



neighbor to neighbor

News from
 Freeport
 Community
 Services

FALL 2021

Community Traditions

“There are people who, not by any choice of their own, spend a lot of time alone—every birthday and holiday,” says Jonas Werner, the driving force behind the Freeport & Pownal community’s free Thanksgiving meal for nearly 20 years. Thanksgiving was Jonas’s grandmother’s favorite holiday. “Growing up, my grandmother always said Thanksgiving is the holiday when nobody should be alone. It doesn’t matter what religion you are or where you come from. She believed Thanksgiving should bring everyone together. That always stuck with me.”

It was also one of the main reasons why Jonas was determined to bring the Thanksgiving meal back for 2021. “Each year, there’s somebody who stops to thank me because it’s the one time a year that they get together with other people,” he recalls fondly. “They look forward to it every year, which made last year devastating.”

Unfortunately, just as planning for the 2021 meal began, a new Covid variant reared its head and case numbers climbed. Jonas and his committee of volunteers were forced to shift gears. They worked hard to infuse a spirit of community and connection into

what would ultimately be a to-go affair. Volunteer Daric Ebert describes the need to balance safety as threading a needle. “We’ll invite people inside and will still be serving in order to get that chit-chat going,” says Daric, who credits the Thanksgiving dinner with setting the tone for his own family’s holidays. “It’s important for me because my daughter is in England. It’s just my wife, my son, and me at home. For me, the community meal reminds me of when I was growing up.”



Jonas Werner and the late Nancy Glidden, Thanksgiving 2017



Scouting for Food 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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To the Freeport and Pownal Community,

Thank you for your unwavering support of Freeport Community Services. Recently, staff and board members have spent a generous amount of time reflecting upon the infinite ways our community looks out for one another. On one hand, I am completely amazed that nearly 65% of our annual budget is funded through individual donations, both your financial donations and the clothing and goods you donate to our Thrift Shop. On the other hand, knowing that the very nature of our community is gracious and generous, it is absolutely no surprise at all. You genuinely care for your neighbors and will go to any length to ensure that fellow residents of Freeport and Pownal do not go without food, warmth, and kindness.

As I transitioned into the role of Executive Director, I looked back with fondness on my six years working alongside you as the Director of Programs. Together we stocked food on the pantry shelves and brought weekend meals to children within our school district. We created joyful holidays for families and ensured children had access to camp and enrichment experiences each summer. You have the greatest ability for impact on those in need within our community and I am grateful that you trust FCS and our incredible staff to ensure those needs are met.

There have been many changes here at FCS over the past year. We have navigated capacity limits, staff changes, and the general uncertainty of living through a global pandemic. Sitting here in the warmth and sunlight of a gorgeous fall morning, I can say with certainty that the future is bright here at FCS and in our community. We have a community center full of staff, volunteers, and visitors that has never felt stronger, more upbeat, and more connected.

Let's lean into our strength and spirit and keep it going! The day-to-day magic of FCS still thrills me, even after 6 years of watching it happen. Our staff upholds the integrity of our agency and is forever finding ways to enhance and improve the programs we administer. With your support, we will continue to welcome those who walk through our doors, our neighbors, and friends, without judgement, but with open arms and the utmost respect.

With gratitude,



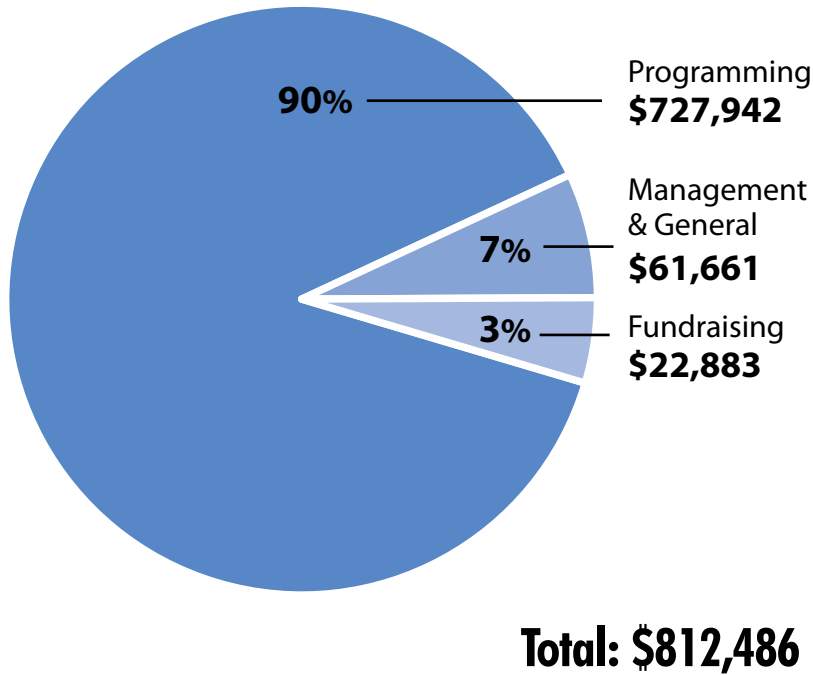
Sarah Lundin
Executive Director



2021 FCS staff retreat

Your Generosity at Work

At FCS, we value each gift made to help our community. By donating to FCS, you are placing your trust in us to use that money efficiently and effectively. It's a responsibility we take very seriously. That's why for every \$10 donated, FCS spends \$9 on programming.



