At Jerry’s restaurant in Lakeview, I contacted Geraldine through the Energy Assistance Program and she agreed to speak about the services that are available to those who need them.

Ashly Stone: This is Ashly Stone, I am with Geraldine Austin and we are at Jerry’s restaurant in Lakeview at around 2:10 in the afternoon on the 26 of July.

AS: All right, so I’m going to start with a pretty simple question, what is your food?

Geraldine Austin: Ice cream [laughs]
AS: Ice cream, ok, that’s a good one.
GA: I know.
AS: Uh, how often would you say you eat it?
GA: Oh, at least, three times a week, or more.
AS: Ok, is it pretty easy for you to get, how readily available is it to you?
GA: When it’s on sale I buy it and keep it in the freezer, otherwise I don’t buy it.
AS: Ok, so only if it’s on sale?
GA: Yeah, it’s my treat.
AS: Ok, sounds like a good one [laughs]
What is your least favorite food?
GA: Least favorite, anchovies, I will not eat them.
AS: Ok, cause I was going to ask you how often you eat it. Never.
GA: No.
AS: What did you eat for your evening meal yesterday?
GA: Um, a Mexican burrito I made at home with taco meat, refried beans, lettuce, what else did I put in that.

[Waitress came and asked if we wanted anything to eat]

AS: So, um, the ingredients, did you buy through the grocery store, were they ones that you grew?
GA: Yeah, no, bought them at the grocery store.
AS: Ok, do you ever.

[Waitress came again]

AS: Do you ever share food with anybody? Do you have people over for dinner or…?
GA: Only my son and daughter-in-law and my two grandsons, but not very often. I usually go up to their house.
AS: Ok, and other than that, do you ever share food, do you ever receive food from other people.
GA: No, no.
AS: Ok, um, kind of thinking of the, this is a little bit of a tough question for some people, but thinking of the food system in the community, as a broad entity, what are three things that you appreciate about the food system in Lakeview? [pause] Um, it can
be the ease in getting food from the grocery store, or the availability of something you
like.

   GA: About the same as any place, I always shop the sales.
   AS: Ok, do you find that there are less or more sales or, as far as prices go?
   GA: I’ve really been surprised that Lakeview’s Safeway has about the same sales
as what Albany had. I’m happy at that.
   AS: Ok, yeah, it’s hard sometimes in a smaller town, there’s not as many.
   GA: No, yeah.
   AS: I understand that people sometimes go to Klamath Falls.
   GA: I do that but not very often.
   AS: Ok. How often would you say you go?
   GA: Oh, if I go once every three months, but I make myself a list, only if it’s
something I don’t have to have right away and I know I can get it, like at Wal-Mart
cheaper then I’ll wait, make myself a list. But sometimes I just need to get out of the
house and have an outing, and that’s my get away. Which I do, I take the camper and I
spend the night and I shop at my leisure.
   AS: Oh ok, well that’s fun.
   GA: And my dogs can go with my.
   AS: Oh fun, very cool.
   Um, ok, so, kind of the other side of the same question, what are three things you
don’t like about the food system in your community, kind of difficult to get, or there’s not
enough of something?
   GA: I really haven’t found any kind of a thing that I can’t get, um, can’t think of it
right now anyway.
   AS: All right, well let me know if you think of anything.
   GA: Yeah, yeah.
   AS: All right. Um, so how, you live, you live alone.
   GA: I do, yeah, I live alone.
   AS: Ok, so, ok, so does all of the food that you eat, do you buy it, do you grow
any of it.
   GA: I grow a garden.
   AS: You do grow a garden.
   GA: I’ve got tomato plants and pumpkin plants this year, and lots of sunflowers,
cause they came up all (?)
   AS: Oh, well that’s pretty.
   GA: The birds are eating good.
   AS: Yeah. So the vegetable that you grow, do you eat them in the fall?
   GA: Oh yeah, the tomatoes I’ll either can them or make salsa out of them.
   AS: Oh, mm, I love salsa. That might be my favorite food.
   GA: Yeah, yeah, homegrown is better too.
   AS: Yeah, I love homegrown tomatoes, very good.
   GA: Yes, yes. Our season’s just a little different down here, sometimes they don’t
ripen like they should and I end up making a tomato relish instead.
   AS: Oh ok, oh, well that’s kind of cool you still do.
   GA: I can’t let it go to waste.
   AS: That’s great (???) (Something about working with short growing season)
GA: Yeah, it is, yeah, I have found that to be an adjustment for me.
AS: Yeah, from the Willamette Valley.
GA: I love to grow a garden, it’s different.
AS: I think we get a little spoiled in the Willamette Valley.
GA: uh huh, definitely.
AS: Um, do you ever face any challenges in getting the foods that you want to eat?

