



FAST FACTS: FAMILIES

Our mission is to build a financially stable community by providing education, food, and nurturing accountability.

From 1992 to present day, we strive to be good stewards with everything that we have been entrusted.

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- 1992** Suzanne and Barry share bread with a few neighbors. Word spreads as families invite other friends in need of food to come to the Birch home and get “porch food.”
- 1994** Over 150 families are participating! The Birches begin a formal referral process. Before a family brings a friend with them to the Birch’s home, they must fill out a short form, vouching that they know them. This referral process continues to be how people join the program until 2017. In order to reach families who are not receiving any assistance, Birch chooses not to accept SNAP or TANF recipients.
- 2002** With a waitlist of roughly 100 families, it takes 5 months to become part of the program.
- 2008** Referrals taken from once every four months to once every two months.
- 2012** Sometimes larger items (like a couch or BBQ) are donated, so this year the drawing item system starts. Each month, participants enter to win one of several large items!
- 2017** There is no longer a wait list, so self-referral applications are now accepted - anyone is able to apply for the program online. The original referral process established in 1994 still exists for those who would like to bring a friend.
- 2022** Birch extends our reach and begins accepting participants who may be receiving SNAP (a requirement established in 1994 so we could prioritize helping those who could not otherwise find food assistance). Without a waitlist, we are able to accept all families who will benefit from the Sustainable Families Program, which includes a strong emphasis on financial literacy and education.



FAST FACTS: AGENCIES

Agencies are other nonprofits that work alongside Birch. Without these other agencies, Birch Community Services wouldn't exist! Birch began with a donation of bread from Union Gospel Mission, followed by Blanchet House, Northwest Medical Teams, Sunshine Division, and others...all other local nonprofits.

When Barry Birch starts receiving calls with donations, he always says yes. However, sometimes there is too much of a certain product to distribute to families coming to his house (say, two pallets of pickles!). At such times, he calls, he calls other nonprofits to see if they need some of that item. In this way, Birch's reciprocal agency program is born.

To this day, Birch works with many other nonprofits that both give and receive from Birch. This way we're all able to share the excess product with whomever needs it.

Now, about 70 other nonprofits come to Birch every week to receive food for their organization. There is no volunteer requirement, but they pay \$125/month. Through these agencies, Birch's food reaches about 25,000 additional people each month!

See reverse for the agencies who are currently receiving food from Birch.

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AGENCIES RECEIVING FOOD FROM BIRCH

- Felida Bible Church
- The Loft
- Set Free Christian Fellowship
- Potluck in the Park
- Basic Needs (Calvary Chapel Southeast)
- Tigard Community Friends Church Food Share Pantry
- St. John The Baptist St. Vincent DePaul
- Lifeline Connections
- Mother & Child Education Center
- Cascade Relief Team
- House of Myrrh Ministries
- Our Streets PDX
- Waste Not Food Taxi
- Tremont Church Food Pantry
- New Life Friends Church
- South Kelso Neighborhood Association
- Columbia Gorge Helping Hands Program
- Live Love Center (NW)
- Portland Christian Early Childhood Program
- Salvation Army Corps (Gresham)
- The Canby Center
- Sanctuary Church Food Pantry
- St. Henry's St. Vincent DePaul
- Emmanuel Community Services
- Mission Teens, Inc. (Northwest Bible Training Center)
- Beautiful Portland
- Angels of God
- Waves of Grace NW
- Freedom House Ministries
- Harvest Christian Church
- Straightway Services
- Flash Love
- East County Aid and Comfort
- Compassion 360
- Zarephath's Pantry
- DeRose Community Bridge and Holistic Wellness
- FolkTime
- Latino Network
- Church of the Nazarene Adonai
- Gethsemane Ministries
- Tigard Grange Free Food Project
- Children's Club, Inc.
- Speak Out PDX
- Portland Lents Foursquare (Revolution Foursquare Church)
- The Redeemed Christian Church of God Chapel of Mercy
- ST Group | Silver Years Adult Day Care Center
- Portland Open Bible Community Pantry
- Free on the Outside
- No One Left Behind
- St. Mary Magdalene Parish (The Madeleine)
- Teen Challenge Men
- Estacada Area Food Bank
- St. Rita's SVdP