Neighbors helping neighbors makes the work of FCS possible.

Where our funds come from:

- Individual Contributions (33%)
- Thrift Shop Revenue (31%)
- Foundations and Grants (12%)
- Town Aid (8%)
- Business Sponsors (5%)
- Rental Income (5%)
- Nonprofit Donations (4%)

The above represents a summary of how your generous contributions were spent during Fiscal Year 2021 and the sources of funds applied. As a 501c3 nonprofit organization, FCS is audited every year and is committed to financial transparency.

volunteer chefs



Lioness Chefs Jane Mallett, Kim Murray and Linda Deming

Food nourishes the body just as gathering with friends and neighbors for a good meal nourishes the soul. FCS has long had a tradition of community meals,

bringing people together for conversation and connection as well as culinary delights.

Our volunteer chefs go to work in our kitchen the first and third weeks of the month for our Free Friday Lunches. They whip up creative meals, like Happy Enchiladas, as well as comfort-food favorites. Meals often highlight the wonderful local meat and produce we have access to in our pantry.



Midcoast FCU Chefs Chandra Thoits Abraham and Joe Gervais

The real stars of this show are the chefs themselves. Laughter, music, and amazing aromas pour out of our little kitchen as they work. Freeport Rotary President, Michele Bois-Gilbody explains why they love to do it. "We have a strong connection with FCS," she says. "This gives us the opportunity to work with FCS and to work on one of our seven areas of focus, food insecurity."

Friday meals are currently packaged to-go and distributed outside of our pantry loading dock at 55 Depot Street. Everyone looks forward to the day when we can gather in our Bradley room to sit down for a meal together once



Rotary Chefs Alex Abbott, Matt Cartmell, Tom Whelan and Michelle Bois-Guilbody

more. "It will be great when we can do in-person events again," Michele says, "because part of the fun is connecting with the community—whether it's a dinner like this or a food drive like Stuff the Bus."

meet mike



Mike Tausek, FCS Manager of Programs

When Michael Tausek joined FCS he not only stepped into a role as our new Manager of Programs, he also took on the role of Freeport's General Assistance Administrator. "Coming into this position after Sarah Lundin and Johanna Hanselman, I knew I'd have some big shoes to fill," Mike says with a smile. "Every day I hear, 'Where's Sarah?' or 'Where's Johanna?'"



Luckily for FCS, Mike's blend of humor, skill, and compassion is the perfect fit for the job. The central theme in Mike's career has been service to others. "There's an altruistic desire to help others that drives me," Mike explains. "What

started the ball rolling for me was an initial immersion in social services as a student at USM. I found value in social work and the benefits that can be achieved for those you are helping."

Mike revels in the direct, hands-on nature of FCS's day-to-day work—welcoming people into the Food Pantry, connecting kids with camp scholarships, and helping families and individuals navigate their way to finding the assistance they need. He's also been impressed by the strong community involvement at FCS. Community service is something that truly resonates with him. "At the end of the day, it's the little things that we can do for each other that really matter," he says. "That's what is really important."



General Assistance Joins FCS

On September 1st, Johanna Hanselman happily stepped down as Freeport's long-time General Assistance (GA) Administrator. As the town planned for her well-earned retirement, it made sense to bring the General Assistance program under the FCS umbrella.

"Caring for the well-being of town residents in need was of the utmost importance to Johanna," recalls FCS's Mike Tausek, who worked closely with Hanselman through the transition. "She did not allow obstacles to deter her from finding available resources. During our last meeting together, Johanna expressed how important each client was to her and the value she found in listening to their challenging stories and restoring hope."

For those who aren't familiar with GA, it is a program administered by all towns and cities in Maine. It provides residents facing financial hardship with resources such as rent, utilities, fuel, food, and medication to assist in meeting their basic needs. It dovetails beautifully into the services and support that FCS has long offered to residents of Freeport and Pownal. In his new role as FCS's Manager of Programs and Freeport's GA Administrator, Tausek works actively with individuals and families to ensure they can access appropriate and immediate financial assistance in conjunction with in-house and outside community referrals.

