

BREADCRUMBS

November 2016

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

Holiday Donations Needed

The Irving Park Community Food Pantry has begun gathering donations for its two holiday distributions, this month and on December 21st. We are asking for contributions of funds, food and fun (i.e., books and toys) to make the season brighter for those in our community who need a helping hand during the holiday season.



Volunteers prepare one of the food lines during the Pantry's holiday distribution in 2015.

In November, we provide clients during our regular weekly distributions with additional meat and trimmings for a Thanksgiving dinner. On December 21st, we hold a special distribution at which clients receive the makings for a full holiday dinner. We also allow clients to select a gift for each of their children, along with a book and stocking stuffer.

For these special distributions, we are especially in need of juice, stuffing, cranberry sauce, canned yams and vegetables, instant potatoes, cake mixes, Jell-O and pumpkin-pie filling.

We typically give out about 400 toys to children (ages infant to 12). For some, it will be the only gift they receive. We especially need gifts for older children (age 10 to 12), especially boys, as we receive far fewer for that age group. Soccer balls and basketballs are popular options.

We also run out of books for all ages early in the



Toy Room volunteers gear up to help clients select a gift for their children during the 2015 holiday distribution.

day. We find older boys, a harder group to shop for, enjoy biographies, sports and other nonfiction books.

Unwrapped new toys and food donations can be brought to the Pantry at the Irving Park United Methodist Church (3801 N. Keeler Ave.) during office hours (call 773/283-6262 to check times). Donations can be left at the bottom of the stairs at the Grace Street entrance. They also can be brought in from 9 a.m. to noon on Wednesdays and on November 8 from 6 to 7:30 p.m. (when the Pantry is open). Local businesses also help collect donations; we'll post them to our Facebook page.

The deadline for contributing toys is Friday, December 16th. Volunteers are needed to collect toys, organize the toy room, and help with the toy distribution on December 21. For information or to volunteer, contact Sara Yost at sara.yost74@gmail.com.

Thank You for Coat Donations

Thank you to everyone who donated winter coats to our annual October program!! We appreciate all your help. Special thanks to everyone at Disney II Elementary School, especially coordinator Rose Rivers as well as Renee Linnemeyer, Nicole Morales, Eileen Lysault, Chris Fey, Bruce Yaeger, Luis Jimenez and Mariela Alvarez.

Pantry Toiletry Theft Spurs Big Community Response

Volunteers arrived at the Pantry on October 5th to find that someone has broken into the church where the Pantry is located and into our space. They broke into food-storage spaces but only stole our stockpiles of toiletries—all of them.



John Psiharis (left) accepts a \$1,000 donation from George Katsikas, vice president of Berman Mid City Nissan (3456 N. Kedzie) as volunteers Pam True (right) and Norma Stritch, who coordinate the toiletries distribution, plan ways to spend it

After a request for help and a news article on DNAInfo, the community responded with a tremendous outpouring of supplies. Some people ordered from Amazon and had boxes delivered, while others dropped off large bags of hotel-sized toiletries of all types.

Among the contributions we received were a \$1,000 donation from Berman Mid City Nissan. We also received a large donation of paper products from Cara Goad and the team at Ketchum, advertising agency for Kimberly-Clark, and four shopping bags of toiletries from Kathleen Trainer, executive director of Common Pantry, our neighboring pantry serving some of the same area.



Volunteer Craig Shutt looks over part of the donation of paper products from Kimberly Clark.



Executive Director John Psiharis and Board President Belma Torres (who nominated the Pantry) accept a 2016 Sharing the Spirit Award.

Pantry Wins Spirit Award

The Irving Park Community Food Pantry was selected as a recipient of the 2016 Sharing the Spirit Award from North Shore University Health System. The award goes to several organizations in which Hospital employees are involved.

The Pantry was nominated by Belma Torres, our board president and a social worker in their patient care system. The award and a \$500 donation were presented during a recognition breakfast at Evanston Northshore Hospital.

Other organizations honored include the Lakeview Pantry and Little Brothers Friends of the Elderly program. Many thanks to Belma for nominating our Pantry!



Shop Amazon With A Smile!

As you begin (or continue) your holiday shopping, please remember to use the Amazon Smile feature at Amazon. If you use the bookmark (which doesn't change how you shop at the site) and designate the Irving Park Food Pantry as the recipient, the Pantry will receive 0.5% of the price of all purchases. It adds up when all our Friends use it!

Pantry Serves 1,278 in September

In September, the Pantry served 1,278 people in 434 households. The total included 123 people in 40 households during our Tuesday night hours. Pet food was supplied to 189 households for dogs, cats, hamsters, birds, and several small animals. Thank you to everyone who helps us meet our mission of being "Neighbors Helping Neighbors."