



John's Story: The Road to Recovery



In 2015, John's health started deteriorating. Over the next four years, he suffered four heart attacks and multiple bouts of pneumonia, while also trying to manage his diabetes. By 2017, John's health was so poor that he had to leave his job as a machinist. "I really loved my job, but after my third heart attack my boss, who was also a personal friend, told me that I needed to retire and focus on my health," said John.

After leaving his job, John was living on social security and trying to make ends meet. "I knew it was important for me to try to eat healthy. I picked up food at local food pantries, but it was difficult to get nutritious food. I really had no choice but to eat what was provided, which was often loaded with fat, salt and sugar."

In 2018, John suffered his fourth heart attack. "I really didn't think I'd make it much longer. I started giving things away—even my prized coin collection." His health continued to decline. "I knew that the medications I was taking wouldn't work well if I wasn't getting proper nutrition, but I just couldn't afford to purchase fresh produce and the high-quality protein sources I needed to improve my health."

In February of 2020, John developed a lesion on his big toe which, due to diabetes, worsened to the point that he needed to be hospitalized at Healdsburg District Hospital. "While I was hospitalized, my health started improving because I finally had access to nutritious food." During his seven-day visit, John met with the hospital's dietitian and she told him about Food For

"The connection with Food For Thought was a godsend for me."

Thought's Welcome Home Program. The program provides three months of healthy food and nutrition education to Sonoma County residents who are discharged from a medical facility and are at risk of malnutrition. The goal of the program is to help individuals recover and to reduce hospital readmissions.

"The connection with Food For Thought was a godsend for me," said John.

"Having access to all the fresh fruits and vegetables, healthy grains, quality meats and fish was amazing. It really helped me recuperate and gain strength. I especially enjoyed the Loving Spoonful soups. They were so delicious and full of nutritious ingredients."

John appreciated the expertise, kindness and friendliness of the FFT team. "The dietitian, Nina was wonderful. She understood my health issues and created a tailor-made diet for me," said John. He also credits his volunteer delivery driver with helping him recover. "My delivery driver was always polite and punctual. I started receiving services just before the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Having groceries brought to my doorstep not only helped me stay off my injured foot, but it kept me out of the grocery stores and helped limit my risk of exposure to the virus."

FFT's Welcome Home Program really made a difference for John's overall health. A recent visit to his general practitioner revealed that both his sodium and glucose levels had really improved. "Food For Thought really saved my bacon...although I don't recommend eating it," said John.

For more information, contact:

Client Services Director **Nina Redman** at NinaR@FFTfoodbank.org or (707) 887-1647 ext. 119

Ways to Give



A Message From Ron . . .

As we pass six months of the Coronavirus pandemic, we are all well aware of how much it is disrupting our lives, and the emotional toll that we are carrying. I especially miss seeing friends and playing music, but even more, I am wondering how I will be able to visit my family and my 96-year-old mother in Atlanta.

My problems seem insignificant in comparison to those who have lost jobs, been infected with

COVID-19 or have lost friends and family members. This is a time for us to remember how much we cherish our community, and what we can do to help each other manage our lives until this pandemic is under control.

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The founding values of Food For Thought center on kindness and respect for all people—clients, volunteers, donors and members of the community. Now more than ever, being mindful of these values can make a difference in our interactions with others. From wearing a mask to taking a moment to consider that another person’s point of view may differ from our own, we can show kindness and respect for one another.

In this issue, we highlight how the agency is making a difference in the lives of our clients suffering from serious illnesses. Our cover story highlights how our Welcome Home Program offered much needed assistance for one client by providing healthy food he desperately needed to aid in his recovery. The update about FFT’s COVID-19 Nutrition Program highlights how nutritious meals for individuals and their household members in isolation are critical to their recovery and the safety of the community.

Lastly, the feature story about FFT’s beautiful organic garden is a bright spot. It focuses on our sustainability practices and how the garden helps provide our clients with physical and emotional sustenance.

I am incredibly grateful to our staff, volunteers and donors for all the contributions made during these difficult times. Your support makes all the difference in our efforts to provide food, kindness and compassion to our clients.

Be well & stay safe!

Ron Karp, Executive Director

Here are some ways you can help provide food + love to more than 1,000 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](https://fftfoodbank.org/take-action)

Monthly Giving

By becoming a Food For Thought GEM (Giving Every Month) donor, you provide us with predictable funding, allowing us to plan for the future. Your monthly contributions play a major role in providing nutritious food + love to our neighbors in need all year long!

To sign up, go to:

[FFTfoodbank.org/take-action](https://fftfoodbank.org/take-action) and select MONTHLY below DONATION FREQUENCY.

Leave a Legacy

You can make a lasting impact by designating a gift to FFT as part of your estate plan. To learn more about joining our Legacy Giving Circle visit: [FFTfoodbank.org/leave-a-legacy](https://fftfoodbank.org/leave-a-legacy)



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.