FAST FACTS: LOCATIONS

FALL 1992: PORCH FOOD

- Suzanne and Barry are gifted loaves of bread from the Union Gospel Mission. It's a blessing to them, so they share it with neighbors in need.
- Donations keep coming to Suzanne and Barry! They keep a small box on their front porch with food for neighbors to take what they need.
- Soon, this box is overflowing with bread, and their front porch is covered in food! Their friends start referring to this as "porch food."
- The food eventually overflows into their home - their couch is covered in bread, and Suzanne and Barry are desperate to find a solution.

1993: THE HOUSE OF DAVID GARAGE: 400 SQ FT

1631 SE 117th, Portland, 97216

- In March, Suzanne becomes overwhelmed with the amount of food in their living room and prays about how to go forward. That morning, her devotional passage was John 21:16: "Feed My Sheep." To Suzanne and Barry, this is a direct answer to keep collecting and distributing food.
- Suzanne's brother, David, dies in a plane crash and leaves his life insurance policy to her.
- With this money, Suzanne and Barry purchase a home with a 400-sqft garage to continue to distribute food.
- More and more people are invited - soon 100+ families come from 3:30-5:30 pm on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

1995: THE OLD AUTO REPAIR SHOP: 2,700 SQ FT

104 NE 80th Ave, Portland 97213

- A friend notices the 175+ families the Birches are helping and purchases a larger building (an old auto repair shop) to lease to BCS.
- The shop had a gravel parking lot which was very uneven. It was a wonderful change to have a parking lot, the parking lot would be filled with huge pools of water on any rainy day.

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FAST FACTS: LOCATIONS

1997: PING-PONG PARLOR NEXT TO A BOWLING ALLEY: 5,000 SQ FT

- By 1997, almost 300 families are coming to receive food. There is an opportunity to move to a 5,000-sqft space, almost doubling their current amount of space!
- This facility is next door to an old bowling alley, and the landlord allows pallets of extra food to be stored in the lobby of the bowling alley.
- With a sloped floor near the garage door, pools of water would collect. Although Barry measures, finding the height of his van was a few inches too tall to fit through the garage door, he tries anyway and finds the van miraculously fits and can be parked inside! God surely had His hand in this perfect fit. Now they can safely park the van to load and unload the food inside the shop.

2000: THE SAN RAFAEL WAREHOUSE: 11,000-22,000 SQ FT

- In 1999, it is clear that Birch has grown AGAIN! The warehouse on San Rafael was available. It was a brand new shell with no electricity, plumbing, etc. The board makes the decision to build out the location to our exact needs.
- In 2000, the construction of the office, cooler, and upstairs clothing and boot area is complete. The building consists of three spaces totaling 20,000 sqft. BCS begins by just occupying the first 11,000 sq feet. As the remainder of the building is vacant, the landlord occasionally allows Birch to store extra food in the vacant space, until BCS officially decides to rent the entire 20,000 sqft warehouse. (And the upstairs boot area adds 2,000 square feet!)
- The move to this warehouse is a huge upgrade because there are three loading docks, two at dock height.
- By 2001, new pallet racking is purchased with many new storage possibilities at this location!

CHANGES AT SAN RAFAEL

- The cooler at BCS has been through many iterations, and now BCS is one of the largest distributors of healthy, perishable foods - mostly because of our large cooler capacity! It begins as just Gracie (on the far left) and is only 10' tall. It is reconstructed many times with additional compressors and undergoes a large renovation in 2007 which establishes both Gracie and George to be the height of the warehouse. In 2021, the cooler size is tripled and the third section, BOB (Big Ol' Barry) was born!
- In 2007 the classroom/computer room was established. The second office became a prayer room. In 2012 the space was expanded and we were finally able to have classes and seminars for up to 40 people on site.



