



PANTRY PULSE

News from Oak Park River Forest Food Pantry

FALL 2016

HOME DELIVERY PROGRAM GOES THE DISTANCE

If you bring it to them, they will eat. And with a joyful sense of relief and a grateful smile at the door. In our ongoing mission to erase local hunger, the Pantry has added a Home Delivery program in an effort to meet the needs of homebound seniors who are physically unable to make the monthly trip to the Pantry.

Adriana Riano, Program Coordinator, oversees the pilot program, which took off in February. "After our success with Summer Meals, we discovered that people are not always going to come to us. There are many shapes and forms of hunger in different populations, whether they're children, adults, or senior citizens. We work constantly to find these pockets of need and create programs to help people receive food throughout the month," explains Riano. Home Delivery seemed the next logical step.

In order to avoid case management, the Pantry reached out to the Oak Park Township, whose Meals on Wheels program currently serves one hot meal per day to 180 homebound seniors --the exact market the pantry hoped to serve by providing groceries the seniors could use to make the rest of the meals they need. With the Township's assessments in place, Pantry staff saw this collaboration as a great opportunity. Starting with 20 clients, the Pantry prepares a list of grocery options. As the Township forwards referrals, Riano adds clients to the list for

home delivery. "Currently, the program runs once per month, with 5 routes, 5 clients each, but our eventual goal is to serve 50 clients," Riano explains.

Two days before delivery, Riano receives the available food list, and develops a list of grocery options. Volunteers call seniors the next day to select the groceries they would like to receive. On delivery day volunteers bag food for each senior, and two-person driving teams deliver groceries to seniors at their homes.

Positive reactions abound from volunteers and clients, alike. Thom Schouten, 8-year Pantry volunteer, serves as crew chief for Home Delivery. "Most of these folks are pretty much alone, and we provide something more than just food delivery when we take a few minutes to visit and ask how they're doing. This makes a big difference to them, and is very fulfilling for us," he explains. Riano adds, "When we call about menus, the clients are very grateful, and hesitate to decline anything, but we want to make sure they're going to use the food. If this chicken is too big, we'll get you something smaller; you've got too much pasta, I'll give you rice." Over time, Riano is prepared to face any potential program glitches, whether they involve weather challenges or funding concerns. It's all part of going the distance against hunger.



Marcus delivers groceries to a senior's home



Volunteers pack groceries for delivery

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- Katie Kelly, Surplus Project Lead
- Beth Klein, Finance and Operations Manager
- Adriana Riano, Program Coordinator
- Libby Stoffel, Development Coordinator

HOURS

- Every Saturday:
9:00 am – 12:00 pm
- 1st Wed. of the month:
7:00 pm – 8:30 pm
- All Other Wednesdays:
3:30 pm – 5:00 pm

TRANSFORMING WITH A “BIG IDEA”

Social Impact agencies are always trying to make changes for the better. But the ELP (Entrepreneur Leaders in Philanthropy), a working group of Oak Park-River Forest Community Foundation, wanted to know how we might transform our entire community. Oak Park River Forest Food Pantry won ELP's inaugural “Big Idea” \$50,000 grant challenge with the Surplus Project – a program that redirects surplus cafeteria food to those who need it. ELP agreed that battling food insecurity while keeping food out of the waste stream is a win for everyone.

The grant is being used to expand the Surplus Project that at present rescues 4,200 meals per year from the cafeteria at Rush Oak Park Hospital and distributes them to community members struggling with hunger. Eventually, the team hopes to rescue 25,000 meals a year.

Taking first steps towards expansion, the Pantry hired Katie Kelly as Surplus Project Lead to foster relationships, expand to new sites, and create a model to apply the concept to new communities. Oak Park and River Forest High School and Dominican University are lined up to be food donors this fall. Recipient agencies are being finalized, but include agencies in Oak Park and Austin. The ELP is also providing mentoring to help develop a business and strategic plan to expand this “Big Idea” to other communities –enabling transformation well beyond our boundaries.



Beth Klein, Jen Grenier, and Michele Zurakowski pose on-stage after winning the Big Idea Grant.

