



Jim's Story: A Lifesaving Connection

In the late 1980s, I was living in San Francisco working as a DJ and managing a nightclub when I tested positive for HIV. I was scared and knew that I really needed to focus on survival. I had vacationed at the Russian River in Sonoma County and thought that the peace and serenity of the area would provide a more healing environment for me.

Making this move turned out to be the best thing that I could have done. In 1991, I was lucky enough to meet a Food For Thought volunteer who introduced me to FFT's executive director, Betsy Van Dyke. She not only helped me enroll in FFT's food program, but also connected me with other key resources for people living with HIV including the Russian River Health Center and Face to Face. This gave me access to an excellent medical team and ultimately to the lifesaving drugs that were starting to become available. I really believe that the nutrition support and the connections that FFT provided helped to save my life.

Over time, I regained some strength and began volunteering at FFT. I helped in several ways from working on fundraising mailings to helping FFT's clients at the food bank counter. Helping others really took me outside of myself. I also served on

FFT's Board of Directors for five years as the client representative and was able to give input about client services.

Food For Thought has been there for me through the ups and down of life. In 2017, I suffered a life-threatening bout of pneumonia. The nourishing food I received really helped me recover. Today, during the pandemic, I am incredibly grateful for FFT. Several years ago, I started a pet sitting business to help supplement my income, but since people haven't really been able to travel during the stay-at-home orders, there isn't much need for the services I offer. This has really impacted my income and ability to purchase healthy food, so the groceries that I am receiving are again a lifeline.

Although living through the pandemic is challenging, I know that I'll get through it. After all, I am a survivor. I understand the need to be flexible and heed health warnings. I also appreciate how a supportive community can make a difference. To me, that community is Food For Thought. Their team of volunteers and staff have always been there to lend a helping hand, and that has made all the difference for me. I am incredibly grateful.

"I really believe that the nutrition support and the connections that FFT provided helped to save my life."

For more information about the HIV Nutrition Program, contact Client Services Director **Nina Redman** at NinaR@FFTfoodbank.org or (707) 887-1647 ext. 119

Ways to Give



A Message From Ron . . .

Finally, more than a year after the COVID-19 pandemic hit Sonoma County, I'm optimistic that we are edging closer to normality. We have all been coping with tremendous challenges, especially for those who lost loved ones. For me, the hardest part has been that many of us have not been able to see friends and family. To go so long without hugs, shaking hands or even a pat on the shoulder is a big loss.

Food For Thought had to make a lot of changes to continue serving our clients this past year, and while necessary, some of them have been hard. To ensure that our facility was safe, we were not able to serve clients inside as we had always done, or even operate the food bank with volunteers. The human connection that clients get from sitting inside, ordering, picking out produce

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and talking with volunteers was completely absent. In spite of that, we did our best by meeting clients at their cars in the parking lot to take their orders, and increasing our ability to talk to delivery clients on the phone.

The pandemic disrupted the lives of our clients as well. Many were fearful knowing that a COVID-19 infection could be severe or even fatal for them. We heard regularly from clients that they were very grateful for our dedication to cleanliness, sanitation and safety.

Born in response to the AIDS epidemic, overcoming challenges to serve those in need has long been a part of Food For Thought's DNA. And as we have always done throughout our organization's history, we have continued to expand to meet the needs of our community. I am incredibly proud to report that we met the moment, quadrupling the number of clients served in 2020, compared to 2019.

We are incredibly grateful to the volunteers who stepped up to meet the increased need for deliveries. Almost 35 volunteers each week have delivered food to clients on routes that span from the Guerneville area to Sonoma, and from Petaluma to Cloverdale. And to the hundreds of volunteers that have pivoted to work from home, help in the garden, host drive-through food drives or support our clients in so many other ways, we thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

And to our donors: because of you, we brought healthy food to more than 4,000 people in need in Sonoma County in the past year. To put it simply, some of these people living with serious illnesses in our community would have gone without food without your generosity.

As we've seen in the fires and floods of the past five years, this is a community that knows how to pull together when things get tough. We will get through this difficult time, and we will get through it together. Thank you for being a part of the Food For Thought community.

