



neighbor to neighbor

News from Freeport Community Services

SPRING 2020

FCS feeds our neighbors in need

The COVID 19 pandemic became a reality here in March, slowly at first, then with astonishing speed, as we all came to grips with our new reality. It forced everyone to drastically change how we spend our time and make our way in the world each day.

With children home from school for several weeks, businesses closing their doors and sending their employees home to work, and government at all levels struggling to maintain services and provide guidance, things took a very serious turn.

At FCS, we realized that we needed to close the Center and, with enormous regret, sent our volunteers home for the duration. Knowing that we needed to prioritize feeding our hungry neighbors, we got to work modifying our food distribution process and began packing boxes to give our patrons out on the loading dock three days a week.

After a couple of weeks, and as more information about the spread of COVID 19 became available, we realized that even this system required closer physical contact than was safe,

so we adapted yet again. Loading the packed boxes and bags of food onto rolling shelves, we moved them down the outdoor ramp to the parking lot and asked patrons to drive up and retrieve their box from a safe distance.

FCS is very grateful to our business partners who have played a vital role in providing the food that we distribute to our neighbors in need. Some long-time partners include Hannaford, Shaw's, Bow Street Market, Royal River Natural Foods, and Good Shepherd Food Bank.



Good Shepherd Food Bank makes a delivery to FCS



Volunteers pick up 4,000 pounds of food from Mid-Coast Hunger Prevention Program for FCS on April 28, 2020

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Mission Statement

To enrich lives, connect neighbors and help those in need in Freeport and Pownal.

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Greetings,

With everything that's happening in the world around us, the start of spring has undoubtedly felt different for all of us. It's fair to say that these past few months have been among the most daunting and extraordinary that many of us have experienced in our lifetime. We are being tested in ways far beyond what we could have ever imagined yet, we are also coming together with renewed purpose, finding greater strength and resilience from each other.



As we navigate these uncertain times together, we all may need reminders of the good that remains and the hope for a new and brighter future as we come out on the other side of this pandemic. We're being reminded just how connected we all are-and how much we depend upon one another. We're coming together-by staying apart-and it's working. The quiet in our streets is the sound of an incredible national effort to keep our physical distance. We're playing our part in something bigger, slowing the spread of the virus. We're saving lives and protecting our healthcare system and we are sending a message to our leaders that we need them to act too.

I am in awe of the amazing community that banded together to support FCS so we can be there for our neighbors in need.

We are grateful for the outpouring of support from our community including donations of food, supplies, gift cards and monetary donations, all of which have made a difference for those in need. Truly, together, we are "neighbor helping neighbor!"

At FCS we are forging new partnerships and building stronger alliances to creatively meet the needs of those in our community. For example, we reached out to Laughing Stock Farm, who supplied us with bags of fresh produce that we could include with our prepacked food. This was a lovely treat for many who were so grateful to receive healthy and nutritious produce at a time when produce from our usual sources was in short supply. This is just one example of how we are finding new ways to meet the needs of our patrons.

In these challenging times, we are proud to continue serving our most vulnerable neighbors. I would like to acknowledge the FCS staff who continued to do amazing work as they always have, under increasingly difficult conditions. They have risen to the occasion and are meeting the challenge this pandemic has presented in the best ways they can. I cannot express how proud I am of the work they are doing.

We look forward to seeing you on the other side of the pandemic's peak and to seeing you back at FCS when it is safe to reopen. In the meantime, please continue to be safe and healthy.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Paula".

Paula
Executive Director

Essential Services: Look back and looking ahead



FCS staff members Sarah and Robin distribute prepackaged food.

As we entered April, with much need to adapt to our new normal, we have done our best at Freeport Community Services to keep our programs in operation. We love to get creative and think outside of the box and the COVID-19 Pandemic certainly gave us abundant opportunity to do just that.

We continued to offer our essential programs such as the food pantry, emergency assistance, and have geared up for summer resources like camp scholarships and free summer lunches. In order to keep both our community and our staff safe, people have been able to access the food pantry Monday and Wednesday from 11am-1pm with prepackaged food available at the end of the ramp in our parking lot. Additionally, while staff had been telecommuting as much as possible, working to come together while staying apart, we continued to be available via phone or email to help the community as we collectively navigated the needs created by so much change.