In addition to GA, FCS has partnered up with the Town of Freeport to administer other long-standing programs to the community—the Gould Medical Trust Fund, Anne Dorsey Loth Fund and the Freeport Emergency Rental Assistance Fund, a collaboration between Freeport Housing Trust and the Town of Freeport. FCS is proud and humbled by the trust and confidence Town officials have placed in us. Collaborations like these deepen our holistic and comprehensive engagement with Freeport residents in need. For residents of Pownal seeking support and services, FCS's Emergency Assistance remains available, as it always has, to fund utilities, car repairs, eyeglasses replacement and other unique household needs.

To find out more about any of our programs, contact Manager of Programs Michael Tausek at (207) 865-3985 ext. 205 or mtausek@fcsmaine.org.

Getting Social with AFFP

A connection to community is an important part of mental and physical health. Older adults who feel that sense of connection have lower incidence of depression and live generally healthier, happier lives. "Social inclusion is about making people feel part of the community, giving them a place and a reason to gather, to interact, and to share," says Age Friendly Freeport & Pownal Coordinator Cathy Cryvoff.



AFFP has created a series of Senior Socials to foster a sense of community and connection. At September's Ice Cream Social, forty ice cream sundaes were served as people chatted and enjoyed a gorgeously sunny fall afternoon. The

Interact Club from Freeport High School came down to join in the fun.

"The Interact Club is a group of mostly first year students who really want to make a difference. They are just intrinsically motivated. They came up with the idea to decorate holiday cookies for our December Senior Social. They painted rocks with colors and encouraging words and surprised the folks at the Elders Association with them," Cathy says. "These kids look forward to their visits to the Community Center as much as the Elders do. We're excited to have students from other groups like Jobs for Maine Grads and National Honor Society, too. It's a win-win."

It's not all fun in the sun. AFFP tackles serious topics and the practical concerns of aging as well. They recently hosted a three-part series on Advanced Directives hosted by Susan Goran, MSN, RN. AFFP's Transportation Program is rolling again with over 220 miles driven in September alone. And, AFFP has partnered up with Habitat for Humanity Critical Home Repair Program and Living to L.A.S.T. to facilitate home repairs like insulation, roofing, and home modifications that help people safely age in place.



If you have questions about any of AFFP's social activities or age-friendly programs, contact Cathy Cryvoff at 865-3985 x 222 or ccryvoff@fcsmaine.org.

holiday update



At FCS, we begin planning for the winter holidays way before the Thanksgiving turkeys go in the oven.

"Holiday Helpline is a tradition in our community," says Sarah Lundin. "The whole Center starts to buzz with excitement as the holidays get closer." Holiday Helpline connects people in need with resources to create their own, personalized holiday traditions. FCS partners with the Portland Press Herald Toy Fund and our community to provide warm clothing and toys to bring holiday joy to Freeport and Pownal. Holiday Helpline isn't just for kids. We believe every member of our community deserves happiness and cheer at this special time of year.

To find out more about our Holiday Helpline, contact Mike Tausek at 865-3985 x 205 or mtausek@fcsmaine.org.

Administering General Assistance

General Assistance is now under FCS's roof. Call Mike Tausek at 865-3985 x 205 to schedule an appointment Monday through Thursday from 8 am to 4 pm.

Emergencies happen and they don't always happen during business hours. If you have an after-hours emergency, contact the Freeport Police Department at 865-4800.

Time for Pantry Shopping

Our Food Pantry moved back indoors this fall. If you are not yet comfortable shopping indoors, home delivery is available! Contact Andy at 865-3985 x 214 or awyatt@fcsmaine.org.

Food Pantry hours

M 11am-3pm, T 9:30am-11:30am, W 11am-1:30pm



Don joyfully battles the leaves

When the Piotti's decided that it was time to hire a lawn maintenance company this summer, Daniel knew just where he wanted to give his brand-new electric riding lawn mower. Daniel had donated outdoor equipment to FCS in the past. He knew how much a donation like this would help our facilities crew and how much it would mean to all of us here.

As soon as the mower was charged up, Don gleefully jumped in the saddle and took it for a spin! It was a huge upgrade from the old push mower. Most of the equipment used to care for the FCS grounds is acquired through donations just like this one. Over the years, our skilled team has nursed along an aging collection of lawn mowers, weed whackers, and snow blowers.

Autumn leaves are a laboriously battle for the FCS facilities team. This slick new rig came complete with a leaf bagger. Now those leaves are no match for Don's tenacity and the mower's efficiency. The only thing brighter than the autumn sunshine was the smile on Don's face when he hooked up that bagger for the first time.

Thank you endlessly, Daniel and Toni, for your incredible donation. Be sure to wave the next time you see Don buzzing around the FCS property!