In Service,

Ron Karp, Executive Director

Ways to Give

Here are some ways you can help provide food + love to more than 4,000 of our Sonoma County neighbors in need:

Make an Online Donation

You can easily make a gift to Food For Thought on our website: FFTfoodbank.org/take-action

Escrip

Do you shop for groceries at Fircrest, FoodMaxx, Lucky, Oliver's Market, Sonoma Market or Petaluma Market?



Register your phone number or grocery rewards card online with escrip.com and select Food For Thought as your charity of choice. A percentage of your purchases will be donated to FFT at no additional cost to you. Use FFT's group number when you sign up: 500024945.

Questions

If you have questions about any of these ways to give, please contact Mark Green, development director, at (707) 887-1647 ext. 102 or MarkG@FFTfoodbank.org

Circle of Giving



Food For Thought receives donations from thousands of individuals and organizations each year. The generosity of our donors ensures that our clients will continue to have the food they need to be healthy. The Food For

Thought Circle of Giving recognizes this generosity and celebrates the compassion of our incredible donors. To view the list, please visit: FFTfoodbank.org/thanks-to-our-generous-donors

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Banana Nut Protein Pancakes

This protein-rich breakfast recipe is a great way to enjoy a favorite comfort food without the guilt.

Ingredients:

1 cup oatmeal (old fashioned oats work best)
1 cup egg whites
½ cup cottage cheese
2 bananas (or more), divided
1 teaspoon vanilla
1/8 teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons baking powder
Cooking spray or butter for frying
½ cup pecans or walnuts, chopped

Instructions:

Slice one banana into ¼ inch slices and set aside. Combine oats, egg whites, cottage cheese, remaining banana, vanilla and salt in a blender and process until completely smooth. Add the baking powder and blend just until mixed. Heat a nonstick skillet over medium heat and coat with cooking spray or butter. Pour out pancakes from the blender and top each pancake with banana slices and nuts. Cook until the bottoms of the pancakes are golden brown, then flip and cook the other side for a few minutes.



Note: These pancakes last for 3-4 days in the refrigerator and can be reheated in the toaster.

A Look Inside Food For Thought: A Conversation with Operations Director Dave Hall



Sometimes life has a way of dropping you in the place that you most need to be. When I started volunteering at Food For Thought in 2009, I never imagined that I would end up in charge of operations at a nonprofit, serving people living with serious illnesses, during the biggest health and food shortage crises the country has ever faced. I realize that both my professional background and even my personal struggles led me to FFT and this moment in time.

Prior to working at FFT, I had a 25-year career in the grocery industry. I picked up important skills that would prove invaluable later in helping me to oversee FFT's operations.

Although my career progressed and I achieved a level of professional success, I was battling some personal issues, including addiction. In 2008, I was committed to getting sober. I decided to move to Santa Rosa to be closer to my mother. Once there, I spent some time in rehab where I learned a great deal about my own and other people's challenges with substance abuse, and the importance of finding the right supportive environment.

I knew I wanted to do something that would make a difference and help others. I started my own small business doing everything from working as a photographer to odd jobs. I also began volunteering at Canine Companions. Luckily, through my work there I met Elisa Baker, a current FFT Board Member, who was then working at the agency. She encouraged me to sign up to help out in the food bank.

I was also happy to be helping people living with HIV. I had tested positive for HIV in 2005 and I'd learned how important eating healthy food was for people living with the virus. Being part of the FFT community connected me with an important cause that was a good fit for my skill set and values. Since I was HIV-positive, I was

also able to become a client and receive nutrition services and healthy food, which I really needed.

In 2012, I was hired to be the Food Program Manager at FFT. I was able to put my professional experience to work and help improve operations. I owe a huge debt of gratitude to FFT's volunteers, clients and staff. I brought my skills to the job, but many of the ideas for improving services came from others. I appreciated the management aspect of the job, but what I enjoyed most was serving clients. I liked spending time with them and learning more about their personal stories. I always tried to make time to connect and offer support or have a laugh with them.

