



# PantryPulse

NEWS FROM OAK PARK RIVER FOREST FOOD PANTRY

FALL 2011

## Oak Park River Forest Food Pantry

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**Michele Zurakowski**  
Director of Operations  
**Kristi Braun**  
Volunteer Manager  
**Paula Berg**  
Pantry Manager

### HOURS

**Every Saturday:**  
9:00 am – 12:00 pm  
**1st Wed. of the month:**  
7:00 – 8:30 pm  
**2nd, 3rd, 4th & 5th Wednesday of the month:**  
3:30 – 5:00 pm

## Among many who visit the Pantry, Sheila is someone you may know

It's a Saturday morning in July, and the line outside Oak Park River Forest Food Pantry starts to form early, before anybody knows how hot it will be. Arriving one by one and in small groups, they are a diverse collection of men, women, mothers with children and grandparents from many ethnic backgrounds and zip codes. Some car-pooled to help each other out. Others push wheeled carts. Many commuted by bus or train.

At 9:00 a.m. the line begins to move as people file through the doors to the basement at First United Church in Oak Park, choose numbers offered by lottery and find seats in folding chairs to wait for their numbers to be called.



Sheila's shopping cart fills up.  
*Photo courtesy of Matt Kosterman*

Their stories are as different as their faces, but many share a common thread: when they envisioned their lives, they never expected to find themselves here.

Among those is Sheila Petty, a lifelong Oak Park resident who has been to the Pantry a few times before.

"I grew up in Oak Park, and went to school here," she says. "I was one of the first women hired by Oak Park Streets and Sanitation. I've plowed snow and emptied garbage on the trucks, and managed some Oak Park parking lots. I helped plant trees on Jackson Boulevard."

Then Oak Park Streets and Sanitation went private, and her job disappeared. Sheila spends her days job-hunting online at the nearby Oak Park Library. She and her beagle, Zeke, have moved in with her dad, who runs an extermination business in Oak Park. "He likes my cooking," she says.

Sheila didn't expect to need help from the Pantry, but she is grateful for the warm reception she finds here. She especially likes the "client choice" format, which allows her to shop the Pantry like a grocery store rather than receiving pre-packaged allotments. Client choice is wonderful, she says, because it allows her to cook the things she and her father like to eat.



Sheila checks ingredients before making food choices in the Pantry.  
*Photo courtesy of Matt Kosterman*

You may recognize Sheila because her roots here are deep. Perhaps you have passed her on the street without suspecting, she plowed your street or helped collect your trash. Like many Pantry clients, Sheila is an integral part of our community.

Once she finds a job, she wants to return to the Pantry – as a volunteer. After all, the Pantry has been good to her, and she'd like to give something back.

*Working together to provide hunger relief in our community.*

## Grants expand and fully fund innovative program, helping clients make healthy choices

Oak Park River Forest Food Pantry's Nutrition Education Program was piloted in late 2010 when a Kraft Foods Feeding Possibilities grant enabled the Pantry to launch its "client choice" model of food distribution. Client choice allows clients to choose their food rather than receive pre-packaged allotments. The nutrition program aims to help them make healthier choices by educating them about selecting and preparing Pantry food.

The program began by presenting nutrition education at approximately half of the Pantry's food distributions, for a total of four per month. Topics have included: incorporating whole grains in your diet, eating more fruits and vegetables, label reading, and using low-fat powdered milk (a common USDA commodity).

As a result of renewed funding from the Kraft Foods Feeding Possibilities program, as well as new funding from Oak Park-River Forest Community Foundation – Young Philanthropists and BlueCross BlueShield of Illinois, the Nutrition Education Program is fully funded for fiscal year 2012.

The Pantry is grateful for the support of these grants. Thanks to the generosity of these organizations, the Pantry will now be able to partner the successful client choice format with a dynamic nutrition education program while expanding the program to more clients.

