

## Gleaners

By: Kendelle Fawcett

Have you ever heard about the amount of food that gets wasted in our food system? Whether it gets wasted in our fridges, thrown out at grocery stores or the vegetables that rot in a farmer's field, it is shocking how much food does not end up in someone's stomach. It is a known fact that there is enough food in the world to feed everyone even though people continue to go hungry (Oxfam). One of the causes of hunger is the unequal distribution of food, and a specific group of organizations, called 'Gleaners, are working to redistribute food in a more equal way. Gleaner organizations can be found across Canada. They take produce that is not used or sold by farmers, process it, and send it off to locations around the world that need food. They see the problem of food being wasted in Canada as an opportunity to share with people around the world. Gleaning is the act of gathering the leftover produce in a field or orchard after the initial harvest. The concept of allowing vulnerable people in a society, such as widows, orphans, or aliens, to glean in a field is as old as the Bible (Lev. 23:22). The Gleaners just take this concept one step further, by collecting the food themselves in order to send it out to vulnerable people in our global society.

Jenn Bate, a first time SOOPER from Richmond Hill, Ontario, went to work with two different



A busy morning on 'the floor' at the Fraser Valley Gleaners Society in the Fall. Photo by Jenn Bate.

Gleaner organizations in British Columbia (BC) last fall. The Okanagan Gleaners Society, in Oliver BC, was established first and the Fraser Valley Gleaners Society, in Abbotsford BC, was modeled after them. The Gleaners accept donations of produce from local orchards and farms, and with volunteer labour process and dry the produce so that it can be shipped around the world to where people need food.

In spring 2016, Jenn realized that she would have an empty 'nest' in the fall and at that time she started to feel called to "travel with purpose", specifically with the purpose of being "the hands and feet of Jesus" wherever she would go. Jenn found herself a used van and with the help of many skilled friends and family, fixed it up so it would be ready for the journey of over 4,000 km to BC. She created her own little home away from home with just enough amenities to create her own "bed and breakfast" for the 2 months she would be away. Now that her trip is over, Jenn is dreaming up ways of letting this mobile bed and breakfast bless others in the future.



The interior of Jenn Bate's van, fitted with drapes and a custom made bedframe.  
Photo by Jenn Bate

Once Jenn made it to the Gleaners she parked her van amongst the RV's at the onsite campground. Both locations have a campground and a main building where the work is carried out every day. Jenn worked with the gleaners for a total of seven weeks and she saw firsthand that "From day to day the Gleaners don't know how many workers will come to help out or just what veggies will be donated. Yet every day, regardless, there was a job for everyone and the work got done. [It was] so incredible. It totally blew me away to daily see how God provided product and people."



Andy Brandt and Dave Traub working on the Gleaning Floor, at Fraser Valley Gleaners this fall.  
Photo by Jenn Bate.

Everyday there was a list of jobs and people could choose where they wanted to work. Jenn purposefully choose different tasks each day in order to get to know more people and learn about their lives. One gentleman she got to know was Andy Brandy. He is 97 years old, but still volunteers at the Fraser Valley Gleaners every morning. He was a passionate farmer and even though he doesn't work his fields anymore he is still working to help feed people around the world. This is just one of the many volunteers with incredible stories about how they consistently and quietly continue to find ways to be involved through their work with the Gleaners.



Thomas Thumbach at Garnett Hollow Organic Farm, in Summerland, BC, digging up potatoes that will be collected by volunteers from the Okanagan Gleaners and donated to make soup. Photo by Jenn Bate.

Jenn went with the purpose of blessing the people that she would work with, but she came away from the experience feeling like she was the one who had been blessed. “Gods incredible spirit of joy was so evident in the Gleaners and staff. This joy inspired me to write a song which I called the Gleaner keener song. Another gleaner and I performed it and dedicated it to the gleaners and staff and God for their cheerful work.” Here are the lyrics:

Verse 1: We are the gleaner keeners who love to chop and chat. Some youthful, youthful seniors make soup with that

Verse 2: Caring, loving, caring we feed God’s folk in need, the love of Christ we’re sharing and lives are changed indeed

Chorus:

Soup for the body

Soup for the soul

To God be the glory

Chop, chop we go

To check out the full version, go to:

<https://www.facebook.com/Okanagan-Gleaners-225816477615568/videos/>