2019 Annual Report Available

Although it seems like ancient history, 2019 was an outstanding year for Food For Thought. Our dedicated volunteers and highly effective staff worked together to make the year one of our most productive ever. We are incredibly grateful to our donors and volunteers, who went the extra mile in providing much needed funding to help us serve our clients. In addition to continuing to offer our HIV Nutrition Program and Medically Tailored Meals Program for people with congestive heart failure, we launched two unique programs to improve health outcomes and serve people in severe need. Welcome Home, which serves people who have just been released from the hospital and are at risk of malnutrition. Bags of Love, a specially tailored food support program for homeless people who are struggling with a serious illness. We partner with local health providers to provide these very vulnerable individuals with nutritious food. We also debuted a new gala event, Our Long Table, and had our most successful Dining Our For Life event. The agency did however face some significant challenges. We were forced to close for a week due to the devastating fires and PG&E power outages in October, and our food bank lost thousands of dollars' worth



You can view the PDF online or download and print a copy.

Please visit: [FFTfoodbank.org/newsletters](https://fftfoodbank.org/newsletters)

Food For Thought is a non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation. Our Federal Tax ID is 68-0181095.



Garden Fiesta Taco Salad

FFT's garden is bursting with delicious tomatoes. This tasty taco salad is a great way to enjoy this seasonal favorite.

Ingredients:

For the dressing:

- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1-2 tablespoons lime juice
- 1 tablespoon (or more) chopped cilantro
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 clove garlic, finely chopped
- Salt and pepper to taste

For the salad:

- 4 medium tomatoes, diced
- 2 hearts romaine (or one head), chopped
- 1/2 cup grated cheddar cheese
- 2 ounces baked corn tortilla chips (optional)

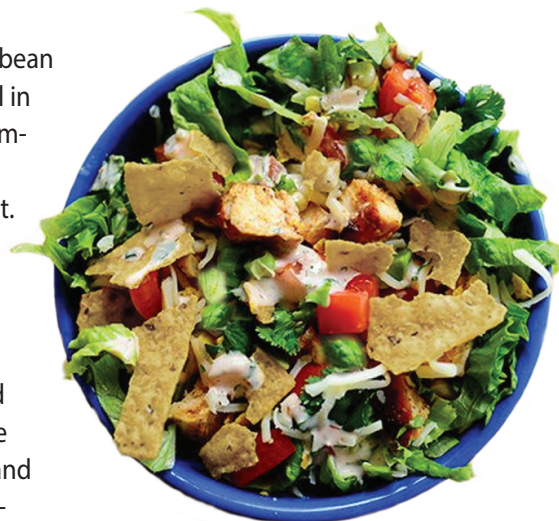
For the meat and bean topping:

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 3/4 pound lean turkey (or turkey burger patties)
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 small onion, diced
- 1 can black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 tablespoon chili powder
- 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1/3 cup water

Instructions:

To prepare the meat and bean topping, heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the onion and cook until translucent. Add the meat and cook until no longer pink, stirring occasionally and breaking meat up with a spoon. Add the garlic and beans and cook two more minutes. Add the spices and water and cook until well-combined and some but not all the liquid has been absorbed. Remove from heat and allow to cool slightly.

Meanwhile, dice the tomatoes, chop the lettuce and grate the cheddar cheese, and put in a salad bowl. Whisk together all the dressing ingredients and set aside. Once the meat and bean topping has cooled, toss with salad ingredients and dressing.



COVID-19: Essential Nutrition for Individuals and Families in Isolation

In May, Food For Thought received a call from the Public Health Department requesting help providing food for an individual who tested positive for COVID-19. Recognizing the importance of providing these very vulnerable people as well as their families access to healthy food to support their immune systems, we quickly developed a program to provide them with nutrition support.

By the end of July, we were providing groceries to more than 350 people in the COVID-19 Nutrition Program. This is a tremendous increase, and demand for the program continues to grow. Unfortunately, here in Sonoma County, we see inequity and disadvantage playing out in the context of the pandemic. **95% of our**

"We are so very thankful for the food, love and support."

COVID-19 Program clients are Latino, while only 27% of the county's residents are Latino. And overall, 75% of the county's COVID-19 infections are in the Latino community.

According to Melissa Tarzia, FFT's bilingual client service coordinator, the clients that the agency serves are very appreciative of the support. One client, Maria, who broke down in tears on the phone, said that she was "so very thankful for the food, love and support."

The clients are also grateful that FFT acted so quickly to get the program into place, "I am feeling much better this week, thanks to your healthy fruits and



Melissa taking orders for COVID-19 Nutrition Program

vegetables! I contacted several community networks for help. I am out of work and you guys were the only one to get us help right away. We are so incredibly grateful and feel like we can stay safe at home because of your food," said Eduardo, a COVID-19 Nutrition Program client.

COVID-19 Nutrition Program Specifics

Food For Thought is currently receiving most referrals from the Public Health Department, but we encourage anyone with a positive COVID-19 diagnosis who is at risk of malnutrition to reach out directly. FFT's Client Services Director Nina Redman, who is a registered dietitian, then conducts a phone intake and evaluation.