Photo courtesy of Paul Goyette

Meet Roy Smith and Barbara Young, two of the growing number of homebound seniors served by the Pantry's pilot Home Delivery program. Once free to work and move around the community with mobility and ease, age and health issues make just getting out the door a significant challenge.



Roy Smith in the kitchen of his Oak Park apartment

“Since you all have been bringing me food, I don't have to go to the Pantry. Because I can't carry it now, no way. Your good people send me just enough for me to make it, and it's nutritious and helps me to eat properly,” says Smith, age 76. On his own now, with his wife in a nearby nursing home, Smith likes the grocery choices he's offered over the phone, and says he needs all the protein he can get, to give him energy when he wakes up in the morning. Chuckling, he

adds, “When you get more tomatoes, cantaloupes and watermelon, add them to my list!”

Barbara Young worked for years doing billing and coding in the health care field, until forced to retire 4 years ago. “Before you started delivering, my daughter-in-law went to distributions for me, but it was hard,” explains Young, adding, “your program saves me from stumbling around the store, because my legs aren't going to take me there anymore.”

She loves and appreciates that the program gives her the chance to get what she really needs, and lets some things, like the pasta, slide until next time. Surrounded by her kids and most of her 5 grandsons, Young cooks in bulk, making meals she can freeze and eat later so she doesn't have to cook every day. Most items last her until the next delivery, except for peanut butter, a favorite treat she admits with a laughing smile, she just can't seem to keep around long enough.



Home delivery recipient Barbara Young at her home the day of delivery

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME FOR HOME DELIVERY CLIENTS

THE PANTRY IS THANKFUL TO THE FOLLOWING FUNDERS FOR CORPORATE, COMMUNITY FOUNDATION, OR OTHER GRANT SUPPORT IN FY2016

- Amazon Smile Foundation**
- Baird & Warner Good Will Network Fund**
- Benevity**
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- Entrepreneur Leaders in Philanthropy Fund, a giving group of the Oak Park-River Forest Community Foundation**
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- George M. Eisenberg Foundation for Charities**
- Greater Chicago Food Depository**
- Illinois Conference of the United Church of Christ**
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- St. Giles Family Mass**
- Stanley McNeil Foundation**
- The Catholic Bishop of Chicago - Rice Bowl**
- The Forever Fund**
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- U.S. Department of HUD, CDBG grant from Village of Oak Park United Way**
- United Way of DuPage/West Cook**
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This list includes FIRST TIME DONORS from January 1, 2016 to June 30, 2016. If we attributed your name incorrectly, please accept our sincerest apologies and let us know by contacting Libby@oprffoodpantry.org.

PANTRY Pulse

2016 Grammy winner

Jason Isbell



Join us for our annual
Rock On Concert to Fight Hunger
Thalia Hall – Friday, November 18th
FitzGerald's – Saturday, November 19th

To be added to our concert email list and receive advance notice of upcoming events, send your request to Marcus@oprffoodpantry.org



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“LEMONAID” FOR SUMMER MEALS

“If we are to reach real peace in this world...we shall have to begin with children.” - Mahatma Ghadi



In the wake of the tragic events of September 11th, the youth of the 700 Block of Bonnie Brae in River Forest took this maxim to heart. They sold lemonade to fund local charities with the theme of “Kids Helping Kids.” Twelve years later the LemonAid stand raised \$37,000 with the funds going to programs that help local youth. The Bonnie Brae kids vet the charities, and block members vote to select the winning programs. This year Oak Park River Forest Food Pantry and PING! (Providing Instruments for the Next Generation) will share the funds.

The Pantry will use its share to fund the Summer Meals program, now in its second year. Summer Meals offers lunches daily to children 18 and under at two open, and three closed-enrollment sites in and around Oak Park. Designed to feed children who receive free and reduced lunch during the school year but struggle with hunger during the summer, the program served more than 600 meals last year and is on track to serve over 10,000 meals and snacks this summer. LemonAid funds will ensure funding for the summer meals program in 2017.



Nick Henek and Cate Best, Co-Chairs of LemonAid announce the Food Pantry as a charity partner.

Please come and join the fun on **Sunday, September 11th on the 700 block of Bonnie Brae.**

September is...

HUNGER ACTION MONTH

visit www.oprffoodpantry.org to find out how you can take action.