

St. George Food Pantry

We Feed His Sheep

Letter from the Director



Do you like hearing people's stories as much as I do? Here is just a sampling of the many stories we hear from people who come to the Food Pantry for assistance.

Brian is a UC student whose apartment was broken into. His belongings were either stolen or broken. He was physically attacked and needed hospitalization. Brian contacted me saying he had very little food.

Nellie lives outside our service area, but a relative told her about SGFP. "They'll help you," she was told. Nellie and her husband have chronic ailments and are caring for a disabled grandson. Sometimes they have to choose between paying their utility bills and buying food.

Tasha, a mother of three children, works at a part-time job and has chosen to go back to school. She greatly appreciates the help she receives from the SGFP, especially the cleaning and personal care items and the diapers.

Because of the generosity of so many, we are able to provide nutritious food as well as non-food items for Brian, Nellie and Tasha. Although most of our donors do not witness the appreciation we see from our clients, it is important that all who donate to our Food Pantry are aware of the difference they are making in so many individual lives.

Thank you so much.

Janet Cavanaugh

BIKE DAY!

The Bike Works Project

Every spring for the last eight years, a group of UC mechanical engineering students have collected and repaired bicycles to donate to children whose families receive assistance from the Food Pantry. This year, on April 19, the students distributed 18 bicycles they had repaired and refurbished to look almost new. The students adjusted the bikes to fit each child, and provided bike locks for all as well as some helmets.

The engineering students grinned as they saw the

joy and smiles on the faces of the children and their parents. Students felt that the day was "awesome" and that the happiness of the kids and families was a "reward in itself".



Working the Front Desk

by Carol Stewart



Not many Food Pantry volunteers like to work at the front desk. It's paperwork after all, and it is more fun to work in the back of the Pantry where you can stock shelves and make up bags and see exactly what you have accomplished. The rewards of the front desk are more subtle.

The front desk worker's job is to ascertain that the clients are who they say they are by checking IDs for all adults and children in the home. We

also make sure that they live in the zip codes we service by checking a recent piece of mail they have received at their home. Finally we ask them to sign a government form affirming that their incomes are within the federally mandated guidelines.

Those are the record-keeping tasks a front desk worker does. But the worker's job description goes way beyond that. We are the first people to welcome clients to the Food Pantry, and we try to make sure that each person we serve feels respected and cared for. As we are completing our paperwork, we have the chance to ask clients how they are doing. Some say they are happy and blessed; others tell us about difficulties they are experiencing. We offer a listening ear, and often we can connect with the clients' joys and concerns: "Yes, teenage girls can be really difficult for moms; I remember." Or "Are you getting medical care for that? Do you have someone to help you at home?" "I really admire you. I think grandmothers raising their grandchildren are the heroes of our community."

Occasionally, clients express humiliation that they need to come to the Food Pantry. We front desk workers let them know that we are not judging them, that we know things can happen to people in life, and that we may someday be in a situation where we need to ask for help. We ask if they have ever taken care of anybody, and they always have. "Well, you have given to others in need; it is your turn to be taken care of a little bit right now."

Clients are asked if they want to have all the items on a USDA list. Of course, they turn down things they don't like or can't use. But more times than not,

they say, "I don't need that; I have a jar at home." We encourage them to take what we are offering, "It's OK to stock up a little; we don't want you to run out before you come next month."

We front desk workers are lucky. Although our job may seem to be boring, we are privileged to have the opportunity to interact with clients, sometimes on a very deep level. We can't offer solutions, but we do offer careful listening and kind support. It is not surprising that most clients, arms filled with bags of food, smile and say "good-bye and thanks" to us as they are leaving the Pantry. It is then that we know that we have been gracious hosts.

Mount Auburn Presbyterian Volunteers

by Patty Muhleman

Should you happen to drop by the Food Pantry on a Wednesday morning, you will find a group of volunteers from Mt. Auburn Presbyterian Church. A couple from that church started volunteering at the Pantry in 1996-97. Then in 2000 another man decided to join them.

Over the years, six more have joined. The current merry band of nine have a great deal of fun as they go about the assignments they receive from Janet.



Some of the jobs involve two men driving the van to drop off cardboard for recycling, stopping at the Freestore Food Bank to pick up the order Janet has placed and sometimes stopping for another pick up at Little Sisters of the Poor.

Meanwhile, back at the Pantry, the women are restocking the front shelves so they are ready for volunteers who make up bags of food each time the Pantry is open for clients. The women also unpack and sort the donated bags and boxes filled with canned goods, paper products, and personal hygiene items. The sorted donations are stored with like items in big labeled boxes in the back of the Pantry.

The volunteers finish their shift doing "odd jobs", like bagging bulk donuts and rolls into baggies that hold six. They also slice large donated sheet cakes into fourths and wrap them for distribution to clients. Another "odd job" is slicing big blocks of cheese into smaller pieces.

Whatever the assignment on a Wednesday morning, the Mount Auburn folks get it done.

Saint George Food Pantry
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Hours:
Monday & Tuesday - 6:00pm - 7:30pm
Last Fridays - 1:00pm to 2:30pm
Last Saturdays - 10:00am to 11:30am

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