

BREADCRUMBS

January 2016

The Newsletter of the Irving Park Community Food Pantry
Celebrating Thirty-One Years of Service to the Community

FDC Grant Aids Pantry in 2016

The Irving Park Community Food Pantry is pleased to announce that the FDC Foundation has provided us with a grant of \$33,400, the full amount we requested for 2016.

The money will fund our Fresh Foods for Better Health initiative and our Client Resources Coordinator position during the year. The grant also will be used to expand the Project Home Grown community garden by the Keeler entrance of the Irving Park United Methodist Church, from which we operate.

The group typically does not give grants in excess of \$30,000, but they continued our funding at this level for the second year due to the efficiency that we obtain from these grants according to John Doyle of FDC.

We are grateful to the group for its generous support and to its board for its efforts on our behalf. Special thanks also to volunteer Gloria Price for preparing our proposal.

Schurz Food Lab Gears Up

Jaime Guerro, founder/CEO of Urban Farm Eatery, in December gave representatives of the Pantry a tour of the Food Science Lab he and others are developing at Schurz High School. The program is ramping up with ambitious plans to provide the Pantry with a variety of micro-greens, greens and vegetables to distribute to our clients.

The program is expanding as funding becomes available. The lab currently is running several small-scale projects, including greens towers (growing kale) and an aquaponics system (in which dirty water is filtered through clay spheres to feed lettuce). Master Grower Nick Greens of Nick Greens Inc. is constructing vertical hydroponic beds for growing commercial-levels of greens in



Jaime Guerro, founder/CEO of Urban Farm Eatery, showed off programs at the Food Science Lab at Schurz High School to Pantry Board Member Sara Yoest and Executive Director John Psiharis during a recent visit.

nutrient-rich water and horizontal propagation trays for growing micro-greens and herbs.

The Lab also is working with MIT to develop the university's first food computer in the Midwest, which will identify the proper nutrients and watering schedule to maximize output for each green. Jessica Schwartz of BuildOn is providing support and developing additional programs.



Aquaponics system.

The programs currently have a few students involved, which will ramp up to approximately 500 next year as the program develops, Guerro says. The lab also will be looking for community volunteers to help maintain the beds and harvest the greens. Their goal is to construct two

more horizontal beds and an additional vertical
(continued on back)

(continued from front)

bed, at which point they estimate they will be able to provide the Pantry with as much as 1,300 pounds of the fast-growing greens and vegetables per month!

The lab has reached the two-thirds point of its funding goal of \$15,000, with the rest needed to develop the program fully. For more information, contact Guerro at urbanfarmeatery@gmail.com.



Hydroponic growing beds are being set up at Schurz's Food Lab to grow greens for the Pantry.

Mount Olive Holds Food Canvas

Special thanks to the parishioners and volunteers at Mount Olive Church, who canvassed Old Irving Park and the Villa to collect donations of food and money for the Pantry in November, prior to the first of our two holiday distributions. This year we again received nearly a full truck load of food and a check for \$3,100.



Roger Torbick of Mount Olive (center) presents a check to Pantry Executive Director John Psiharis from the group's annual drive. Also present were Operations Manager Jim Byrne, Bookkeeper Lisa Albrecht (right) and Office Manager Sandra Schwarzbeck.

We appreciate Roger Torbick for his leadership on this project, Alfreda Rommel for her efforts in organizing it as a Pantry board member and all of the members of Mount Olive who participated, as well as all our neighbors for contributing so generously.

Schools Supply Food, Socks

Several elementary schools ran food drives to aid our holiday distribution, both to restock our dwindling supplies and add to the special items we give our clients for the holidays.

St. Viator Elementary School gathered more than 20 boxes of non-perishable food items, while William P. Gray Elementary School, under the direction of faculty members Dina Alikakos and Monica Gil, obtained more than 100 boxes of donations. We thank both schools for the donations and all their efforts on our behalf.



The Newcomb Knights, the 7th-grade boys' advisory led by Ms. Newcomb, won the competition at Intrinsic School to donate the most socks to the Pantry. In all, the school donated more than 80 pairs.

Thank you to students and staff at Intrinsic High School, which held a Sock Hop drive for the Pantry. During October and November, they collected more than 80 pairs of socks, and they intend to continue the program for several more months.

Special thanks to Shalitha Brown, 7th grade math teacher, who coordinated the program and worked with the Pantry to deliver the socks. We are always grateful to receive socks, especially men's white crew socks, which are in high demand.

Pantry Serves in November

In November, the Pantry served 1,538 people in 493 households, including 116 people in 45 households that came for the first time and 163 people in 47 households who were served during our Tuesday hours.

Our Pet Food Corner provided pet food to 236 households. Thank you for all your help in ensuring we remain "Neighbors Helping Neighbors!"