

Plant a Row for the Hungry
By: Linda K. Schneider

Do you like to garden? Do you sometimes have too many cucumbers on the vine at one time? Cucumbers, tomatoes and squash all have a tendency to multiply overnight. Why not plan on sharing your wealth? Plant a garden and plan to share a row or two with your local food shelf. People in need will receive this food.

There is an organized program called Plant a Row for the Hungry (PAR). It was started in 1995 when a garden writer invited readers to plant one extra row of vegetables in their gardens for those in need. WHAT A GREAT IDEA! The momentum is growing. (I couldn't help the pun.)

Last year the number of responses to this program reached 1.4 million pounds of home-grown produce donated to food banks and shelters in the United States. The result? Over five million people were fed meals made from this food abundance. That really brings a smile.

Where should you drop off your home-grown fresh produce? Start asking some questions around your town of your local Chamber of Commerce or your town clerk. Ask for the locations of your town food shelves, senior centers, shelters, church and community dinners, soup kitchens, drop-in houses or halfway houses.

Here in the Upper Valley, we have some excellent drop off points:

Listen Community Services in Lebanon, New Hampshire
The Upper Valley Haven in White River Junction
Bugbee Senior Center in White River Junction

Listen Community Services 603-448-4553 Open Monday-Friday 9am to 5pm
60 Hanover Street
Lebanon, NH 03766

Marilyn Bourne, Executive Director of Listen Community Services in Lebanon, New Hampshire, says, "We offer canned and boxed foods all the time. Sometimes we receive frozen meat from government sources. But we all know that the *very best food is fresh vegetables.*"

Listen Community Services Food Pantry is open to all in need. Vermont residents need a referral from SEVCA or the Haven. New Hampshire residents should make an appointment. Community dinners are served in White River Junction, Enfield, Canaan, and Lebanon, four nights during the week, but not on weekends.

Drop off fresh produce at the corner of Hanover and Hough Streets in Lebanon. Monday would be the best day to bring food to Listen Community Services.

The Upper Valley Haven 802-295-6500 Open Monday-Friday 8:30am to 4pm
713 Hartford Avenue
White River Junction, VT 05001

Tom Ketteridge, Managing Director of The Upper Valley Haven explains, “We can always use more fresh vegetables. All produce flies out of here. People love it and it is good for them, as well. If it wasn’t delivered here, many people may not ever get any fresh vegetables. These people can’t afford to buy produce. Half of the folks that benefit from our food shelf are children.”

Drop off produce Monday through Friday. Early in the week is better. Friday morning is fine, but not Friday afternoon. The Upper Valley Haven Food Shelf is not open weekends.

The Upper Valley Haven Food Shelf on Route 5 in White River Junction, provides food to fill various needs. One week of groceries per month are provided to those having a qualified referral from a community service agency. Bread and produce is available to anyone in need. Shelter guests also benefit from these donations.

Bugbee Senior Center 802-295-9068 Open Monday–Friday 8:30am to 4pm
262 North Main Street
White River Junction, VT 05001

Kathy Avery, Director at Bugbee Senior Center states, “We will never turn down fresh produce. We make salads every day. Senior meals are served five days a week, Monday through Friday. Seniors can take produce home.”

Best drop off days are early in the week, before 1:30 pm at Bugbee Senior Center.

Willing Hands Inc. 603-448-0736
PO Box 172
Lebanon, NH 03766
www.willinghandsinc.org

We are also lucky in the Upper Valley to have Willing Hands Inc., a non-profit organization. Commercial businesses and local farmers donate food, such as day old bread or produce that is not perfect to sell but great to eat. Volunteers gather this food and deliver it to 50 locations in the Upper Valley for the needy to receive this bounty.

Peter Phippen started Willing Hands Inc. two years ago after watching large amounts of food being thrown away. Phippen says, “Willing Hands Inc. is delivering 130 tons of produce to 50 locations in the Upper Valley, traveling four thousand miles per month.”

If you don’t have time to plant a garden but you see the tremendous benefits to this program, please make a donation. This summer as the gas prices go up, financial help will be greatly appreciated. Call Willing Hands with questions, to volunteer or to make a donation.

Gardeners: *Ready, set, grow!* And don’t forget to plant a row for the hungry.

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