FAST FACTS: VEHICLES

In the early days of Birch Community Services, our vehicles are our biggest pain point!

Since the Birches agree to picking up any donation - any quantity or any item - it soon becomes important to have a multi-purpose fleet.

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- 1992** Barry drives his Toyota Cressida sedan down to Union Gospel Mission or Portland Rescue Mission. By the end of the year, the Birches purchase an old, beat-up, brown minivan which they call "Ugly." Ugly is now the primary vehicle for pick ups.
- 1994** The Birches purchase a 1978 Dodge conversion van for \$4,000, with a vacation set-up in the back and a brand new engine. When they remove everything in the back, three whole pallets fit inside. Jonah, their son, remembers getting picked up from middle school after Barry had been to PRM. Sometimes he would have to ride home on top of the produce! This van is white and blue, and therefore had the name, "Vanna White and Blue."
- 1999** "Big Red," the first dock-high truck is 16' long and carries six pallets at one time! However, it is hard to keep running. In the first year, they replace the engine, brakes, starter, carburetor, water pump, AND the clutch! It still is a huge step forward.
- 2000** Receive a donation of a 1988 20' International diesel. This truck holds up to eight pallets at one time. It is named the BATmobile (Birch Area Transport).



FAST FACTS: VEHICLES

- 2000** The board approves a \$13K budget to purchase a 12-14' vehicle. Barry prays and pours over newspaper ads each night, looking for the right deal. Finally, he finds a 1990 Ford 350 with a Gruman 14' box, which holds up to six pallets. The seller, Nels, is supportive of the Birch mission and sets the price to only \$2,000!
- 2001** BCS purchases a 24' box truck. This truck is stolen twice, but returned both times. Therefore, it was named the "Prodigal." It is the truck that always comes back home.
- 2006** A semi truck and trailers (53' and 32' long) are given to BCS and named "The Goat." This unruly truck/trailer combo has a short life span and is retired after only a few years.
- 2008** BCS purchases a brand new Sterling 26' refrigerated box truck. This is a fabulous truck, and is still being driven daily in 2022. With over 250,000 miles, it is ready to be retired and BCS is currently fundraising for its replacement.
- 2012** From 2011-2012 we receive multiple donations from foundations such as the Murdock Charitable Trust, the Meyer Memorial Trust, and many individuals who made it possible to purchase a new 26' Freightliner refrigerated truck. This truck is still driven daily at BCS in 2022.
- 2012** Birch purchases a New Sprinter Van, thanks to a donation from Walmart.
- 2020** BCS Replaces the 2012 Sprinter Van with a new Transit Van.
- 2021** Birch purchases a new Peterbilt truck. This truck is our first CDL truck requiring a Class C license, which allows for safer, heavier loads.
- 2023** A \$100,000 grant from Metro will fund 60% of the cost of a truck to replace our Sterling 26' truck from 2008.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CONTRIBUTE TO FUND THE GAP TO PURCHASE THIS NEW TRUCK, PLEASE VISIT BCSI.ORG/DONATE OR THE FINANCIAL SUPPORT TABLE.



