

BREADCRUMBS

January 2015

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

FDC Increases Pantry's Grant

The Irving Park Community Food Pantry is pleased to announce that the FDC Foundation has provided us with a grant of \$33,600 to continue funding our Fresh Foods for Better Health initiative and our Client Resources Coordinator position during 2015. The grant also will provide seed money to help start the proposed community garden at Irving Park United Methodist Church, from which we operate.

The grant represents more than a 10% increase from the grant we've received for the past two years from the group. According to Board member Susan Patke, the FDC Board was quite impressed with the quality and quantity of services we provide as well as the Pantry's leadership. The group typically does not give out grants in excess of \$30,000, but this year they granted our full request based on Susan's recommendation.

We are grateful to FDC for giving us such generous support and especially to Susan for her efforts on our behalf. Special thanks also to volunteer Gloria Price for preparing our proposal.

Sadly, this month we are parting company with Julie Kult, our Client Resources Coordinator, who is leaving us to care for her newborn son. We are currently recruiting for a new part-time person with social-work skills to aid our clients with the variety of issues they have beyond food insecurity. We appreciate all of her hard work for our clients.

Liberty Tax Offers Donations

Liberty Tax Services on West Irving Park Road is partnering with the Pantry once again this year to generate additional donations. For every paid tax return completed between January 2 and February 15, Liberty will donate \$5 to the Pantry. For more information, contact manager Michael McNichols at mcnicholsm@marwill.com or 773/286-6900.



Executive Director John Psiharis accepts some of the "hygiene kits" created by St. Viator Brownies and Juniors Girl Scout troops

St. Viator Makes Contributions

Thank you to the leaders and members of the Brownie and Juniors Girl Scout troops at St. Viator Elementary School for the recent contribution of nearly 100 "hygiene kits." The kits consisted of toothpaste, toothbrushes, soap, shampoo, hand sanitizer, shaving cream and razors. The contribution was part of the girls' activities to raise awareness about those in need, for which they earned a "Heart for the Homeless" badge.

Many of our clients are in need of these items, and we seldom have enough to meet the requests we receive. We very much appreciate this targeted approach to donations.

We'd also like to thank St. Viator's Student Council, which organized a classroom food drive before Thanksgiving. The students gathered a dozen boxes of food. Then in early December, the St. Viator Parent Association collected food at its expanded Mistletoe Market and auctioned donated items. Those efforts brought in seven more boxes of food and \$370. We appreciate all their efforts!

Thanks to Everyone Who Donated

Thank you to Irving Park United Methodist Church, which donated some of the proceeds from its Broadway Christmas performances in December to the Pantry. We'd also like to thank the anonymous donor who brought into the church a donation as well as baby formula, which we always need.

We've received a number of other donations. We've initiated a partnership with Rotary Club of Chicago O'Hare, through the efforts of Pat Rantella, to receive boxes of personal-care items from United Airlines that include toiletry kits with toothbrush, toothpaste, combs, face wipes and even slippers. These items are collected from planes after international trips, as opened boxes cannot be repacked. We appreciate these donations to help keep our toiletry supplies growing.

We'd also thank Paul Reimer, general manager at the Container Store on North Avenue, for 50 plastic bags to aid our holiday distribution and toy room organization. Thanks also to U-Haul on Cicero Avenue, which donated 10 large shipping cartons that served as toy collection boxes.

Our thanks go to Clover Hill Bakery, which donated pastries for our holiday distribution on December 17th. Thanks also to the Magic After School Place (MAP) kids at Carlson Community Services, who created a banner and holiday decorations for the Pantry's holiday program. We'll have a full report on the distribution next month

Thanks also to Director of Volunteers Louie Iovane and everyone at the Alzheimer's Association of Illinois, which donated hundreds of t-shirts in all sizes from its recent Memory Walk events. We will be sharing these shirts with our clients in January as an extra mid-winter treat.



Nick Calderone sets up one of our family stations during the December 17th Holiday Distribution.



Students at the Magic After School Place (MAP) at Carlson Community Services created decorations for the Pantry's December holiday distribution

Food Drives Boost Pantry

Special thanks to the parishioners and 70 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. This year was the most successful yet for this tradition. Our truck was filled to the top with food from our pickup, and the church collected nearly \$4,000.

We appreciate Roger Torbick for his leadership, Alfreda Rommel for her efforts to organize 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.

A number of other food drives were held for the Pantry this holiday season. Among those participating were Community Savings Bank and Kid Watch. Special thanks to Karla Rodrigues, manager at Spex, who coordinated a food drive in December during which people donating food received a \$25 gift card for Spex.

Pantry Serves 1,521 in November

In November, the Pantry served 1,521 people in 568 households during the three weeks we operated. Those clients also received the fixings for a Thanksgiving dinner. We added 123 people in 43 households. Our volunteers assisted 7 households with 19 people to apply for SNAP benefits.

We also provided pet food (for dogs, cats, birds and hamsters) to 224 households through our Pet Food Corner. Thank you to the Community Animal Rescue Effort (CARE) for their partnership and to the CARE and IPCFP volunteers who coordinate and take part in this valuable program. We are one of the only pantries in all of Cook County that provides pet food to our clients.