



Client Story: Genesis A Family Matter

Photo Credit: Google Images

One evening in mid-August, Genesis and her brother were feeling terrible. “We both had the chills, a fever, and had lost our sense of smell and taste. All the typical COVID-19 symptoms,” said Genesis. Fearing that they might have contracted the virus, they went to the hospital around midnight. “It was really scary. It is one thing to watch the news reports on television, and another thing to be at the hospital and have doctors and nurses in protective gear examining you. We were there for an exhausting six hours before they released us. We both tested positive.”

Genesis and her brother couldn't believe they had the virus. “Our family had been so careful. We had stayed home, and everyone wore a mask when they went out. But there had been one small get-together with a few members of our extended family. I think that is how we got the virus. We were all wearing masks and practiced social distancing, but despite these precautions, everyone got sick. It's just so contagious.”

Very quickly after the visit, the virus spread to all five family members in Genesis' home. “My brother and I had flu-like symptoms, but it was even worse for my older sister, mother and father,” said Genesis. “My dad, who has a heart condition and diabetes, had to be hospitalized due to complications from the virus. We were all very anxious about his health and the doctors warned us that he might not make it.”

Meanwhile, everyone in the household was struggling to regain their health. “At first, we were so sick that we

had to rely on friends to bring us prepared meals. It was an extremely challenging period. We were so worried about my dad, and we also had to focus on recovering as well. It was such a relief when the Public Health Department connected us with Food For Thought and we learned about the free nutrition and grocery delivery service,” said Genesis.

“My mom and dad usually do most of the cooking, so I really appreciated that the healthy food provided by FFT helped inspire me to do meal planning for the family.

Fortunately, my father recovered from COVID-19 and came home. I honestly believe that the nutritious food that we received made a big difference. I was able to work with FFT's client services team to make sure that he had the right diet to address his other health concerns.”

Today, everyone in the household has recovered from COVID-19.

Genesis, who studies behavioral psychology at Santa Rosa Junior College and works as a behavior assistant at Santa Rosa City Schools, credits Food For Thought with helping her family pull through in an extremely difficult time. “FFT is a very thoughtful organization,” said Genesis.

“Being a psychology student, I can't help but think about Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Food is one of the most basic physiological needs and Food For Thought made sure that this was taken care of for us, and that we did not have to face this family health crisis alone. We are so incredibly grateful for the help we received.”

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For more information about the COVID-19 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 . . .

As I write this, PG&E is preparing for another public safety power shutoff due to a forecast of high heat and winds. With COVID-19, two fires and a consequential election coming up, I wonder how much more we can handle.

While not all of us have lost friends or family to COVID, lost our home or lost our job, all of us are experiencing loss from the enormous changes to our lives. I am grateful to have a job where I can be of service to people in the community who need support.

I know everyone on our staff feels the same way. When the pandemic arrived in Sonoma County in March, so many things shifted at Food For Thought. We quickly realized that it would not be possible to maintain a COVID-free

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work environment with scores of clients and volunteers coming into the building each day. New staff members were hired to replace the volunteers working in the building and the kitchen. We had to cancel our regular food drives and create new virtual events to replace Our Long Table and Dining Out For Life. These changes dramatically increased our expenses and lowered our income, and I wondered how Food For Thought would be able to respond to the increased needs of our clients.

Fortunately, there was an astonishing outpouring of support from our donors and volunteers, as well as grants from foundations and government agencies. We have been able to serve more than 1,400 clients and almost double the amount of food we distribute each week. Volunteers have really stepped up by delivering to clients all over the county (31 separate routes), staffing our drive-thru food drives, doing administrative work at home, and growing and donating food.

In this issue, we highlight how much of a difference you are making in people's lives. In the cover story, a client shares how the healthy food provided by our COVID-19 Nutrition Program aided her entire family's recovery from the virus. The feature about FFT's Loving Spoonful Program gives a behind-the-scenes look at how nutritious and delicious house-made food items are prepared for clients by FFT's dedicated team. Lastly, the Why I Give story by one of our donors highlights how the act of giving helped him feel connected to and have an impact in the greater community.

During this season of giving, I greatly appreciate your generous support. There are many ways you can continue to help our clients—by making a cash donation, volunteering at one of our upcoming holiday food drives, or contributing to our Virtual Holiday Food Drive or Dining In For Life. All of these will ensure that our clients receive healthy food through the holidays and beyond.

May this holiday season provide you and your families peace and comfort.

Ron Karp, Executive Director

Ways to Give

Here are some ways you can help provide food + love to more than 1,400 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), 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 your 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.

Gifts of Stock

Food For Thought accepts gifts of securities, including donated shares of both publicly and privately held corporations, stock options and shares of mutual funds.