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FAST FACTS: IN-KIND DONORS

- 1992**
- Barry and Suzanne were gifted a few bags of bread from the Union Gospel mission.
 - McTavish and Classic Foods were the next donors.
 - Barry Birch would pick up donations from Union Gospel Mission, Portland Rescue Mission, and Medical Teams International after he was finished with work as an office furnishings broker.
 - 30-gallon plastic barrels of Stagg chili are donated - Suzanne Birch and Leann Rowlett scoop the chili into individualized portions for families!
- late 1990s**
- Nestle donates everything from chocolate milk and creamers, to pasta, and cookie dough.
 - Partnered with Shriner's Food Caravan (the last remaining Shriner's Food Caravan in the US!)
 - 1998 - Danner boots begins donating, creating a huge value for families in need of safe footwear.
- early 2000s**
- Reser's Fine Foods starts donating high quality picnic foods and Inmar increases their donations of nonperishable staple items.
 - Costco starts donating.
 - Birch receives produce from Charlie's Produce, Organically Grown, Apple Foods, and Imperfect Produce (now our largest produce donors!).
 - Ulta donates excess makeup and skincare products to Birch.
- 2007**
- Wayne Farms starts donating large semi-truck loads of chicken regularly, providing an excellent lean source of protein for families
- 2010s**
- Home Depot and Bed Bath and Beyond donate home improvement and home décor to Birch.
 - Farmers from Bend grow crops of potatoes, just for Birch families!
 - Donor base grow from ~200-300 in-kind donors and donations grow from 5 million pounds/year to 13 million pounds a year!
- 2020**
- During the pandemic, BCS sees a massive increase in donations (particularly from food distributors who serviced closed restaurants).



**CELEBRATING
30 YEARS**

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FAST FACTS: EDUCATION

While Birch Community Services began with Suzanne and Barry distributing food, their heart has always been for people to use their food budget to achieve their financial goals.

When Barry and Suzanne got married, they made a commitment to become debt-free and live the rest of their lives debt-free. Receiving and distributing free food seemed like a great way to make financial progress!

The 2000s

In 2000, three board members: Egbert Kunrath, Aaron Aigner, and Kevin Watts, facilitate the first “Master Your Money” class for families at Birch Community Services. Ten couples attend this first class.

By 2002, Egbert Kunrath continues teaching the “Master Your Money” Class four times each year. General announcements about the classes are distributed to all participants, with the option of signing up. Some families are specifically recommended to take the class if they have particularly difficult or complicated financial situations.

Also during the early 2000s, a team of staff and volunteers works to connect families with classes that are of interest to them. BCS coordinates participant families and other community members to teach one-time courses. Classes ranged from cooking to canning to quilting, couponing, and even interior design on a budget!

2007

BCS constructs a computer lab and classroom in the back of the warehouse. Computer classes such as how to use Word, Excel, and resume writing are offered.

In 2007, taking a finance class is now strongly suggested for all families who have been at Birch for more than one year. The class is still taught by Egbert Kunrath, and it hosted at Mountainview Christian Church. About 20-40 people attend each class.



FAST FACTS: EDUCATION

- 2014** While financial education and literacy is emphasized at Birch, Suzanne and Barry are concerned that the BCS budget does not reflect an emphasis on financial education. In early 2015, they hired Dino Biaggi as the Program Manager, as the first full-time staff to ensure families were receiving the help they needed to get on their feet.
- 2015** BCS launches a mentoring program where specific families are matched with community volunteers. Most of these volunteers have careers in the finance industry. These one-on-one meetings were so beneficial to these families that in 2016 Dino Biaggi starts one-on-one meetings with every family at Birch Community Services.
- 2016**
- 2017** Birch's own financial curriculum, re\$tart, is launched. Dino, the Financial Literacy Manager, creates a curriculum based off the previous courses offered (Good \$ense, Financial Peace University, and Financial Beginnings). re\$tart is created to focus on the content that most applies to Birch participants' financial situations.
- 2020** All financial courses move to Zoom, and attendance is no longer limited by physical space! Many more couples attend together, because childcare is no longer a necessity. All one-on-one meetings are also moved to Zoom.
- In September of 2020, Beka Dorr is hired as the first Financial Literacy Assistant, helping to maintain communications with families.
- 2021** Thanks to a matching grant from the WHH Foundation and many other generous donors, we hire our second financial literacy counselor so families can now have one-on-one financial meetings twice each year.
- 2022** Earlier this year, our in-house (program participants only) website was launched as a one-stop shop for financial resources!