GA: No, not really. Well the price of meat is too high now, I don’t buy steak or groceries like that very often. They say not too eat too much red meat anyway.

AS: Ok, and then, these are a couple of questions, they’re actually USDA questions that we’ve been asking people, um, reading them out loud might be a little bit confusing.

[Asked 1st USDA question]

GA: I have, I have plenty to eat, because I shop the sales and stock up, I always have, I’ve done that all my life. Like I say I may not have steak or roast, but otherwise yeah.

AS: Ok, ok, so you’d say pretty much the first one (enough to eat and type you want), maybe not all the meat you would like.

GA: Yeah, yeah.

AS: Great, um, what has been your involvement with food in the past? Um, gardening, or if you’ve ever worked in a grocery store or a restaurant, or your family, family farmers, anything like that.

GA: I was raised on a farm, milked all the cows.

AS: Ok, a dairy farm?

GA: Dairy farm.

AS: Where was that?

GA: In Lobster Valley, Alsea.

[Talked shortly about Alsea]

AS: So dairy farming, did you grow anything else?

GA: Dairy farming and then my dad decided to grow blueberries one year, but we didn’t make it.

AS: Oh really?

GA: He didn’t last very long in blueberry farming.

AS: So what did you, what did you family, did they sell the milk to butter factories, cheese factories?

GA: When we were over in Lobster Valley, yes, they were selling (???). And, I can’t remember when we moved just outside of Philomath, I went to high school in Philomath, and we had cows (???), not really sure what he was doing with them, but he didn’t sell them, cause he worked for (???) Dairy.

AS: Ok, ok. Do you think he used them for beef?

GA: For beef, yeah.
AS: Great, um, do you have any stories, maybe, connected with your family and food, past, present, any kind of, I mean even funny stories, things that happened to your dad when he was a dairy farmer.

GA: I do know that we had green beans for breakfast, lunch, and dinner there for awhile when we lived down south of Corvallis, that was when I was, before I even started school. We were so poor, we had nothing else in that house to eat but green beans that my mother had canned.

AS: Oh wow, oh that she had canned, ok.

GA: And I swore, I’d never eat another green bean. And you know, when I was pregnant with my daughter, my first child, what did I crave? Green beans.

AS: Green beans really? How funny.

GA: So that’s my funny story.

AS: How funny. Were the green beans that you ate, were they grown by family as well?

GA: Yes, you’d grow a garden and you’d can, and that’s what we lived on for quite awhile [laughing].

AS: Wow. I like green beans but I don’t know about three times a day.

GA: I know it, for breakfast I can’t recommend them.

AS: Yeah, how funny.

AS: Um, are there any special family recipes that you have from your family?

GA: [pause] Um, not really, not any particular one, I cook like my mother did, which is meat and potatoes and gravy, with salad.

AS: So you learned to cook by, by cooking with her?

GA: I did most of the cooking growing up because my mother always had to work out, she was a waitress. It fell to her to help to support the family, and I was the second mom of the kids I guess you’d call it.

AS: Ok. So when you started cooking was it with your mom, or did you kind of figure out how to do that on your own?

GA: She would show me once, and then I’d.

AS: Then you’d figure out from there?

GA: Figure it on my own, yeah.

GA: And oatmeal cookies used to be my favorite food to cook, and my kids won’t eat them now [laughing].

AS: I used to be quite the baker when I was younger, how funny.

Um, is there anyone in your family that currently is involved with food, raising, selling, processing, any kind of food.

GA: No, not really.

AS: Working in a restaurant, anything like that.

GA: No, no. My step dad, who raised me has, he has cattle on his property, but I don’t think he sells them or does anything, they’re more for him to watch.

AS: Ok, um, do you belong to any groups in the community? Rotary, or bowling league.

GA: No, I have (???) I lead a boring life.

AS: Do you find that it’s been hard to get involved with things, coming in, not being born and raised in Lakeview.