To make a stock gift, notify your broker that you wish to transfer securities into Food For Thought's brokerage account at TD Ameritrade. You will need to give your broker the following information:

Account Name:
Food For Thought
P.O. Box 1608
Forestville, CA 95436

Account Number: 929032001
DTC Number: 0188
Tax ID: 68-0181095

Questions

If you have questions about any of these ways to give or to let us know that you have initiated a stock gift to FFT, please contact Mark Green, development director, at (707) 887-1647 ext. 102 or MarkG@FFTfoodbank.org.

Please support our Major Business Sponsors:



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



Mushroom Barley Soup

This hearty and healthy Loving Spoonful soup from FFT's kitchen is the perfect start to a holiday meal!

Ingredients:

1/2 ounce dried porcini mushrooms
6 tablespoons unsalted butter or oil
1 medium onion, diced
3 cloves garlic, minced
3/4 pound fresh mushrooms, trimmed and thinly sliced
2 stalks celery with leaves, diced
1 large carrot, peeled and diced
1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley
1 tablespoon all-purpose wheat or brown rice flour
1 quart beef or vegetarian broth
3/4 cup barley, rinsed
2 teaspoons kosher salt
Freshly ground black pepper

Instructions:

Put the dried mushrooms in a bowl and cover them with 2 cups of boiling water, and soak for 1 hour. Strain the mushrooms through a cheesecloth-lined sieve into a bowl. Reserve the liquid. Coarsely chop the mushrooms and set aside.

Melt the butter or oil in a large, heavy stockpot over medium-high heat. Add the onions and sauté until softened, then add the garlic and sauté until fragrant, about 2 more minutes. Add the fresh mushrooms, celery, carrot and half of the parsley, and sauté until the mushrooms are golden, about 10 minutes. Stir in the flour until well blended. Add the mushroom soaking liquid, soaked mushrooms, broth and 4 cups of water. Stir in the barley, salt and pepper.

Bring to a boil, stirring frequently. Reduce the heat to low and simmer until the barley is tender, about 30 to 40 minutes. Adjust the seasoning with more salt and pepper if necessary. Sprinkle with the remaining parsley before serving.



Loving Spoonful Program: Making a Difference

Ruth Lefkowitz has worn many hats during her career: culinary entrepreneur, pastry chef, garden coordinator, volunteer manager and former Food For Thought board president, but the one she enjoys most is that of chef. She currently leads the Loving Spoonful



Ruth Lefkowitz: Kitchen Program Coordinator

Program team that prepares the delicious and nutritious menu selections for FFT's clients.

Launched in 2017, the Loving Spoonful Program was started to encourage people to try healthy foods and build community. "We not only made soups and items like chopped vegetables to include in grocery orders, but

we also offered a congregate lunch program three days a week at FFT's Forestville facility for clients and their guests," said Ruth.

When the pandemic hit, FFT had to suspend the in-person lunch for safety reasons. "We really miss being able to visit with our clients, but we quickly adapted the program to make sure that they could still receive house-made items," said Ruth. "Instead we began packing up the soup, salads and other food items in to-go containers and distributing them in the food orders. Client response has been incredibly positive. People appreciate having a selection of healthful items to include in their meals."

In planning the menu items, Ruth carefully considers what goes into each recipe. "At FFT, we believe that food is medicine. I really focus on creating nutrient-rich, low-sodium dishes including a variety of vegetables and high-quality protein sources such as legumes, turkey or chicken," said Ruth. "It is our mission to help

clients enjoy eating a healthy ingredient that they didn't think they liked such as kale, broccoli or mushrooms. It is very gratifying when someone tells us they liked a particular dish with an ingredient that is new to them."



Ruth and her team especially appreciate being able to incorporate the crops grown in FFT's onsite organic garden. We are proud to grow an abundance of fresh fruit, sugar snap peas, herbs, peppers, zucchini, tomatoes and many other vegetables. "Having the garden not only allows FFT to offer these seasonal options to clients to cook with themselves, but also through the Loving Spoonful Program, we can use these wholesome ingredients to prepare hearty soups and stews that can be frozen and enjoyed during the winter months."

For safety reasons, FFT also had to suspend volunteer involvement in the kitchen due to the pandemic. To fill the void, FFT hired additional kitchen staff. "We were very fortunate that Coby Leibman, who formerly ran the program, was available to work with us along with some additional new staff members," said Ruth. "But we really do miss our hardworking volunteers. Many of them have professional culinary experience or are accomplished home chefs. The spirit of teamwork was incredible, and we look forward to the day when we can welcome them back to the kitchen."

