



The Berkshire Food Project seeks to alleviate hunger, food insecurity, and social isolation by serving healthy, no cost meals and connecting people to other resources, all in a dignified and respectful manner.

**Our current lunch distribution schedule is:
Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 11:30 AM to 1:00 PM.
Each day we distribute two meals. ALL are welcome - no questions asked.**



Patti Messina and Christa Collier of NBUW with the new warming oven.

Hot Soup, Stew, Chili on the Menu

Since March, the pandemic has impacted so many aspects of the Berkshire Food Project! One temporary change has been that meals are distributed cold, to be heated at home. Recently we have been able to add hot soup, stew or chili to our menu thanks to a warming oven provided by the Northern Berkshire United Way. This means during the winter we can always have a hot item, ready to eat, along with meals to take home and heat up.



Looking Ahead

The warming oven will build our capacity long term to provide hot meals to more people. Our kitchen isn't really set up to provide more than about 100 hot meals at a time. With the warming oven we will be able to prepare meals, keep them safely at the right temperature and continue cooking more meals in the kitchen. As we look ahead to the post-COVID world, we are already planning on how we can continue to meet the community's need for meals, even if it remains high.

Thanksgiving is Coming!

We've had lots of inquiries about Thanksgiving. Naturally, this is our favorite holiday here at the BFP - the holiday is the epitome of what the BFP is all about. Our staff and volunteers and diners all miss our dining room and look forward to when we are all gathered around the table breaking bread together again. Sadly, we are not able to gather around the holiday table this year. Instead, our delicious Thanksgiving meal will be distributed to our diners during our regularly scheduled operations the week before Thanksgiving.

Last March when this pandemic began it never occurred to us that it would last this long and we would have to handle our traditional Thanksgiving meal this way.

We will have a full Thanksgiving feast with all the trimmings and that means the preparation has begun. As we usually do, we've begun preparing squash and freezing it - we get lots of locally harvested squash in our farm shares and from others who simply have a great harvest. We cook them while they are fresh from the farms and gardens, preserving the most flavor and nutritional value. In the photo to the right our volunteer Bill Svrugla is cutting up a Hubbard squash that weighed over 30 pounds!



Thanksgiving Opportunities to Volunteer

While the daily operations at the BFP rely heavily on a regular crew of volunteers, special holiday meals require extra help. We will be in the kitchen the entire weekend before Thanksgiving- Saturday and Sunday from 9 AM until 4 PM. We will continue to follow COVID safety precautions, which in addition to symptom screening prior to the start of a shift, mask wearing and even more hand washing than usual also includes limiting the number of people in the building. We have work stations set up in the kitchen and the dining room to ensure adequate distancing for a crew of 8-10 people at any given time. Research indicates that another way to mitigate risk of getting sick is to limit the time spent indoors with others - so we are limiting each volunteer shift to 90 minutes or two hours. That means we have a total of over 50 slots to fill on November 21 (Saturday) and November 22 (Sunday). If you are interested in helping prepare and package holiday meals, please contact us ASAP so we can reserve a slot for you - e-mail Kim at kim@berkshirefoodproject.org or [click here for a quick link to use](#).



While volunteers are spread out, we still have fun chatting and listening to music while working at separate stations. It's certainly another way COVID has impacted the BFP though. We look forward to a time when we have crews crowded around work tables laughing and joking as they work side by side. In fact, our anticipation of returning to our dining room and returning to full crews working side by side is what keeps us going these days. We are really looking forward to getting back to that!

In the photo at the left you can see our volunteers working at separate stations and you can also see one of the silver linings of this COVID cloud. In the rear of the photo you can see drivers from **Northern Berkshire Transport** picking up meals that they will deliver to those who have been asked to quarantine due to COVID exposure, OR have compromised immune systems and other underlying health issues that prevent them from coming to pick up their meals. At any given time, least 25 households are benefitting from this service set up by the **North Adams COVID Emergency Operations Center!**

Recently we had a small story air on Spectrum News (on channel 1 if you have your television service through Spectrum).
[Click here to watch it.](#)

In the video you may have noticed that **Amanda Chilson** was with us from the **nbCC**. ([Click here for their website](#).) One of the vital services accessed at the BFP has always been connections to other organizations and resources. While we may not be able to have organizations setting up for outreach in our dining room right now, having people like Amanda help with distribution does give everyone the opportunity to connect to resources and services. Thank you **nbCC!** Please let us know if you would like to represent your organization this way at a future distribution day.

Thank you to everyone who continues to support the BFP during these uncertain times. Each week we see new faces - people who are often facing challenges and crisis due to the pandemic and its rippling effects. We are so grateful that we have enough for everyone thanks to all of the wonderful people who support us. Thank you!

We provide prepared meals to take home and heat up every Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 11:30 AM to 1:00 PM.

This schedule remains in effect for the foreseeable future - but not forever (we promise). There is NO criteria and no questions asked.

We encourage families to send a single person to pick up to reduce the number of people standing in line.

Masks and social distancing required in line and in the building.

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