GA: Yes, I have found that if you’re not in the quick.
GA: But then, part of that is my own fault because I’m not the type of person to go out and visit people. I take after my mom. And that’s why getting my part-time job was a big help.
AS: You, right, you get out.
GA: I did, I did, yeah, meet a few of the drivers.
AS: Right, ok. And how, I’m sorry I already forgot, how long have you been here?
GA: Four years.
AS: Four years. And what brought you here in the first place?
GA: My son lives here, my two grandbabies. Otherwise I probably wouldn’t be here.
AS: All right.
GA: I’ll be honest. It is a very small town and I could say I find it hard to get acquainted.
AS: Ok. How, do you have any plans, I mean do you plan on staying here?
GA: Oh yes. Property value, when I bought four year ago, it was cheap enough I could buy. I sold the truck my late husband and I had and used that money as the down payment on my home. I’m fortunate enough to be fine in town here, which I could not afford to do up in Albany. I never would have been able to. It’s gone up since I bought mine thank goodness. But no, I plan on keeping my home and staying here.
AS: So, I mean how would you describe your experience so far, it’s been…?
GA: It’s a nice town. I’ve been very comfortable on the street where I live. I have good neighbors, we just visit in the summer time from across the fence, but as far as going to other peoples’ house… it’s my fault though, I don’t do that.
AS: Ok. So, I mean is there anything in particular about Lakeview that you appreciate? That, I mean, what would you think is your favorite thing about living in Lakeview [pause] And you can say you grandkids if you want to.
GA: Well, definitely my family and grandkids.

[Talked about family for a few minutes]

GA: But it is peaceful here. I just bought a bike, or, (???) got a bicycle for my son.
AS: Oh yeah, I need to do that.
GA: Yeah, and I, riding bicycle again, you know, the cars watch out for you. Up there in Albany you’d get thrown over. Or Corvallis. So yes, I feel, I feel like the slower pace I guess.
GA: The one thing that really surprised me was they stopped for the pedestrians.
GA: And when I first moved here I’d just be driving down, never thinking about stopping and then realized, oh, everybody stopped. So now I stop.
GA: But it is a slower pace, I do appreciate that.
AS: And, just out of curiosity, cause it seems, based on other people I’ve talked to, a lot of people, base their kind of social circle on church, kind of.
GA: No, I’ve never attended church, I do believe in God but I figure I can talk to him no matter what.
AS 07-26-07 Interview with Geraldine Austin

[Talked about churches, feels out of place b/c not nice enough clothes etc, but hasn’t tried churches in LV]

AS: Um, I don’t know, if you haven’t been in Lakeview that long, do you know anything about how the farmers and rancher are doing.

[Talked briefly about this, but had no real idea of the current situation of farmer and ranchers in Lakeview]

AS: All right, um. What kind of assistance programs are available that you are aware of in Lakeview, or Lake County even?

GA: Well the heating assistance I have, the food stamps program, um. And of course the Senior Center, but um. I have gone down there a couple of times, just to see what it was like, to be around people, and then I tell myself I’m not that old yet. Later I will probably join in down there, which I think is great.

AS: Yeah, yeah, they do an awful lot down there.

GA: They do.

GA: Yeah, I went down there when I was trying to decide what Medicare program to go with. I went down, they offered a program for helping explain some of that, so I did go down there for that, which I think is great.

AS: It helped you figure out what.

GA: Well, I was even a little more confused, but I did get it figured out.

AS: Always worse right before it gets better.

GA: Yeah, how true, how true.

GA: But I have found that, I had to go to the hospital when I fell down and broke a bone in my hand. The medical care is very good.

AS: That’s what I’ve heard.

GA: I’ve been very pleased with everything.

GA: And then of course I have to go for my commercial drug. Seeing of my age I have to have an exam every year.

AS: Oh, ok. Ok. And what about your grand, are either of your grandchildren in the school system yet or are they too young?

GA: The one went to kindergarten, he’ll be in first grade this next year. And the other one was in a day care, this year he’ll be in kindergarten.

AS: And what has been you impression so far of the educational system here in Lakeview?

GA: I think it’s great, I really do. And I’ve been involved being a school bus driver so I actually have.

GA: Problems on the buses, have to go talk to the principal, kicked a girl off once. High school.

GA: I’ve been real pleased with the school, and I think it’s great for my grandkids to be in a smaller town, they were from Portland. I think that this town to raise kids.

AS: Ok, how did they end up down here? How did your son end up.

