

Cooking across cultures

The Boeing Employee Fund provided NEFP with the nest egg needed to launch the 12 classes that Jeni Broussard, NEFP project coordinator, has been leading.

The flavor of a culture is captured by its cuisine. The ingredients, tools, and methods used to prepare and eat foods are not only shaped by climate and geography, but also by religious, economic and social circumstances. By learning about and appreciating world cuisine, we unintentionally learn something about the culture from which it came, and that is a remarkable thing.

I have had the privilege of attending several of the cooking classes given at the food program and have learned so much about all aspects of both international and domestic cooking techniques. Jeni's approach to preparing and presenting foods has been both fun and educational. Thank you for the opportunity to be part of this class. – Greg

In these cooking classes, we do more than prepare food. We share stories and history, and discover how the recipes came to be as they are. We talk about our experiences growing up, what our likes and dislikes are, and the recipes we've come across that find their way back to the table. As the instructor, not only was I given the opportunity to do research and learn more about the foods I love to cook, but also to emphasize



Chefs received a supply of ingredients so they could try their creativity at home.



The cooking class chefs dig in on delicious meal.

just how strong a role food has in softening cultural barriers.

I grew up in a town with a sizable Latino migrant community, and many of the non-Latino people in town had a distrustful and less than friendly attitude towards this community. When the first Mexican café opened its doors, mainly to serve other Latinos, the towns folks were slow to roll in. However, in two years time, it became the talk of the town. They expanded, turned from a deli into a restaurant, and started advertising in the newspaper. For four years, I loyally patronized Tulcingo Mexican Restaurant—all the while growing more and more familiar with and fond of Mexican culture.

Surely, I am not the only one to have been subtly changed by eating unfamiliar fare. To bring this little known phenomenon into view so we can eat more mindfully, now that tastes great to me!

From the Heart is published by the Northeast Emergency Food Program (NEFP) at Luther Memorial, a community ministry of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO).

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NEFP is about more than food

The Northeast Emergency Food Program really does offer a wide variety of services. We give out food boxes to almost 2,000 people each month, and that is what we are known for. At least, that is what most people think of when they hear “food pantry.” But there is so much more going on in this church basement.

Food or doing service seems to be the draw for most of those who come to us. NEFP provides a three- to five-day food box, complete with frozen meat/vegetables, refrigerated items and desserts to those who come. We also provide fresh produce and bread each day; close to 20 people come just for these fresh items and only get a food box from time to time.

In addition to this “normal” work, we also give 28 home-bound, HIV positive, low income people a food box of canned and dry goods to help them through the days when their weekly delivered meals from Daily Bread Express (one of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon’s HIV Services programs) might not stretch far enough. And, you will recall that our satellite operation at Genesis Community Fellowship, partnering with Westminster Presbyterian Church, is helping over 100 people a month with a healthful, nutritious food box as well.

But wait, there’s more! We have over 100 people a month providing service to their neighbors. Seven churches send people to help out once a week or once a month. These folk make up the backbone of the NEFP work force. They are skilled, dedicated, hardworking and EXTREMELY dependable. Some of these folk (such as Harry and Sue) have over a decade of weekly service. Others come a few times a year when their congregation is scheduled for their monthly Saturday work party.

We have a couple of new types of helpers. For several years, we have provided opportunities for local university, community college and high school students to earn community service credit by helping out at NEFP. This year, we have had Portland State University, University of Portland, Concordia University and Portland Community College students coming regularly. University of Portland has a wonderful program where work/study students perform their service here for the full school year and earn their work/study paychecks; this is a perfect plan for us—great, regular workers who know what to do and how to do anything here.


In addition, we have been a community service site for the Multnomah County Community Court. It seems as though we have someone here at least weekly working off a minor infraction all to our benefit. We have been quite lucky to have quite a few of these folk return to volunteer

on their own, since working at NEFP is such a great experience.

New this year is a wonderful program at AEROTEK, a staffing company. From time to time, their employees get hurt on the job, placing them in a light duty status. AEROTEK found out about NEFP and has been sending these workers to us—at their regular hourly wage paid by AEROTEK. We have been blessed by these folk who work hard and are grateful to be at work, rather than sitting at home doing nothing.

A hallmark of NEFP is the ambiance of our pantry. When you read Jaynee’s article about the Clothing Center (see page 4), you will understand the spirit that fills our volunteers, staff and people coming for help. We are “connected by threads of humanity.” You are part of that fabric because of your donations, prayers, support and good wishes.

And, on a personal note, I will be leaving NEFP on June 30, after six-and-half years as the program manager. It has been a good run for me. Your support and guidance have been very rewarding. The need staggers me still. Please continue to respond generously with your time, talent and treasures. *Thanks.*



John Elizalde
NEFP Program Manager



Social beasts

Join the Northeast Emergency
Food Program on Facebook!