Not Just a Shop

It looks like our secret is out. FCS's Thrift Shop won Down East Magazine's Editor's Choice Best Bargain Store for Best of Maine 2021. Even those who love our shop don't always know what truly makes it such a special place. You see, FCS wouldn't exist without the Thrift Shop. "It's been there from the very beginning with the Clothes Tree," says Thrift Shop manager Miriam Tanner. "It's woven into the history of FCS."

The money raised by our Thrift Shop is an important source of income, second only to the individual monetary contributions made by our community. It directly funds the Food Pantry, the Backpack program, Holiday Helpline, Thanksgiving meals, Free Friday Lunches, camp scholarships, and home heating assistance. "The Thrift Shop is a chance for the community to donate in another way. Giving your items and purchasing items, that's a revenue driver for FCS," Miriam explains. "It's a circle of giving that goes around and around. It's a great metaphor for how communities work."

Our volunteers and staff are critical to making that circle of giving happen. "I love working with people who have a similar mindset, who lift each other up and support each other," Miriam declares. "We rely on our volunteers. In turn, our volunteers feel empowered. They really take ownership of the shop and running its day-to-day operations. We couldn't do it without them." The process starts by sorting goods in the back room. Things that can go out on the floor are priced and displayed. Special and high-value items get pulled aside and highlighted on the wildly successful Thrift Shop Instagram feed. Out of season items are tucked away in storage until it's their time to shine.



The whole process is very physical. On any given day, staff and volunteers may hang a hundred items of clothing or haul furniture from the loading dock to the shop. They manage to do it all with a smile. "The Thrift Shop is so much fun!" exclaims long-time volunteer Donna Parkinson. "Not only does it help to bring in a large share of the revenue to support all the amazing programs FCS provides but it is also a gathering place for sharing the excitement of finding unexpected 'treasures'. I enjoy seeing the smiles and celebrating discoveries with customers, many who return often. They become friends as do my fellow volunteers and the talented hardworking staff who make the treasure hunt especially exciting for all of us."

Just as the Thrift Shop helps us take care of our neighbors, thrifting in general helps take care of our ecosystem. "It's a simple way to green up our economy," Miriam says proudly. "It reduces the amount of clothing being made that will be barely used and then put into the landfill. You are reclaiming so many things when you are reclaiming clothes and items that would otherwise be discarded."

"Traditions" continued from pg. 1

Jonas Werner is resolute and philosophical about the changes to his beloved dinner. He knows the path to any goal isn't necessarily a straight line. "This year is a step towards reminding people that we are a community [that is] here for each other. It's a step towards bringing people out of their homes and getting them on that path to being together again."

The focus on community extends to the production of the meal. The 2021 Thanksgiving meal will be the first truly end-to-end volunteer, community event. All the food will be donated by the local farms, local families, or Freeport Community Services. The meal will be prepared by volunteers from community and restaurant partners including 1912 Café, Buck's Naked BBQ, First Baptist Church of Freeport, The Freeport Grange, Gritty's, Harraseeket Inn, Linda Bean's Maine Kitchen, Petrillo's, and St. Jude's Church.

Community is also the invisible hand that ensures families have enough food and festive fixings to cook and host their very own holiday meal. Freeport-Pownal Cub Scout Pack 45's annual Scouting for Food Drive plays a pivotal role in filling over 100 Thanksgiving Baskets each year. Scout parent Karen Rose first participated in Scouting for Food when her son Jesse was in first grade. "This will be his 6th year," she says proudly. "It's so gratifying to see our community come together with such generosity to help folks who need it. We typically fill our Subaru just collecting in our neighborhood, with many folks giving more than one bag in addition to cash donations. For me this event is what Thanksgiving is all about."

"It's not just the Cub Scouts who get involved," explains parent Jerry Antil. "The Boy Scouts will help out on the day of at the Community Center collecting food, checking for old or expired food, and sorting it into groups." Antil appreciates how Scouting for Food helps raise awareness about food insecurity. "It's a problem that

can be hidden or buried, so kids might not realize there are families right here in this community who have trouble obtaining food day-to-day. For me and my boys, Scouting for Food is a great way to give something back to our community."

For his part, Jonas Werner shuns the limelight as he reflects on the community traditions he helped to create. He points out that it takes up to forty volunteers to pull off the dinner each year. "I often get too much credit," he says humbly. "I was just the person who thought of doing it. It's all the people who cook and volunteer to serve and clean and do dishes for three hours straight who deserve the credit. They are just amazing."

Stay in Touch

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Add clyons@fcsmaine.org to your email CONTACTS. Check your Spam or Junk folder. If FCS is in there, please mark it as Not Spam or Not Junk.

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 Mon. - Fri. 9-5 pm

fcsmaine.org



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Connecting Neighbors, Enriching Lives
Freeport Community Services
 Since 1974



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