GA: My son took over the management of Lakeview Sanitation, yeah, so he, it’s a good opportunity, built their home. Both of them gave up their jobs up there to come down here and take this position, but, I think it worked out really good.
AS: Small town.
GA: Yeah, and like I said, a smaller town, it’s much better to raise kids in.
AS: Yeah.
AS: Are they enjoying it so far?
GA: I think so. My son works too many hours sometimes. He really gets swamped but I think it will all be worth it.
AS: Yeah. That’s good. Um, other than the Energy Assistance, do you receive any other service?
GA: Just the food stamps, that’s it. I did go back on those just for the summer, because of not working during the summertime, and so I decided I was going to go ahead and sign up, and then I debated about driving bus again or not. I’m still a good driver but the kids I have trouble with. I really have a difficult time when they get nasty with me I have a.
GA: Of course that makes (???) I think.
GA: But I do insist that they follow what I say on the bus, I’m responsible, so when they start telling me that they don’t have to do what I tell them to do, I do get up.
GA: And it’s not like I’ve never dealt with it before, I drove school buses for six years when my kids were growing up. So I knew what I was getting back into, but, it’s a pain.
GA: They’ll say anything.
AS: Oh wow, that’s not, that’s hard.
GA: It can be hard but I’ll go ahead and try to work again this year. Until I don’t feel like I’m a good driver. But I drove truck with my husband for 12 years.

[Talked for several minutes about experiences driving truck with her husband]

AS: So in the assistance that you have, what has your experience been?
GA: Been fine, I, like I say, I was a little embarrassed to go in for the food stamps at first, and I was kind of embarrassed to even use them. But, a lot of people tell me, and I’ve also seen other people purchase things with food stamps that I would never think of doing.
AS: Oh really?
GA: Bacon, stuff.
GA: And you know, ok, fine, I’m on food stamps, I’m not going to go up there and buy a T-bone steak. I try, I make it stretch. So I try to do those things and think you know Gerry you’ve earned it. I don’t get that much know that I’m working, but every little bit helps.

[Talked about how food stamps are becoming more acceptable to people]

AS: Do you know where the food comes from, that is eaten in this community? Like do you know where the food, I mean, if it’s local or from.
GA: Probably a lot from California like everybody.
GA: No I really, I don’t question at the store where it comes from, it looks fresh enough to me.
AS: Do you make a point of eating any local food, do you, I mean.
GA: Well when they had the farmer’s market here in town I’d come down. I don’t know if they even had it. I came down and looked through last time they had it. I didn’t buy anything cause I didn’t need anything at that time.

AS: Uh-huh. If it was more readily available, would you have any preference whether you bought local food or food from, like say California.

GA: Well it’s always nice to help out the local businesses and stuff when we can, and help the community.

AS: Right. And (???) do you think that Lakeview could make a, I mean I know they’re working on the community garden up near the hospital. Do you think that’s a viable goal for the community to start growing more fresh fruits and vegetables? We were talking earlier about the short growing season, but a lot of people have been experimenting. At the prison there’s quite a garden, yeah, we went up there yesterday and did a tour, and it’s really impressive, I mean they.

AS: Do you see that as kind for a viable thing for the community?

GA: Well I think everybody’s going to have to start growing their own food here GA: My girlfriend and I were talking about it. I’m very happy I do have a garden plot, as long as I can afford the water, cause I’m on city water, I have to pay for my water. And I like doing that but, I, you know will go over probably (???)

AS: Are there any ways you’d like to change the food things in Lakeview?

GA: No, unless they bring back the farmer’s market I think that.

AS: If it helps the community.

AS: Um, have you, maybe basing this on Albany or anywhere else you’ve heard of, people think, bringing in more local foods, or, in any kind of way. Have you heard anything about that? I mean I know Corvallis, it’s kind of a trend towards local, organic kind of maybe because it’s a university town, have you heard anything about that, maybe when you were in Albany.

GA: I know in Philomath they have the organic gardens, down, don’t even remember the name of the street now.

AS: Ok, I didn’t know that.

GA: But, uh, around here I, I don’t know.

AS: Ok. Ok. Um, is there anything else about the food system in Lakeview that you think is important for people to know about? Just in general, or anything that comes to mind.

AS: I mean anything you think, for someone who’s never been here before, if they’re asking about, how it works.

GA: [Long pause] No, I can’t think of anything. You know, I was surprised that there were two stores here, so there a little competition, which is always nice.