WE LOOK FORWARD TO EXPANDING OUR COURSE OFFERINGS IN 2023 TO INCLUDE FIRST-TIME HOME BUYING, TIME MANAGEMENT, CREATING A FAMILY VISION, AND ESTATE PLANNING AND WILLS.



FAST FACTS: GARDENS

Penelope's Garden 2009

Penelope's Giving Garden was the original Birch Teaching Garden. In 2009, BCS was offered the opportunity to benefit from a vegetable garden installed for our participants. The goal of the garden was to educate and encourage Birch families on how to layout and build their own gardens. Verdura Culinary Gardens helped develop and install the sustainable organic vegetable garden, utilizing participant volunteers. The BCS Teaching Garden was born.

Riverbend Garden (2009-2011)

Riverbend Organic Gardens began development in June of 2009. Verdura Culinary Gardens, was approached again by a generous family who wanted to help give back to the community under the supervision and expertise of Caroline and Larry Lewis. This partnership perfectly fulfilled what BCS strives to create; we are focused on the importance of teaching our families new skills that will encourage and enrich their lives.

Baker Garden (2012-2018)

Casey and Angela Baker, participants with Birch Community Services, had been planning on turning their city lot into a sustainable garden. They decided to share this experience as a living, learning lab with other participants at BCS – and the BCS Baker Garden was born.

The Sunderland Garden (2012-Present)

Located near the BCS warehouse, Sunderland Garden is a predominantly culinary garden planted, maintained, and harvested by BCS volunteers with a common interest in learning sustainability through growing their own food. In 2021 alone we spent over 400 volunteer hours in the garden with 88% of volunteers learning something new the day they gardened.

"This year, we have multiplied our garden by 4 times at least. I love working and learning in the Birch garden. I learn so much."

-BCS Participant



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FAST FACTS: KEY PEOPLE

Birch Community Services WOULD NOT EXIST without a long list of servant-hearted volunteers over the past 30 years. Unfortunately, there is no way to list all of the key people who created the BCS environment that we know today. Here is a small list of the huge group of people who have made Birch Community Services the thriving organization this it is today.

Suzanne and Barry Birch

Our founders distributed food from their home for three years. They graciously allowed over 150 people come to their house, use their son's bathroom, park in their driveway, and they used their own cars and gas to pick up food from all over town. In 1995, Barry quit his job and started receiving a small salary from Birch. Barry served as the Executive Director until 2005 (when he turned 62 and began receiving social security). At that point, Suzanne became the Executive Director and Barry became a full time volunteer! Barry passed away in 2015, surrounded by family and friends.

EARLY FAMILIES

When BCS started, families like the **Rowletts, Smouses, Richards**, and many more not only enjoyed the benefit of receiving food, but were dedicated to helping Suzanne and Barry distribute food effectively and efficiently. These families all talk about scooping chili out of 30-gallon barrels into gallon-size Ziploc bags! There was always an interesting variety of food!

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FAST FACTS: KEY PEOPLE

VOLUNTEERS

Like the early families, throughout the 90s, many families not only received food, but also enjoyed the aspect of volunteering to help operations run smoothly. It wasn't until 2000 that volunteering became a requirement...and even then it was only after three years of participation! Until that point, Barry was the only employee and hundreds of families volunteered. After such positive feedback about the volunteer requirement in 2000, it became a requirement for all families to volunteer after just one month on the program in 2007. This has created a beautiful sense of community and ownership our families have at Birch Community Services, and we are grateful for their service!

CHRISTIAN SEARCH

In 2003, Christian was hired as Birch's first employee (besides Barry!) He worked in the warehouse after he was done with his high school courses, and continued working at Birch until 2008. He moved to TriCities to take over his family's HVAC company...but he **STILL** comes to Birch to volunteer. Just last year, in 2021, he did all the labor for our cooler expansion. Over the years, he has donated thousands of dollars of labor to keep our coolers up and running!

