



Food For Thought began as a grassroots organization, and would not be here today without the support of our dedicated volunteers. The two longest serving volunteers, John and Kathy Dennison, both supported FFT for over 30 years. Kathy volunteered in the food bank every Tuesday since her first shift in 1989, and John has done it all – from helping at food drives, picking up donated food, stocking shelves, and helping at events. We recently learned that John and Kathy are leaving Sonoma County to be closer to their grandkids, so we visited with them at home to hear about their decades of service.

“Kathy and I started helping out at Food For Thought in 1989 after attending the showing of the AIDS memorial quilt at the Santa Rosa Fairgrounds. Kathy started first, and I slowly began helping pick up food from food drives and then working at the food drives myself. There were many happy times, and there were also many tough times. We attended a lot of funerals back then.

Food For Thought was and is wonderfully diverse. I had some prejudices I inherited as a kid that I didn't know I had, and spending my time volunteering at FFT changed my life in so many positive ways. It inspired me to speak out when people shared their prejudices with me, educating people, with kindness of course, that love is love.” ~ John, 2023

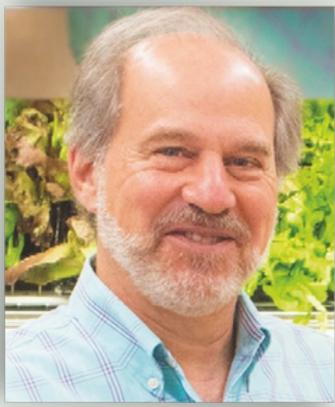
“I showed up for my first shift when Food For Thought was operating out of the Guerneville Senior Center, and then I didn't stop coming back until the COVID pandemic. I am pretty sure they didn't think I would be back, but I keep my promises.

I made so many dear friends volunteering at FFT. Many of them we lost in the early days when there were no treatments. We saw the shift in how AIDS was being treated as new medicines became available. People started to be able to live longer and manage the disease, just like other long-term illnesses such as thyroid disease and diabetes. I'm so grateful for the community we got to be a part of at Food For Thought.” ~ Kathy, 2023

All of us at Food For Thought wish John and Kathy all the best on their new adventure. They are a big part of our history, and their years of dedication to helping our neighbors in need are a testament to the type of people that are drawn to FFT. To honor their legacy and commitment, each year Food For Thought gives a Dennison Award to a volunteer with a decade or more of service to our community.



For more information about becoming a volunteer, contact our Volunteer Program Manager Liv Chaaban at LivC@FFTfoodbank.org or (707) 887-1647 ext. 109



A Message From Ron . . .

For over two decades I have had the privilege to work with our staff and volunteers to steward FFT through periods of enormous growth and change. In 2014 we expanded our mission to serve clients with a variety of medical conditions in addition to HIV. As a result, we were well positioned to respond to the COVID epidemic and served more than 6,000 clients on our

COVID nutrition program. Over the years our client demographics have also changed

The COVID epidemic increased our client counts from 1,000 in 2019 to 5,500 in 2022!

dramatically. Both our expanded mission and COVID have brought even more diversity to the clients we serve. Now, the majority of our clients are people of color, many of whom do not speak English as their first language.

The diversity of FFT staff has also changed. Twenty percent of our staff members are bilingual, and we are hiring a bilingual dietitian – all to better serve our entire client population. As we add members to our board and staff, we actively seek to have our organization be a reflection of the clients we serve.

At our current facility in Forestville, we have had to maximize every square inch of space in order to respond to and serve our growing client base. The COVID epidemic increased our client counts from 1,000 in 2019 to 5,500 in 2022! We were able to manage by hiring additional operations staff, improving efficiency, and improving technology.

The growth of FFT is a reflection of the growing need in Sonoma County. There are still thousands of people in the county that are food insecure, and our goal is to serve more of these people than we do now. Just as in the past, we know our donors and volunteers care deeply about our clients, and will help FFT continue to adapt to the changing needs of our community.

Ron Karp, Executive Director

Ways to Give

Make an Online Donation

You can easily make a tax-deductible gift on our website: [FFTfoodbank.org/donate-now](https://fftfoodbank.org/donate-now)

Become a GEM

Giving Every Month (GEM) is Food For Thought's monthly giving program. GEMs provide a steady monthly source of support to Food For Thought, helping us provide comprehensive nutrition and other services to men, women, and children living with serious medical conditions in Sonoma County. To become a GEM, visit [FFTfoodbank.org/donate-now](https://fftfoodbank.org/donate-now) and select a monthly donation.



