For many years, The Idaho Foodbank's number one concern was bringing in the maximum number of pounds of food for distribution to Idahoans in need.

About seven years ago the sources of our food donations began to change. Instead of national manufacturers we were receiving more food from sources closer to home, like growers and retailers. The type of food began to change as well. Instead of shelf stable, there was more fresh and frozen food. The change in the sourcing and types of food coincided with a renewed emphasis on healthy eating.

While the Foodbank was distributing more food considered nutritious, staff quickly discovered that many of the food recipients lacked the exposure and experience necessary to prepare some of the new food items. The need for cooking instruction and nutrition education was readily apparent.

Through Cooking Matters, a hands-on cooking program developed by the national organization Share Our Strength, the Foodbank is now able to provide people of all ages with the basic skills they needed to prepare more nutritious meals for themselves and their family.

Distributing more nutritious food and also providing those in need with the skills to utilize that food for the benefit of their health and well-being represented an enormous change, but there was still more to be done.

Prescription for Change

Fruits, vegetables, proteins and whole grains are all part of a healthy diet. People who are food insecure lack predictable access to these kinds of nutrient-dense foods. Limited resources and competing demands for those resources like rent or medicine, will often push healthier, more expensive food choices to the bottom of their list.

Without access to the foods that constitute a healthy diet, people who are food insecure are at greater risk for chronic diet-related health conditions such as type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and obesity.

(continued on page 4)
Helping People Move from Hunger to Health

Nutritious Food
Growers, processors, manufacturers and grocery stores donate nutrient-dense foods essential for a healthy diet.

Childhood Nutrition
Backpack and School Pantry programs provide families with access to nourishing food in a familiar, nonjudgmental environment.

More of the Good Stuff
Because nutrient-dense foods are so important to physical and mental health, the Foodbank is prioritizing certain categories of food for collection and distribution. Categories include such popular food items as dairy, fruits and vegetables. Recommendations under the USDA’s My Plate program will guide the size of each category to align with the food variety necessary for a healthy diet.

From hunger to health – the journey that is making Idaho families and communities stronger and healthier than ever before.

Working in collaboration with healthcare organizations such as clinics and hospitals is making it easier to identify patients who are food insecure and then refer them to a nearby food pantry or feeding site for help. Healthcare partners are also working with the Foodbank’s Mobile Pantry program to provide health screenings and even some medical care in conjunction with targeted food distributions.
Cooking Matters is a six-week program during which students learn fundamental cooking skills along with good nutrition. Cooking Matters at the Store is a two hour class that teaches how to shop for a healthy diet on a budget.

Health Mobiles
Mobile pantries are a means to distribute a wide variety of fresh and shelf-stable foods to a very specific audience, such as seniors in an independent living facility. Mobiles are sometimes combined with health screenings or actual medical care conducted by a healthcare partner.

Screen and Intervene
Through patient screening, healthcare partners are able to identify those in need and refer them to a nearby food pantry or feeding site for help.

It’s so important for organizations like ours with separate specialties to help the community. When we partner, our impact grows exponentially.
Josh Campbell, Programs Director, Genesis Community Health, Healthcare partner

Offering students fresh fruits and vegetables helps them feel like we care about more than just feeding them. We care about their health.
Mari Ramos, Family Community Resource and Engagement Coordinator, Snake River Elementary, School Pantry partner
If he didn't start eating healthier, I don't think I would have him here today. The class changed Floyd's life.

Husband and wife graduates of Cooking Matters for cardiac patients

In many ways, Linda and Floyd are like any couple that's been married for almost five decades. They met after Floyd returned from the war in Vietnam. They live in Linda's childhood home, a house that's two miles from where Floyd grew up. They enjoy time with their kids and grandkids in their small Nampa neighborhood. However, a recent health scare forced Linda and Floyd to reassess their lifestyle choices and change their dietary habits.

A year ago in February, Floyd had open heart surgery. Because of his heart's condition, Floyd needed three stints. Unfortunately, two of his main arteries were closed so the doctors could only open one. Ironically, on the holiday that celebrates hearts, he was in the hospital mending his own. “He was in the hospital on Valentine’s Day,” Linda said with a smile. “He likes to do it that way.”

Floyd’s rehab facility was St. Luke’s, an important healthcare partner of The Idaho Foodbank. St. Luke’s provides various health services for many food-insecure Idahoans, an important aspect of The Idaho Foodbank’s hunger-to-health initiative. It was at St. Luke’s in Meridian where Linda saw an advertisement for a Cooking Matters class offered by The Idaho Foodbank.

To this point in his life, Floyd’s diet consisted of mainly steak and potatoes. However, seeing a need to better protect his heart, Floyd agreed to join the cooking class with Linda. She noticed positive results from the class right away. “There were dishes that he would have never tried before but he found out they’re not so bad,” she said. “The class changed his attitude.”

Although it can be easy to recognize the need for a low-sodium, heart-healthy diet, actually acquiring the taste for nutritious foods can be difficult. For Floyd, the most important aspect of the class was how it recalibrated his taste buds. “It changed my whole outlook,” he said. “I learned how to eat something besides red meat or biscuits and gravy. It’s completely changed my way of looking at diet and food.”

For those seeking a healthier diet, finding nutritious substitutions for less healthy foods is key. In the Cooking Matters class, Floyd and Linda learned about trading bread for lettuce and swapping French fries for sweet potato fries. In fact, the turkey burger and sweet potato fry recipe that they learned to make in class is now a weekly staple in their home.

On March 27th, Linda and Floyd celebrated their 48th wedding anniversary, a feat that was in doubt just one year ago. Fortunately the year was kind to Floyd and recently his doctor gave him a clean bill of health. From open-heart surgery to making freshly prepared, nutritious meals each night, what’s made the difference for Floyd’s diet? Both Linda and Floyd will agree that The Idaho Foodbank’s Cooking Matters class played an important role. “If he didn’t start eating healthier, I don’t think I would have him here today,” Linda said. “The class changed Floyd’s life.”