It is impossible not to look toward the future, a warm summer where we can gather once again, with hope and excitement. We are prepared for upcoming programs as mentioned above with the anticipation that they will operate as they always have. We hope you have taken time through all the social distancing we have had to do to explore camp options for your children this summer. What fun to for them dream big, to think about what they would do if they could do anything. Please reach out to Sarah Lundin 865-3985 ext. 205 to let us know how we can help make this happen. Given the challenges of this spring, we all deserve an extra special summer!



Summer Camp is always special



donor spotlight

Why does FHT support Freeport Community Services?

Freeport Housing Trust (FHT) provides annual financial support to FCS because they are an integral part of the Freeport community. They provide an important backbone of supportive services and community engagement. In particular, their efforts to ensure children of all demographic backgrounds have meaningful and enriching summer experiences that create a foundation for the school year and life beyond. It is FHT's pleasure to see FCS support our residents and to deliver the same quality services to the broader community.

Freeport Housing Trust is a non-profit organization with a mission to provide safe, decent, and affordable housing opportunities to the lower and moderate-income households of Freeport, Maine.

In addition to providing apartments, and in line with their generous support of the community, FHT established an Emergency Rental Assistance program with the Town of Freeport in 2014 to support households in town undergoing financial hardship in order to provide stability and support in times of stress.

Freeport Housing Trust's Board of Directors include twelve passionate and mindful members from all corners of the Freeport community. Matthew Peters started as Executive Director of the Trust in 2018 after working for a large non-profit housing organization in Maine for several years. His experience ranges from real estate development, acquisitions, and asset management to urban planning and environmental sustainability. He and his family live in Portland.



thrift shop update

A new shopping experience

Life is change. That is the old adage, and with so many changes to the Thrift Shop, and the world, where to begin? How about with all of the things that are the same. We have consistently received generous donations, of course the inventory is constantly changing which is great for all our customers. That is the inherent excitement of a thrift shop, to never know what treasure you may find! We have had such generosity that we have been able to set things aside, so that even though we are not currently accepting donations due to the virus, we have plenty on hand for when we reopen our doors. We will let the community know as soon as is safe for us to begin accepting donations again.

Another constant is the amazing volunteers who work at the Thrift Shop! We are so lucky to have people who value the mission of FCS and have been there to help the Thrift Shop generate the income that funds the FCS programs. We value their health and well-being and have missed them so much during social distancing and shelter in place. We look forward to their return!

Now for the exciting changes, the Thrift Shop has been through yet another reorganization. The checkout counter is front and center as you walk in the Thrift Shop doors, and we have moved things around, with the intent that the shopping experience is more intuitive. Like things with like. With more sight lines to the other treasures you will inevitably want to take home with you! Come see us soon!

Another successful winter events season: White Nights and Freeze Out

Another successful White Nights event.

Held on Feb. 6th at the Hilton Garden Inn, “the place we call home” was this year’s White Nights theme and in reflecting on these times, all the more fitting.

Given its importance to FCS revenue, again this year, the amount of work to be accomplished to meet the target date was achieved by streamlining the auction committee process. A small auction subcommittee and the Board helped make the process less daunting and doable.

Pat Palmer, of the FCS Board and 2nd Vice President, was Event Chair and oversaw staff, sub-committees and did a wonderful job. Jen Panciocco supported the Auction sub-committee and Board and kept the groups moving along to secure as many items as possible. And, thanks to Liza



Celebrating FCS! #freeportcommunitycenter

Moore’s efforts as Host Committee Chair, she helped bring in some new Event Hosts to support the evening which covered all expenses with a slight overage,

Our auctioneer, again this year was John Bottero of Thomaston Auction Galleries who provided the expertise in encouraging

everyone to bid “bid high, bid often,” all for a good cause. For the first time, we offered absentee bidding on our live auction items. This allowed those not able to attend, to bid and support FCS. We continued to be fortunate to have his expertise to maximize our proceeds and donate his services.