## The Pantry welcomes the following NEW DONORS:

Art & Carole Albores  
Patricia & Leslie Bachar  
Jacqueline Barlow  
John & Monique Behr  
Darlene Bennett  
Rachel Benoit

Villoria Land  
Carol Landow  
Claire Lareau  
Karen & David Latham  
Lilian Lau  
Nathan Laurell

new

# Grocers, farmers, volunteers unite to bring tons of fresh produce to clients

In the summer of 2010, Oak Park River Forest Food Pantry started an ambitious produce rescue program by reaching out to local grocers, asking them to donate food that could no longer be sold in stores but was still fully fit to eat. Today, the Pantry rescues well over two tons of fresh produce every month.

In line with its continuing mission to provide healthy and nutritious food choices to clients, the Pantry has seven produce vendors: **Door to Door Organics**, an on-line organic produce delivery service; **Greater Chicago Food Depository**; **Montalbano Farms**, an organic local farm operation; **Trader Joe's**, Oak Park; **Ultra**

**Foods**, Forest Park; **Whole Foods Market**, River Forest; and **Oak Park Farmer's Market**.

More than 30 shifts of volunteers each month pick up the produce from vendors and deliver it to the Pantry, where other volunteers sort and repack the food into serving sizes.

Hatch Patch, Fair Oaks Presbyterian Church, St. Giles Church, Cheney Mansion, OPRF High School, Dominican University and Oak Park Temple vegetable gardens also drop off food to the Pantry on a regular basis. Individual gardeners occasionally share their bounty with us as well.

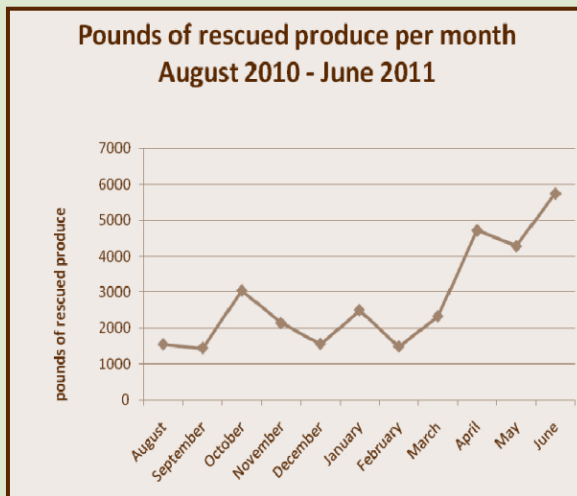
On a given rescue day, the Pantry



BJ Lau fills her car with rescued produce from Trader Joe's. Photo courtesy of Matt Kosterman

may receive lettuce, potatoes, bananas, apples—the list goes on. The volume and variety has increased clients' choices from a single serving of produce, such as four apples per family, to four servings at most distributions.

In June alone, the Pantry rescued 5,754 pounds of produce, providing 3,863 servings.



produce  
rescue



Volunteers BJ, Lynda & Jean sort and package rescued produce. Photo courtesy of Matt Kosterman