"During the intake process, we really try to get a complete picture of the unique challenges that the individual and the household faces," said Redman. "In some cases, in addition to providing food for the entire family, we are also providing diapers. The goal of the program is to help people isolate while they are ill and contagious. This not only helps them stay focused on their health, but it also reduces the risk of the spread of the virus to the community."

After the phone evaluation is completed, the person can begin receiving groceries or prepared meals within two business days. Groceries and/or meals for others living in the client's home including partners, children and others are also provided and delivered to the client's home anywhere in Sonoma County. For more information about the COVID-19 Nutrition Program, visit, [FFTfoodbank.org/covid-19-food-program](https://fftfoodbank.org/covid-19-food-program).



Spotlight on Food For Thought's Garden

A Conversation with Garden Manager Sorrel Allen



At Food For Thought, we believe that food is medicine! The organic food we grow and harvest from our garden is so alive and full of flavor and nutrients, and it contributes greatly to our clients' healing process. There is so much love that goes into growing and harvesting food from the garden. Many of our clients feel that it provides them with physical and spiritual healing.

When clients arrive at FFT, they are immediately greeted by an incredibly vibrant and beautiful display of blossoms, butterflies, plants and volunteers. The garden instantly connects clients to a larger community. This is the first step in helping our clients, who are suffering from serious illnesses, feel a sense of dignity and support. It is a welcoming and safe place for clients to sit, walk or lend a hand. Many clients have told us how much visiting the garden brightens their day.

In the summer and fall months, FFT's magical garden is bustling with activity, as Sorrel Allen, garden manager, educator and herbalist, spearheads its cultivation and care. With the help of a team of dedicated volunteers, she oversees planting and harvesting of crops that nourish FFT's clients.

Volunteers, or "garden fairies," are the heart of the garden. The dedicated hands and hearts of our volunteers make everything possible, and rain or shine they lovingly and joyfully tend the crops that are shared with our clients. The garden is therapeutic for our volunteers as well. Our staff and clients so appreciate their support, and their efforts are essential.

Vision & Sustainable Practices

Sorrel shares her thoughts about what makes FFT's garden so extraordinary.

FFT is a place where clients and volunteers feel nurtured on every level, a place that physically and metaphorically encourages care for the land and care for one's own body. We

provide our clients with the healthiest produce grown in rich, fertile soil by happy, welcoming volunteers.

FFT's permaculture garden is designed to mimic natural systems, in which nothing is considered waste. Instead, everything is a resource. We practice biointensive agriculture, focusing on achieving maximum yields on our acre of land, while increasing biodiversity and sustaining soil fertility. As a result, our garden is highly productive.

Our garden combines edible landscaping with extensive fruit trees, berries and vines. We turn all food waste into incredibly rich compost and worm castings that feed our soil. We practice cover cropping, crop rotation, seed saving and mulching to retain moisture and protect the soil in our beds.

The decision about what to grow is one that is made collaboratively by the FFT team. The food bank is generously supported by many local farms so we aim to grow unique crops, that might not be donated and would be expensive to purchase. The garden has deep roots that are intertwined with Occidental Arts and Ecology Center (OAEC). Throughout the history of the garden, OAEC has provided seeds and plant starts as well as labor and inspiration.

We produce highly diverse heirloom plant varieties and fresh organically grown crops like strawberries, artichokes, asparagus, raspberries, herbs, salad mix, edible flowers and sugar snap peas. In our garden, we nurture fruit trees that provide an abundance of fruits such as Asian and European pears, peaches, elephant heart plums, cherries, pomegranates, figs, guavas, oranges, mandarins and lemons. Thanks to our incredibly fertile soil, our microclimate and the vegetable starts donated by local nurseries including OAEC, Harvest for the Hungry and Emerisa Nursery, we produce the most outstanding varieties of heirloom tomatoes and peppers.

Photo Credits: Sorrel Allen and Lisa Rose



The garden is home to Sonoma County's only AIDS memorial. Visitors have inscribed the names of a loved one onto copper leaves that hang from the trellis and flutter to make a gentle sound in the wind.



SAVE THE DATE: THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3rd
TAKE OUT. DINE IN. GIVE BACK.



With the current health risks posed by COVID-19, Food For Thought is turning the tables on our annual Dining Out For Life event and inviting you to "Dine In" with restaurant take-out and support our important work with an online donation. While this event has changed, the need for our essential nutrition services remains the same.

This year our generous restaurant partners are not in a position to donate a percentage of their sales to Food For Thought, so your support is more important than ever!

You can help support this event by ordering take-out and donating on Thursday, December 3 or by volunteering as a Virtual Ambassador. For more information please visit, FFTfoodbank.org/dining-in-for-life.

Questions about this event? Please contact Dominique Petersen at (707) 887-1647 ext. 126 or DominiqueP@FFTfoodbank.org

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

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