

The Cove: It's more than just food.

The Methow Valley has a long history of taking care of its own. Originally, the literal “end of the road” made getting help from outside the valley walls not practical. So, over 12 years ago, when 12 valley residents met together to re-establish a local food bank for valley residents, it was no different than people here have done for years. The expressed purpose of the Cove, when it opened its doors in a small café-style storefront on Glover Street in downtown Twisp, was “to demonstrate God’s love in the community by operating and funding a food bank and providing goods and services to people in need in the Methow Valley”. Since that time, as a charitable organization, the Cove has not only provided food in a caring atmosphere but financial assistance for utility bills or other emergency circumstances in the Aid and Assistance program. Another Cove program, The Faith in Action-Guardian Angels, echoes the belief that “a neighbor’s independence depends on us”, matching a trained volunteer with an elderly or disabled person usually living alone. The Guardian Angel program, led by Eunice Marchbank, has over 30 volunteer “special friends”, with still more needed to cover requests.

Each program the Cove has started has been in response to a specific need in the Methow Valley. For years, seniors had to move away when the challenge of living locally became too much of a burden. The nearest assisted living facility was 40 miles away. Friends and family were faced with hazardous winter driving conditions in order to visit loved ones. When Jamie’s Place was built in 2005 followed by Mountain View, another 6 person adult family home in 2009, local folks were able to plan on being able to remain in the valley in an environment that supports autonomy, dignity, privacy and choice.

Recently, the venerated “Neighbors Helping Neighbors” program has become part of the Cove. Having operated for over 20 years, volunteers gather and distribute Christmas baskets to as many as 125 families. This year they plan to operate a “Manger Mall” where parents can select and purchase new donated gifts for their children. “More than just food” became an even greater principle when the Cove adopted the Methow Resource Recovery, a group that sells locally recycled building materials. The proceeds are then donated to non-profit organizations in the valley.

Nowadays a person can Visit Glover Street in Twisp any Thursday afternoon between 1:00 and 4:00pm and find a lively, friendly “happening place” with 20 volunteers serving soup and sandwiches and distributing supplemental food to over 70 households weekly. The founding director of The Cove, Glenn Schmekel, has believed the success of the Cove and its various ministries is based on the idea of honor. Honoring our neighbors, elders, and offering our gifts to each other in a respectful way. “Our goal has been to change our community’s ability to care for-and our attitude toward-our neighbors in need. We begin with relationships and provide a shelter from the storms of life to share food, resources, respect and love.”