helps. I have a neighbor down here who helps me out. I've been trying to get more people outside because I feel it's not the Presbyterian Church pantry, it's the pantry at the Presbyterian Church.

BB: It's my, always my theory that, I don't want it to be, even though we provide the Faith and the money that buys the non-USDA food, the fifteen cents a pound on the non-USDA, even though we supply that I still don't want it to be.

BB: And I don't think Faith Center should be Faith Center pantry, it should be the pantry at the Faith Center.

AS: Ok. When you say the fifteen cents a pound, that's the Presbyterian Church itself that pays it?

BB: Yes, but um, we have, we have an account at Klamath-Lake County Food Bank, and they put money in there that is given to that unit, it's (?) to the pantry. So when this invoice is tallied up then they just subtract it. But at first it was a little rough on the church because we didn't have any build up of any funds. But I haven't written a check from the church for a year or so, more than a year or so. And the Ministerial Association sends some money over to Klamath, and puts it into our two accounts I don't know how he.

BB: We got over the hump on that problem when um, do you remember there was the water crisis down in the Klamath Basin?

AS: Yes.

BB: Well the cluster of Presbyterian Churches applies for a grant from the denomination. They got a twenty thousand dollar grant. There are seven churches in this cluster of Presbyterian, and the cluster had a thousand dollars so they made it twenty-one, and they gave, divided it up evenly between the seven churches, and they could do what they wanted to do with that money. Some of them paid medical, some of them helped people with insurance, cause they couldn't make their payment on their insurance. Some of it was to help a student get back to school, because the folks didn't have the fall term money. You could do whatever you wanted to do, it was up to the church. We chose to go the food route. And so the money was, at that time we had three pantries, and the money was divided up at the three pantries on the basis of the amount of boxes that they gave out. And the account was kept at our church. And so I could write check and they could order cases of apple juice if they wanted to, whatever they wanted to do and then they would give me the bill and I would just pay the bill.

BB: So that helped us over the hump with the, the funds for that fifteen cents.

BB: I, I uh, we still have some of the money left. I think Faith Center has used theirs all up, and of course the other pantry divided it up between the other two pantries, they had some money left too.

AS: Ok. Um, going back to the people who volunteer at the church, I spoke with Jennifer Dooley, at the Crisis Center, she said that she comes in quite often and she helps the Hispanic people.

BB: Yeah, she's a great help, she's a wonderful gal. She just wrote us a letter saying that she's going to be the director for a couple of months and she probably won't be in. No, she's been a big help and she. If I want anything put into Spanish she'll do it for me and get it typed up and so. But it's a big help.

AS: How do you think that affects the Hispanic people that come in and they don't speak English, do you think that really helps them.

BB: I think so.

AS: Do think that makes them more willing to come in.

BB: I feel that there's a breakdown, it's a warmer feeling now than it was at first, um, you know it's an individual basis sometimes on people, but um, generally speaking I think they feel more comfortable now than they did at first. Even if Jennifer's not there. Because, uh, they'll laugh at some things, you know, before it was kind of serious and.

BB: And I understand, they didn't know what they were getting into. We could have taken advantage of them, you know, because they didn't know what they were getting into, but now I think, I think there's a trust build up and they'll even, I can even get a smile out of them once in a while.

BB: And we have a fellow, I don't know when he's going to be back, he just had a heart bypass, but he is the host of hostesses, he can make people feel so much at home, and he loves the kids that come in, and he has a bag of candy.

BB: And I can remember when I first heard Ed say to the people who went out the door, thanks for coming, and I thought, Ed, you're thanking them for coming? What a great idea. The opposite of what you think. Most of the people are very, very thankful, and grateful for.

BB: I don't very often hear anybody go out the door without a thank you. And like I say, some tears in their eyes sometimes.

AS: Um, what would you say, what works well within, within the system, within the food pantry. Specifically at the Presbyterian Church, but you can also talk about, if you want to, the food warehouse, the food share, or Klamath-Lake County Food Bank.

BB: Run your question by me again.

AS: What works well within the system that you're working, that you're kind of running down at the Presbyterian food bank, or the food bank, the food pantry at the Presbyterian Church, what is going well that you would not want to change.

BB: Most of it, most of it right now. I think that we have a good relationship and, and I think we work well together, um, we talk, we're honest. I think that's where it's, if you feel something then you're honest with the group and you sit down and hash it out a little bit. Because most of the time it's something you don't understand.

AS: Ok, I see.