“The biggest challenge our community faces is helping those who are hanging on the last rung of the ladder. The dramatic cost of living here is placing a tremendous stress on families and individuals. I can see it each day that I drive home, and with the folks I work with. What I like about Food For Thought is tying in food education into the food bank services. Education is empowerment, and helps people who are struggling to find nutrition without relying on processed foods. We have 40+ years of deprogramming to do with respect to food processing. That is why I am a GEM.”

- Andrew, 2023 New GEM

Legacy Giving

Please consider leaving a legacy gift to Food For Thought. You can easily donate through your will, trust, insurance policy or retirement plan, at no extra cost to you.



Your legacy gift will help feed our future neighbors in need in a profound and lasting way. If you are ready to include Food For Thought in your will or trust today, head to [FFTfoodbank.org/leave-a-legacy](https://fftfoodbank.org/leave-a-legacy).

If you have questions about any of these ways to give, please contact **Ron Karp**, Executive Director, at **(707) 887-1647 ext. 105** or RonK@FFTfoodbank.org



Banana-Blueberry Bread

Ingredients:

2 cups blueberries, fresh or frozen
3 ripe medium bananas, mashed
2 tablespoons unsweetened applesauce
1 1/4 cups white whole wheat flour
3/4 teaspoon baking soda
1/4 teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons butter, softened
1/4 cup brown sugar, packed
1 large egg or two egg whites
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
Baking spray



Instructions:

- Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Lightly spray a 9" x 5" loaf pan with baking spray.
- In a medium bowl, whisk flour, baking soda and salt. Set aside.
- In a large bowl, cream the butter and sugar with an electric mixer. Add egg, bananas, applesauce and vanilla, and beat at medium speed until thick. Scrape down the sides of the bowl as needed to fully incorporate the ingredients.
- Add flour mixture and blend at low speed until combined, do not over mix.
- Fold in the blueberries and pour batter into the prepared loaf pan. Bake on the center rack for 50 to 55 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean.
- Let the pan cool to room temperature before slicing.

Food Drives



Food drives take place all around Sonoma County on the first, second, and third Saturdays of every month. Volunteers enthusiastically greet shoppers, asking for that week's most needed items for the food bank. These events bring people from all walks of life together to support FFT while making meaningful connections and having FUN! Food drives are a great way to volunteer for FFT right in your own neighborhood.

Due to the increasing cost of food, we rely on the generous support of our community to continue meeting the needs of our clients. **Each food drive generates between \$2,500- \$4,500 in food and funds. That breaks down to roughly \$500 per hour!**

Prior to the COVID pandemic, food drives generated over \$300,000 in food and funds, and we are working tirelessly to return this program to its pre-COVID fundraising capacity. Sign up for a shift today and join in the FUNdraising!

"I just think it is kind of fun that people will actually come up to you and ask you what you need. It is FUN to see that people actually care." - Ivy, Cherry Valley Elementary Student

"I like to come to the food drives every time. I really like to see how people's faces light up and smile. It puts a smile on my face too!" - Ruby, Cherry Valley Elementary Student

For more information about Food Drives, contact our Food Drive Coordinator
Amanda Wood at AmandaW@FFTfoodbank.org or (707) 887-1647 ext. 125

Food For Thought Plant Sale

Celebrate Earth Day weekend with us! We invite you to come to the FFT plant sale on **April 22 and 23** and purchase the beautiful organic starts that we are growing in our new greenhouse. We are located at 6550 Railroad Ave., Forestville. All proceeds support Food For Thought programs.

Choose from a wide selection of plants, including vegetables, squash, melons, flowers, herbs, native plants, and more. Many plants are being lovingly grown by Garden Manager, Oliver Evans, along with the help of our amazing volunteers at FFT.

But it's not just about the plants – it's about making a positive impact on our community. By participating in this event, you'll be helping to support us and provide food + love to our Sonoma County neighbors in need.

So, gather your friends and family and join us for a fun day of shopping for plants and giving back.



“I'm excited to help people pick out the best plants for their home gardens. We're growing a range of tried-and-true classics and unique heirloom varieties all suited for Sonoma County, and 100% of the sales benefit Food For Thought!”

~ Oliver Evans, FFT Garden Manager

For more information about the Plant Sale, contact Events Manager, Kristen Power, at KristenP@FFTfoodbank.org or (707) 887-1647 ext. 126



“After I lost 70 pounds, I was referred to Food For Thought. Once a week, there were people delivering nutritious food to me. During my recovery, one of the most difficult parts was loneliness and isolation from people. And to have these kind people coming by, volunteering their time, and bringing the food that I dearly needed, it meant the world to me. I'm at 175 pounds, right where I need to be. Please do anything you can to support Food For Thought.”

~ Hans, FFT Client

Please support our Major Business Sponsors



Food For Thought's mission is to foster health and healing with food and compassion.

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