While the weather that evening was not ideal, approximately 190 +/- businesses and individuals were represented as event partners, auction item donors, vendors, and sponsors and 115 people attended. With our online auction, those who couldn’t attend bid online, on a number of items, all adding to the total. We are continually amazed at such community support. A huge thank you to Charlie Burnham Energy Services for their donation of 10-certificates for 100 gallons of oil. Through our auctioneer’s efforts, we were able to maximize the value and bidders agreed to also donate the certificates they bid on to FCS. We value everyone’s contribution to the process to support us.

White Nights raised approximately \$44,000 this year including over \$11,000 from the pledge rounds supporting FCS children’s programs such as the Camp Scholarships and the Backpack Programs.

Freeze Out continues to support our neighbors in need.



First year joining us. Atlantic FCU business team

Held on Saturday, Feb. 22nd, the objective of Freeze Out is, of course, fundraising and awareness of the struggles of those in need in our community and now, more than ever this support has helped us during the COVID-19 crisis we have experienced.

Freeze out was held at Shaw's with our Stuff the Bus event, Royal River Natural Foods, and Bow Street Market. In addition to the markets, donations were collected downtown in front of Freeport Village Station, Mexicali Blues, and by Nordica Theatre. Thanks to so many volunteers and businesses/organization teams for coming out to be "Freezin' for a Reason."

This year, we were offered the opportunity to be at VisitFreeport's Fare & Ice event on Friday, February 21st and had an FCS display. As well, we were on their website. It was a good opportunity to connect with businesses and visitors and reaffirm our support to each other.

Prior to Saturday event date, a number of area locations including, town halls, schools and businesses had food containers delivered three weeks prior to the event in Freeport and Pownal. Each tote had information and an information sheet for details including a suggested "shopping list" and how to donate online. 24 food collection totes were delivered with information on how to donate.

Arlene Arris, Police Chief Sue Nourse, and Val Nielsen were on the planning team along with staff Nancy Trottier, Debbie Atwood and Sarah Lundin.

Again, this year, Karla Seaman was our committee chair and did an extraordinary job. "We are small, but mighty" as Karla said about the committee, and their efforts reflected the energy and enthusiasm for continuing the support for this important fundraiser. We would like to extend huge thanks for Karla's continued commitment and support to our Freeze Out event over the years.

As a result, Freeze Out raised nearly \$3,000 in monetary donations for our Fuel Assistance Program and 2,119 pounds of food/product for our Pantry.



Freeport Community Library staff at Bow St Market

Expanding the FCS Transportation Program



Our Volunteer Drivers provide a great community service

Volunteers play a vital role and FCS is looking for caring, compassionate volunteers to help carry out the organization's mission. Becoming a volunteer driver will help FCS continue to serve those in our community who need this growing essential service. And, volunteers like you, benefit too, by giving back to your neighbors in the community. With the additional drivers, more rides can be provided to those needing assistance getting to medical and essential services appointments. FCS is looking to expand as we recognize that many residents in Freeport and Pownal find transportation an ongoing challenge.

Through a grant from the Charity Fund of the Maine Community Foundation, Lynn Ellis has come on board as our Transportation Coordinator and is responsible for the Transportation Program and helping to conduct outreach and engagement activities to recruit more drivers. She will conduct orientation, screening, and training for all drivers. In collaboration with the Volunteer Coordinator she will implement volunteer tracking software and volunteer recognition activities. It's a great opportunity to grow the Transportation Program with Lynn's expertise and passion. Bringing in new drivers will allow FCS to offer more services to those needing rides in our community.

Contact Lynn Ellis, Transportation Coordinator at 207-865-3985 ext. 223 or lellis@fcsmaine.org if you are interested in becoming a volunteer driver or if you are a resident and need this service. She looks forward to working with you when it is safe to resume the Transportation Program.

Volunteer Updates



As the new Volunteer Coordinator, I have been delighted to meet and get to know the many, many volunteers who keep our programs running at FCS.

Change is inevitable and new staff bring new and different approaches, which can be stressful to longtime volunteers who are used to doing things a certain way. Our volunteers have been very generous with their time, helping me understand their various roles and responsibilities in the Food Pantry, Thrift Shop, Transportation, and other programs here at FCS.

We were making real headway in terms of MY training when COVID-19 hit and it was with a heavy heart that we asked our volunteers to stay home a few months ago. Naturally, we care deeply about their health and well being and could not take the risk of exposing them to the coronavirus.

