

FOOD PANTRY REPORT

As Christ fed the multitudes, the mission of the Grace Lutheran Church Food Pantry is to feed the hungry.

The week of April 17 was National Volunteer Appreciation Week, a reminder that every week is volunteer appreciation week at the Grace Lutheran Food Pantry. We have about 60 volunteers whose tasks include picking up food from the Central Illinois Food Bank and local grocers; unloading, sorting and storing the food; cutting up bulk meats; packing casserole ingredients and bags of canned fruit; packing bags of food and personal items for the homeless; packing grocery bags of non-perishable foods for all clients; logging clients into our data base; keeping our client distribution area stocked, and distributing food and personal items to the clients. Thank you every day of every year to them – and to the congregation of Grace for the significant in-kind donations and staff support you contribute to our operation.

Our volunteer appreciation extends this month to Grace member Dan Hoselton and a crew he arranged from Henson Robinson to deliver and install our new (500-pound), double-door, stainless steel cooler to give us badly-needed additional storage for the milk, eggs and produce we provide to clients. It was an incredibly challenging job to navigate such a large piece of equipment into the building, down the stairwell and into position in the basement.

One more special note of appreciation this month goes out to longtime friend of the Pantry Mary Loken whose Loken Family Fund at the Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln made a donation to cover the cost of a replacement refrigerator we needed in the Pantry.

Also this month the Pantry again supported the annual Easter food basket project sponsored (and paid for) by Grace and Peace churches. Ninety households – including 80 from McClernand, Franklin, Blackhawk and Jefferson schools – were given a tote of non-perishable foods, a 10-pound hams, a gallon of milk, a loaf of bread, a 5-pound bag of potatoes, a dozen eggs, a sack of snacks and a bag of personal items.

As for regular Pantry business, the month of March was one our busiest since the onset of the COVID pandemic. For the month we served 561 households and 1,423 clients. Year-to-date through March 31, we had served 1,467 households and 3,855 individuals, representing increases of about 60 percent over the same period a year ago as we return to 2019, pre-pandemic levels of clients. About one-fourth of our clients are over age 55 and about 10 percent are homeless.

We ended March with a Pantry account balance of \$72,806. This is about \$15,000 less than our balance at the start of the year, but that is due in large part to the \$3,000 cost of our new cooler and about \$5,000 in pending reimbursements to the Pantry account that Grace and Peace will make in April to cover the costs of the Easter food baskets they sponsor.

Doug McFarlan, Director 11