In March of 2020, everything changed. COVID-19 had spread to Sonoma County and we knew that we would have to make some big operational changes to keep our clients, volunteers and staff safe. It was so important to everyone working at FFT that there was no interruption in client services. We had to look at everything and figure out what adjustments could be made quickly. We developed safety protocols based on the guidelines provided by health officials. We set up curbside ordering and pick up for the clients in the parking lot. We also had to suspend volunteer shifts in the food bank. This was especially important to keeping the facility safe.

By May, FFT had launched its COVID-19 Nutrition Program to serve people with a positive diagnosis. This program had a big impact on Food For Thought. As the virus spread, demand for our

services has more than quadrupled. We are constantly restocking shelves and filling client orders. We also have expanded our team of dedicated delivery drivers and added several new routes. We are grateful that many of the volunteers that previously

worked inside our building became delivery drivers and that some new faces joined the team.

It has been a challenging year, but the sense of teamwork has been incredible. Today, we are still busy serving clients, but I'm hopeful about the future. Vaccinations are underway in Sonoma County and like everyone else, I am looking forward to a time when we can all safely be together again. I know that I am right where I need to be. I've always appreciated being part of FFT's team and am grateful to be serving residents of Sonoma County living with serious illnesses at this critical moment in time.

"It has been a challenging year, but the sense of teamwork has been incredible."



Why I Give: Evan Wright

I first learned about Food For Thought through my friend John Hershey, a photographer who was donating his time at an FFT fundraising event. I was new to Sonoma County and involved in the visual arts, so he asked me to come along and help.

From there my involvement with FFT grew. I participated and contributed to their annual fundraising event, Dining Out For Life. I also regularly volunteered at FFT's antique store. I did everything from hauling furniture to creating visual displays to highlight the unique items available for purchase. I really enjoyed the work and the fact that my involvement with

FFT connected me with talented, like-minded people in the community who sincerely wanted to make a difference.

In addition to volunteering, I also began making monetary donations. From the start I was impressed with FFT's work to foster health and healing with food and compassion. It just tears me up to think of anyone going without food, especially someone living with a serious illness. I am happy that FFT expanded its mission several years ago. When I first started volunteering, the agency provided services to clients living with HIV. Since then, the mission has broadened to help people living with other illnesses including congestive heart failure and now, individuals who have received a positive COVID-19 diagnosis.

I think that it is inspiring for a charitable organization to be aware of what is going on in the community and to provide help to those who really need support.

"It just tears me up to think of anyone going without food, especially someone living with a serious illness."

FFT is a very well-run organization and I am confident that every dollar I donate goes into feeding our neighbors in need. Due to the pandemic, food insecurity is at an all-time high and right now I can't think of a better way to support our community than by donating to FFT.

Diana Laczkowski 1949-2021



We recently said goodbye to a dear friend. Diana will be remembered as a passionate, skilled and incredibly caring member of our community.

Diana volunteered with Food For Thought for many years, and there wasn't much that she wouldn't do to support our clients. She donated her time as a human resources consultant, and could also be spotted delivering groceries to clients, holding food drives, helping out at events and staffing our antique store.

After joining our board of directors in 2012, Diana served as board president from 2016-2019. Her leadership skills were another gift to the organization, and she served as a mentor to many of us at Food For Thought.

More than anything else, Diana brought kindness and warmth to our Food For Thought community, and we will miss her dearly.

Join us for a special evening benefiting Food For Thought



Sunday, June 13 at 7:00 p.m.

For more information: [FFTfoodbank.org/our-virtual-table-home](https://fftfoodbank.org/our-virtual-table-home)

This livestreamed event features options for delicious food and wine by delivery and a great online auction. Enjoy music, inspiring speakers and opportunities to interact with other guests all from the comfort of your home!

Your support helps feed 4,000 people living with HIV, COVID-19 and other serious illnesses in Sonoma County.

Questions? Please contact Mark Green at (707) 887-1647 ext. 102 or MarkG@FFTfoodbank.org

Thanks to our Corporate Sponsors



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

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