VOLUNTEER DRIVERS

For all 30 years of Birch, we have received donations because of our ability to always say YES and pick up food quickly and reliably from food distributors, restaurants, grocery stores, and other food retailers. To this day, we only have one full time driver and one part time driver on staff, despite having three trucks and one transit van. The other vehicles are driven by volunteer drivers, whether they are retired truck drivers like Wayne Cooke, current drivers who enjoy volunteering for a day, or just someone who enjoys driving a large truck!

WE LOOK FORWARD TO WELCOMING EVEN MORE VOLUNTEERS IN 2023!



FAST FACTS: AWARDS & RECOGNITION

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- 1994** Birch Gleaners, Inc officially becomes a 501c3 nonprofit.
- 2000** Channel 8 "Eight's Heroes" on 5:00 news features Barry Birch and BCS.
- 2002** Featured in Lifestyles Northwest newspaper.
- 2004** Birch Gleaners becomes Birch Community Services.
- 2005** Suzanne and Barry are honored at the PepsiCo Christmas Party
- 2007** Portland Business Journal places BCS in top 25 Non-Profits for the first time.
Senator Ron Wyden visits the Birch warehouse!
- 2011** Birch is featured on the NBC Nightly News. People from all over the country contact the Birches.
- 2012** Suzanne and Barry give a presentation at George Mason University for the Center for Nonprofit Management in Fairfax, Virginia.
Suzanne and Barry are on the 700 Club.
- 2013** Suzanne and Barry Birch are honored as *Oregon Heroes* through the *Heroes of the Heart* event by the Adventist Health Foundation
- 2012-** Birch hosts replication seminars for people
2017 interested in creating an organization like Birch.
- 2017** Birch is honored as one of "100 Best Green Workplaces" and "100 Best Nonprofits to Work For" by Portland Business Journal
Birch is honored as the "Oregon Recycler of the Year" and receives the "Rotary Ethics in Business" award.
- 2018** Birch is chosen as a Catalyst by Stand Together and is invited to be one of their Catalyst nonprofits who have an innovative solution to poverty.
- 2019,** Birch earns the highest Four Star Rating on Charity
2021 Navigator.
- 2020** Birch is named a finalist for the Better Business Bureau Torch award in Ethics
- 2021** Birch named one of Portland Business Journal's "100 Best Nonprofits to Work For".



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FAST FACTS: SUSTAINABILITY

REDUCING WASTE

Starting in 1992, all the food the Birches picked up would have otherwise gone to waste.

Stores, restaurants, and food suppliers may reject or discard food that's still good for a number of reasons such as the product is near the end of life, the packaging is damaged, the produce is ugly, there isn't enough shelf space, or too much product was ordered.

Birch Community Services is an outlet for about 300 different suppliers to donate their product that would otherwise go to the landfill.

From the beginning, Birch has shared product with many other nonprofit organizations in order to get as much food as possible to people in need.

In 2004, the agency process was formalized and now BCS gives 3-4 million pounds of food to these organizations each year - the food they otherwise would not have the capacity or ability to get directly from the suppliers!

RECYCLING

In 2017, Birch was honored as Oregon's Recycler of the Year.

Through recycling, Birch has generated revenue each year.

Since 2018, recycling has generated over \$100,000 in revenue!



FAST FACTS: SUSTAINABILITY

FARMERS

Since the 1990s, farmers and composters have come to Birch to receive produce, bread, and other items that are no longer of good enough quality to put out for shoppers.

These farmers have a variety of animals such as pigs, goats, chickens. One farmer even raises bugs and sends his larvae all over the country for fishing bait!

We have some composting farmers who find our past-prime products perfect to keep the pH balance of their soil.

Currently, 14 farmers and 3 composters come to the warehouse weekly.

AGENCIES

We also give 4 million pounds of product to about 70 other nonprofit organizations each year.