Looking to the future, Ruth, who has a Master of Arts with a focus on community food systems from Sonoma State University, knows she is in the right place. "I am really grateful to be at FFT doing what I love, especially during these challenging times. To me there is nothing more important than providing food and compassion to people suffering from serious illnesses."

Help Us Provide Holiday Meals for FFT's Clients!

Every year, Food For Thought's clients receive everything they need to make a festive holiday meal. We would love your help providing them with all the trimmings! You can donate through our Virtual Holiday Food Drive on our website: [FFTfoodbank.org/virtual-food-drive](https://fftfoodbank.org/virtual-food-drive).



Why I Give: John Book



I first learned about Food For Thought through my employer and then donated to the organization via United Way's annual fund drive. When I discovered that FFT supports people living with HIV, I was intrigued and was inspired to make regular donations.

Nutrition is important. If healthy choices aren't available, people will eat the unhealthy food that is available. I am the same way. I find it helps to keep the fridge stocked with healthy food so there are no bad choices for snacks or meals. Food has always been a centerpiece of family gatherings. Weddings, birthdays and funerals all include a shared meal. It helps build community.


I really appreciate that FFT is stepping up during the COVID-19 crisis to provide food to families in need and support the local community. I believe it is important to stay up to date and help our neighbors suffering from serious

illnesses. During the initial days of COVID, I felt a sense of despair. Staying home to stop the spread of the virus may be the best way to halt a pandemic, but the lack of action left me feeling helpless. Donating to local causes allows me to take action and help ease the pain and suffering that everyone is experiencing in 2020.

I've had a quote from Albert Einstein on my office wall for many years. "Only a life lived for others is a life worthwhile."

I've been very fortunate in my life. Yes, I've worked hard. I never had an allowance growing up and I paid for my own college education. Many would say that I've earned my success. However, no matter how hard I've worked, I am, and you are, a product of circumstance. As such, I believe we have a moral obligation to give to those in need. Especially when so many people in our community need help.

"Donating to local causes allows me to take action and help ease the pain and suffering that everyone is experiencing in 2020."




DINING OUT FOR LIFE
SONOMA COUNTY

**THURSDAY,
DECEMBER 3, 2020**

Order takeout from these restaurants on Thursday, December 3rd and make a donation to support Food For Thought online at FFTfoodbank.org/difl or by texting **FUNFFFT** to 44-321.




<p>BODEGA BAY Bluewater Bistro Ginochio's Kitchen Terrapin Creek The Tides Wharf & Restaurant</p> <p>CLOVERDALE The Trading Post Restaurant</p> <p>COTATI Mi Pueblo</p> <p>FORESTVILLE Canneti Roadhouse Italiana Sunshine Coffee Roasters</p> <p>GEYSERVILLE Catelli's</p>	<p>GRATON Underwood Bar and Bistro Willow Wood Market & Cafe</p> <p>GUERNEVILLE boon eat + drink Koala's Fine Food</p> <p>HEALDSBURG Baci Cafe & Wine Bar KinSmoke Mateo's Cocina Latina Pizzando Spoonbar</p> <p>KENWOOD Salt & Stone</p>	<p>PETALUMA Cafe Zazzle Dempsey's Restaurant & Brewery Cucina Paradiso Ristorante Italiano</p> <p>ROHNERT PARK Amy's Drive Thru Hana Simmer</p> <p>SANTA ROSA Carmen's Bistro & Bar Dierk's Midtown Cafe Dierk's Parkside Cafe Franchettis' Gasthaus Goji Kitchen Jackson's Bar & Oven JoJo Restaurant & Sushi Bar Mac's Deli & Cafe Pizza Gourmet</p>	<p>SANTA ROSA (CONTINUED) Ricky's Eastbound Russian River Brewing Co. Sazon Peruvian Cuisine SEA Noodle Bar SEA Thai Bistro The Spinster Sisters Three Leaves Foods Walter Hansel Wine & Bistro Yeti Restaurant Zoftig Eatery</p> <p>SEBASTOPOL Bar B Que Smokehouse Bistro Fern Bar Fork Roadhouse Gravenstein Grill Gypsy Cafe Handline Martha's Old Mexico Restaurant</p>	<p>SEBASTOPOL (CONTINUED) Namaste Kitchen O & C China Bistro Pascaline French Patisserie & Cafe Ramen Gaijin Retrograde Coffee Roasters Roasters Espresso Bar Screamin' Mimi's Sonoma Wine Shop & La Bodega Sushi Kosho Sushi Tozai</p> <p>SONOMA HopMonk Tavern Mamma Tanino's Ristorante The Plaza Bistro</p> <p>WINDSOR Russian River Brewing Co. Sweet T's Restaurant + Bar Ume Japanese Bistro</p>
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