

BREADCRUMBS

April 2016

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

Pantry Herb Garden Plans Growth

The Irving Park Community Food Pantry is starting up its Herb Garden at the Irving Park United Methodist Church in the space adjacent to the Pantry entrance just off Keeler Ave. alongside the Serenity and Prayer Garden. We are seeking donations and volunteers to help build on the success it had during its introduction last year.

The garden is collaboration with Three Brothers Garden, which operates its own garden for the Pantry, and IPUMC. The herbs that we grow, comprising basil, oregano, cilantro, thyme, parsley, mint, rosemary and sage, are harvested early Wednesday mornings and distributed to clients at distributions later that day.

Last year's garden got off to a great start, with more than 50 bags of herbs distributed each week. We are now looking for donations to increase production before expanding our crops in new ways next year.



The herb garden (at rear, shown at last year's opening) is adjacent to IPUMC's Prayer Garden.

Among the items we are seeking are organic soils and herb plants. We also need volunteers to help tend the garden during the week or sponsors to "adopt" a bed. We also are looking for tried-and-true recipes to maximize our clients' use.



The Pantry's garden was welcomed to the community at a grand opening last summer.

For more information on the program or to arrange a donation, please contact Lee Stein at lee@irvingparkfoodpantry.org.

Liberty Tax Programs Aids Pantry

Thank you to Liberty Tax Service at 4900 W Irving Park, which ran two fundraisers for the Pantry during tax season. The first, in February, provided a \$5 donation for each tax return completed and raised \$465. The second, during March, discounted preparation fees by 50% to everyone who donated at least \$20. We appreciate their efforts for us!



Liberty's Michael Barnett (left) presents Executive Director John Psiharis and Volunteer Manager Lee Stein with the donation raised from clients.

Girl Scout Raises Cookie Donation

Great thanks to Becky Spears, a Brownie Girl Scout at St. Viator Elementary School, who asked her customers to donate a box of cookies during her sales this year. She donated 24 boxes last year and set a goal of 100 for this year—which she surpassed, donating 110 boxes to the Pantry! We appreciate her efforts in making this happen and giving our Tuesday night clients a nice surprise in March.



Becky Spear sets up her cookie station with the help of her mom, Gina, and brother James.

Pantry Needs Volunteers!

[Irving Park Foods Pantry](#) needs a box-cutting volunteer! This is labor intensive work for between an hour and three between 9 a.m. and 12 p.m. on Wednesdays. If you are interested, please email Lee at volunteer@irvingparkfoodpantry.org

For any Early Birds, the Pantry also needs two to three volunteers to help in the kitchen. Hours are Wednesdays from 6-8 a.m. Contact Volunteer Manager Lee Stein at 312/608-1465 or email her at volunteer@irvingparkfoodpantry.org. Thank you!

Midcity Nissan Runs Food Drive

Thanks also to Midcity Nissan for running a program for us earlier this year, in which customers got \$3 off any work performed for each food item they donated to the Pantry!



Packets of bay leaves were given to clients to help spice up the meals they cooked.

Garden Started With Donation

Thank you to Bella Ventresca for her donation of packets of bay leaves. They were happily accepted by our clients to spice up the meals they made with the groceries we gave them. It also gave our herb garden a good head start on the season.

Cat, Small-Dog Food Needed

We are the only food pantry in Chicago to give our clients pet food, but pet-food donations from our usual sources have dwindled recently. We are especially in need of cat food in all types as well as kibble for smaller-sized dogs. We always need supplies of litter and other supplies, toys, etc.



Volunteers provide approximately half of all Pantry clients with pet food when they come in for food.

Pantry Aids 1,365 in January

In January, the Pantry served 1,365 people in 491 households, including 103 new clients in 44 households and 67 people in 22 families who came during our Tuesday night hours. We also provided pet food to 258 households for dogs, cats, birds and other small animals.

Our volunteers also helped six households with nine people apply for SNAP benefits. Thank you to everyone for ensuring we remain “Neighbors Helping Neighbors!”