

# Food Bank makes a big difference in people's lives

By RENA LANGILLE

It's a slow walk up the four-foot-wide concrete ramp from the fifth floor of the Market Parking Garage into the windowless, unheated distribution room of the Downtown Food Bank. It could be the dreariest place in the Market if not for the murals that greet clients as they enter.

Two walls, painted by volunteers in tribute to the food banks' founder, Jack Henning, who died in 1997, show the beautiful verdant forests, handsomely carved totems and native people who once lived in an as yet unsettled Puget Sound.

The other walls and floor of the

approximately 16-by-25-foot room is unadorned concrete. There is a long, nondescript table behind which stand volunteers distributing food stuffs, but in the corner under the murals is a "help yourself" big mound of shiny clean yellow potatoes and big red sacks of onions.

The foodstuffs handed out here keep hunger at bay for the people who can afford little more than a roof over their heads and utilities, and for the homeless, who have nothing. As 900+ hungry people come through each week, there is an order to the proceedings which barely keeps chaos at bay. But each customer can be certain of two things besides food: dignity and

respect. This is very important to John Rockwell, Director of the bank, who oversees everything.

John, a short, stocky man with dark hair and snappy brown eyes, has been the director of the Food Bank for five years. He has patience and purpose, and is willing to talk with anyone about his mission; making media presentations to politicians, business sponsors and the public.

He is backed up by a constant forager of funding and food drives - Stephanie Druxman, the only other paid staff. For the rest of the food bank work, he relies on an indispensable group of 15 to 20 volunteers, some of whom have been with the program for more than 12 years. They

supply the manpower to off-load products, stock shelves and supply the distribution room on service days. They also contribute a quiet friendliness of spirit to everyone they encounter.

As Director, John works with three organizations who deliver food: the U.S. Government (surplus commodities); Northwest Harvest, [www.northwestharvest.org](http://www.northwestharvest.org); and Food Lifeline, [www.foodlifeline.org](http://www.foodlifeline.org). Resources also come from groups as diverse as large corporations and backyard neighborhood food drives. Through Food Lifeline, which acts as their agent, the 28 food banks in King County often pool money to purchase bulk items such as rice, beans, and peanut butter. Sometimes the banks also get good deals on chickens, eggs,

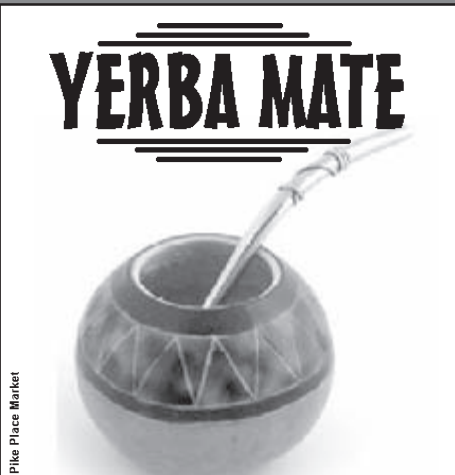


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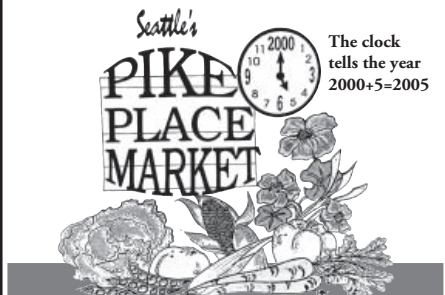
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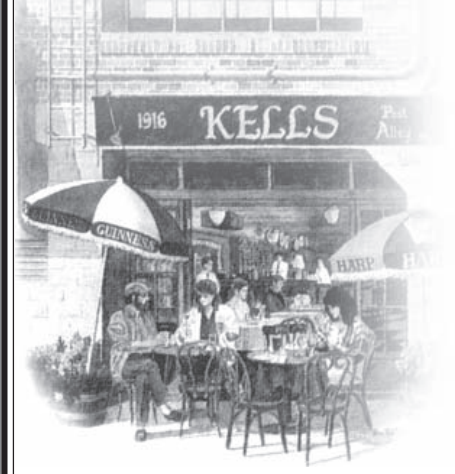
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