After we waved goodbye, for now – to the last volunteer, we set about making the best use of this time, with an early start to thrift shop renovations and a long overdue effort to organize the surplus food in the pantry. We will be ready when our volunteers return!

The FCS community is a dedicated and resilient one and staff have been getting a boost from regular emails and calls of encouragement from our volunteers. We miss you and can't wait to have you back.

Until then, take good care and stay in touch.

Debbie Atwood.

Celebrating National Volunteer Week 2020

Responding to the needs of their neighbors in Freeport and Pownal, volunteers created Freeport Community Services in 1974 and have been the backbone of this growing organization ever since.

It was with a very heavy heart that we asked our volunteers to stay home in mid-March in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and we have missed having them at the Center.

FCS has many staff members who are working from home and we're maintaining a reduced presence on site in order to ensure the health and wellness of our staff, while continuing to operate the food pantry and to conduct necessary maintenance. It is a quiet place.

During this time, which is an odd combination of chaos and isolation, we were happy to celebrate our incredible volunteers during National Volunteer Week, April 19 - 25, which is part of the larger Global Volunteer Month in April commemorated around the world. Noting the irony and challenge of acknowledging this special time while being unable to gather our volunteers as we do each year in April, we set about finding a way to thank them for their ongoing service.

We hit upon the idea of delivering a token of our appreciation to each volunteer. Donning our face coverings and gloves, we put together route maps and headed out, in separate vehicles, prepared to leave the gift on each doorstep, for safety's sake

(cont. on page 7)



A wonderful day to recognize our volunteers

What a treat it was to see so many of volunteers in person! After spending so much time together working for a common cause, we've all struggled to adjust to our enforced separation and a simple hello from a safe distance was a welcome relief.

There will come a day when Freeport Community Services is abuzz with activity once more. Until then, we're staying connected in as many ways as we can and taking very seriously our responsibility to help curb this pandemic. Happy Volunteer Appreciation Week, 2020!

"Feeding our neighbors" continued from pg. 1

Other partners include Wicked Whoopies (a crowd pleaser!), Coffee by Design, Merrymeeting Gleaners, Freeport Friends, Laughing Stock Farm, and the Town of Freeport. We also were grateful to receive a steady stream of donations from OUR neighbors.

We feed 80 to 90 families each week at FCS, with humility and gratitude for the opportunity to provide this service. With your ongoing support and partnership, we will continue to play our part in weaving the fabric of community.

New members join the FCS team

We are pleased to welcome new members to the FCS team. The new members bring vast experience, ideas and energy to the organization. While they have been with us for a few months, their expertise in their respective areas is helping to continue our work with new ideas and goals. (Read full bio info on our website: www.fcsmaine.org) We are fortunate to have them on the FCS team. Feel free to contact them with any questions you may have.

Debbie Atwood is the Volunteer Coordinator with vast experience in Volunteer Management and was recently the membership manager at the Maine Association of Nonprofits from 2016-2018.

Lynn Ellis is our new Transportation Coordinator through a grant from the Charity Fund of the Maine Community Foundation and is an experienced social worker with over 40 years of experience.

Miriam Tanner Leslie is our Thrift Shop Manager with extensive experience as a business owner, gallery director and has strong design aesthetics and business acumen.

Erin Hogue is the Thrift Shop Team Leader who has vast retail experience both at the shop level and online retail sales and marketing.

new faces at FCS



Debbie Atwood
Volunteer Coordinator

datwood@fcsmaine.org

Tel. 865-3985 x 206



Lynn Ellis
Transportation
Coordinator

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Miram Tanner Leslie
Thrift Shop Manager

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Erin Hogue
Thrift Shop Team Leader

Tel. 865-3985 x 207

How would you like to receive your newsletter?

We want you to stay up to date with FCS. How would you like to receive future newsletters?

Kindly select one - and *please* print:

Email it to me at _____
Email address

Mail it to me at: _____
Name Street or PO Box Town State Zip

You may email the information to: Kim Hudak: khudak@fcsmaine.org or call: 865-3985 x202

Or mail to: Freeport Community Services, PO Box 119, Freeport, ME 04032



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Community Programs and Services Ext. 205

Donations Hotline Ext. 216

Volunteer Coordinator Ext. 206

Open 9:00 am to 5:00 pm

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