How do we reach out to the social networking generation? Take a look at our Facebook page, or tell your grandkids (or maybe even your children) to become fans of NEFP!

Yes, we do serve children and families—lots of them!

By Dave Hogan, NEFP volunteer

Kids are an important part of what we do at the Northeast Emergency Food Program.

I am reminded of this while riding my bike to volunteer at the program for the past year. Each week, I ride past Harvey Scott Elementary School, less than ten blocks from NEFP in northeast Portland. The sight of the school reminds me of something a Harvey Scott employee said last year. After spring vacation in 2009, Shelly Drury told *The Oregonian's* David Sarasohn that she noticed how many students returned to school hungry, wanting seconds and thirds for lunch at the school. "A lot of these kids, the lunch they get now, that's their meal until they come back tomorrow," Drury told him. "That's not one situation, that's a huge situation."

Drury and Sarasohn were talking about the importance of the federal government's school lunch program in getting food to hungry kids. More than 400 Harvey Scott students qualify for free or reduced-price lunches, according to Portland Public Schools.

Educators know the importance of keeping kids fed



and nourished. Research has shown that better-nourished kids perform significantly better in school. Studies also have found that kids experiencing hunger have lower math scores and are more likely to have attention, behavioral and attendance problems.

Parents know this, too. I've had parents who come to NEFP for emergency food tell me about their struggles to keep food on the table for their kids. One mother cried while telling me about her teenaged son's budding interest in writing. She was pleased by his improvement in school, but she was having difficulty keeping her family fed and clothed and worried that it would harm her son's studies.

To me, that's a big part of why emergency food programs are important. *Last year, NEFP distributed food boxes to families that included more than 8,100 youths under age 21. That's about 155 youths a week.* With Harvey Scott School located so close by, it's clear that some of those food boxes are going to the homes of students at the school. I've thought of that every week as I pedal by the school building on NE Prescott St.

We need your support!

May was another big month at the Northeast Emergency Food Program. We spent \$1,200 to buy rice (1,700 pounds), oats (625 pounds) and beans (800 pounds). This is big money for our operation, and we struggle to keep the basics on our shelves. Your financial support makes a very big difference and is greatly appreciated.

Donor's Name _____

Donor's Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Honoree's Name (if applicable) _____

Honor Celebration _____

Honoree's Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Please make tax-deductible checks to EMO/NEFP or pay by (check one):

Visa MasterCard American Express

Credit Card No. _____ Exp. date _____

Your gift makes a difference . . .

- \$25 provides food for a family of five people for three to five days
- \$50 provides food for three families of three people for five days
- \$100 supplies 1,000 pounds of donated food from the Oregon Food Bank
- \$500 provides a can of vegetables for every person served in a month
- \$1,000 provides five days of food for 77 families
- Other amount _____

Mail form and payment to EMO/NEFP, 0245 SW Bancroft St., Suite B, Portland, OR 97239.

Clothing is more than clothes

By Jaynee Power, a Wednesday's Child, Monday's NEFP volunteer

The Clothing Center, located at the Northeast Emergency Food Program, is a room the size of a large bedroom, lined with racks of free clothing. It relies on the kindness and generosity of donors whose usable wearables improve the lives of countless families who need help with one of the primary items on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs: clothing. Donations are always gratefully accepted. *A candle loses none of its brilliance when its flame lights another candle.*

During a three-hour span on Mondays, we serve an average of 15 families by folding, bagging, logging and giving out an estimated total of 300 free clothing items. The shelf life of a donated item varies from three seconds to three days. In between helping clients, we sort and hang an average of eight armloads full of clothing and accessories.

Limits are placed on quantities we give out, in order to serve as many people as possible, but we sometimes make exceptions. One client was disfigured with burn scars on her face when her home had burned down; she spent Christmas in the hospital. Another client was eight months pregnant and had no infants' clothing; it didn't seem right for a person to begin life in this world with no clothes. I told both clients, "I'm not counting your items; please take whatever you can use." Heart-wrenching stories like theirs and many others would stir a person to give the shirt off their back.

In winter, the greatest need was for blankets, outerwear, men's socks and men's pants. Right now



The Clothing Center at NEFP.

we'd especially like a narrow full-length mirror, as well as men's socks and pants.

Why do I love working at the Clothing Center? Trust me, it's not for the sometimes not-so-clean underwear/socks/shoes. It's an opportunity to pay it forward. It's working with our dedicated team of volunteers. I appreciate NEFP's welcoming and non-judgmental environment, sensitivity, inclusiveness and spirit of community service.

At the end of the day the question is, "Have you made a difference in an area about which you are passionate?" When I take home clothing to mend and bring back, I feel a sense of humility and satisfaction. And I wonder who wore these clothes, and who else will wear them ... total strangers, *yet connected by threads of humanity.*

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