BB: I think communication is vital. Good communication is vital, to any organization. And, and the freedom to disagree, um, I don't want somebody, you know, disa-

greeting and not listening to me, what I'm saying, but disagreement doesn't bother me at all.

BB: And most of the time, if I have an idea and they don't exactly like it, by sitting down you put an idea together, it works great.

AS: Um, so do you face any challenges right now?

BB: No, I don't think so. No, I don't think we're facing.

BB: Well, there is a discussion of trying to become a food bank here. I don't call it a crisis or anything, I think it's just a, an intent to improve our service.

AS: And what's your opinion on that, you're, would you like to see it become a food bank or would you like to see it.

BB: I'd like to see it.

AS: You'd like to see it become a food bank?

BB: No, (I'd like to see it stay as it is)

AS: (You'd like to see it stay how it is?)

BB: I just don't feel we have the man-power to do it, to handle.

AS: And would it, it would be the food share that would become a bank or it would be the Presbyterian Church.

BB: No, it would be the food share that would become a food bank.

BB: I, I just don't think they realize the amount of work.

AS: Yeah, it sounded like it was quite a bit when Sharon.

BB: Well Sharon said that too, yesterday down at the warehouse.

AS: Um, are there any changes that you would like to see made at the food pantry?

BB: No, I don't think so.

AS: Ok. Other than maybe some extra volunteers, you had said before, especially some, maybe some younger people to go and get the food from Klamath Falls or.

BB: Oh yes, those are thing you live with with volunteers. You can't expect them to be there at 8 o'clock and leave at 5 o'clock, they're volunteers and you have to respect their time and.

BB: There are times when you don't get coordinated, but those are, those are things that I don't think are unique.

AS: Right, yeah.

AS: Um, what do you see, Bernie, as your role within the community through the food pantry, working through the food pantry.

AS: [long pause] It's a tough question.

BB: (laughs) That's a good question.

BB: I'm probably a leader in the.

BB: People call me, you know, wanting to know, um, so I think that I do play that role of educator. I have, when I'm asked, I go to Soroptomists, and Rotary, or Lions and explain something, or send somebody, to see.

BB: [long pause] I can't think of anything, that covers it for me

AS: Ok. Um, and one last question. What is your view of what the community will be like in twenty years? Do you think it will have changed, do you think it will be the same?

BB: No, I think we're due for a change

AS: Ok, and what do you think that change will be?



BB: A growth, a small growth. I don't see, some people think we're going to grow, but I don't think, I think it'll be a small growth. It's just, hard to.

BB: This is a great community and they pitch in when there's need, and I think that our needs will be always pretty well met, within the community.

BB: It does concern me a little bit about having retirees move in without a balance of young families. I've known other communities that have this problem, and it hurts the schools, not only from an enrollment standpoint, but the interest, and when you need to increase your tax base, the retirees don't want it, they say well we supported our kids, let the younger families support their own. Especially, you know, being a person that's not grown up in the community. I saw that my brother said, when he moved to, um, (?) up in Port Angeles, Port Townsend area. Um, they wanted to put in a big community center, swimming pool, basketball court, meeting room, big complex. But it was hard to sell. Cause they weren't into swimming, and weight lifting, and playing hand ball, and those things. So I, I remember Dick telling, my brother telling me about the struggle, they finally got it built, but they didn't have any measure to maintain.

AS: Oh no.

BB: Which I thought was funny. Not funny, it was almost tragic, get a building, no money to operate the building.

BB: I think, uh, we're slow, I'm, I'm a little bit, uh, concerned about the library because it's so slow. Um, there's been reason for it. Slow but steady I guess, nothing, uh, real fast. Although we did come together in one year and reformed the Booster Club down at the high school for the athletic program and the art, music, extra-curricular activities that were cut. And, uh, in a year or so, one year I think we raised forty thousand dollars. And that, and they, I don't know what they've raised this year.

AS: Ok. When you say we've raised forty thousand dollars.

BB: In the community.

AS: In the community, wow.

BB: I don't think there was any grant money, I don't believe it was any grant money, it was all raised with fund-raisers and the local Ford garage gave us a little Focus, and we sold raffle tickets on the Focus.

BB: Got that established again, I think those programs are very important in a school system.

AS: Yeah. Um, all right, well, that's it for the questions, is there anything else that you'd like to add, that you think people should know about the pantries or about Lakeview before we finish this up?

BB: No, I don't think so.

AS: Ok, ok, all right thank you Bernie.

BB: Well you're welcome.