Helen Box  
 Amy Brogioli  
 Kent & Karen Bromley  
 Victor & Sheila Brown  
 Patricia Bryant-Allen  
 John Burr  
 Jeanine Buttimer  
 Alice Calabrese  
 Sarah Caldicott  
 Jeffery Cappel  
 CB Richard Ellis Inc Foundation  
 Joshua Chrisman  
 Christ Community Church of Plainfield  
 William J. Clark  
 Joy Conklin  
 Carmella Corsini  
 Ellen Cutter  
 Patrick & Pamela Deady  
 Rocio & Jose Delgado  
 Laura & Steven Derks  
 James Dittman  
 Rollin Dix  
 Bernard Dowling  
 Barbara & Gerard Downey  
 Robert Downs  
 Jim Driskill  
 Joshua Eisenberg  
 Wendy Erwin  
 Alexander Eugenides  
 Donald Evans  
 Cherie & Mark Fedota  
 Julie Feigl  
 Robert & Jane Filek  
 Mark Finger  
 Thomas Finn  
 First United Church – Church School  
 Mary Fitzgerald  
 John Flynn  
 Forest Park Antiques  
 Forest Park National Bank  
 Garnett Foster  
 Irmtraut Gangl  
 JuliAnn Geldner  
 Barbara & Thomas Geller  
 Leticia George  
 Robert Giles  
 Joseph Graber  
 Greenplan Management Inc  
 Mark & Charlotte Greenstein  
 Emily Hauser  
 Carolyn Hayes  
 Sandra Hernandez  
 Barbara Hofmaier  
 Holmes School  
 Ken Honderich  
 Dan Hosek  
 Monique Hoskins  
 Jim & Barbara Hunt  
 Jane Jeffries  
 Michael Jogerst  
 Lynn Kamenitsa  
 Jacalyn Kareb  
 Mary Kastenholz  
 Clifford Kavinsky  
 Thomas & Susan Kindler  
 Cheryl King  
 Jack Knowles  
 Frances & Jeffrey Kraft  
 William Kroepelin  
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 Hannah Sklar  
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 St. Bernardine's Women's Club  
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 State Farm Insurance  
 Albert & Margaret Staven  
 Roma Steinke  
 Linda Stephens  
 Felicia Stewart  
 Susanne & Jim Sutphen  
 Stuart Swibel  
 Wendy Toan  
 Hallie Trauger  
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 George & Nancy Wohlford  
 Chuck & Sallie Wolf  
 David & Judy Wray  
 Joy Yamasaki  
 Herb & Claudette Zobel  
 Martha Zuehlke

# donor spotlight

## Inspired entrepreneurs: Christopher Family Foundation fights hunger

Family foundations play an important role in the financial success of Oak Park River Forest Food Pantry. Recently, a substantial donation from the Christopher Family Foundation enabled the Pantry to continue to meet its clients' growing needs. Family members Doris and Jay Christopher have a long history of taking their passion for food and family and putting it into action to make a difference.

Inspired by her dedication to preserve the tradition of family mealtimes and driven by her entrepreneurial spirit, Doris Christopher founded The Pampered Chef from the basement of her River Forest home in 1980. As this organization thrived over the next few decades, Christopher continued to make an impact. Her interest in the fight against hunger led her to become a board member of Feeding America, the nation's leading domestic hunger-relief charity. During her eight-year tenure, the organization grew tremendously and is celebrating its 20th anniversary in partnership with the Pampered Chef.

The work and generosity of the Christopher Family Foundation continues today. Its donations enabled the establishment of the Family Resiliency Center, an



Paul Schueler, Jay Christopher, Kelley Schueler, Doris Christopher, Scott Christopher, Julie Christopher *Photo courtesy of Christopher Family*

academic educational program at the University of Illinois campus in Urbana, Ill., Christopher's alma mater. Another is the Christopher Family Foundation Food and Family Program, which strives to build positive connections between food and family life. The Christophers are also supporters of the Illinois food banks. The Pantry is grateful to be a Christopher Foundation funding recipient. The Foundation's willingness to provide funds to organizations that share their passion and dedication in the fight against hunger is truly inspirational.

## Pantry Raises \$20,000 during Hunger Walk 2011

# thank you

Over 97 donors, volunteers, board members, and staff participated in the Greater Chicago Food Depository's 26th Annual Hunger Walk on June 25, 2011. Staged from the south lawn at Soldier Field, the annual event is a 5K walk along Chicago's lakefront and the largest single day anti-hunger event held in Chicago.

**Supporters of the Pantry raised \$20,000 during Hunger Walk 2011.** The fundraiser is crucial to the Pantry as 100% of the money raised goes to the purchase of food.

To all those in our Oak Park and River Forest communities who donate funds and energy to the Pantry — THANK YOU. Your efforts sustain the Pantry and enable us to fulfill our mission — working together to provide hunger relief in our community!



Board Member, Collete English Dixon, & Director of Operations, Michele Zurakowski, are the first of 97 Pantry Team members to cross the finish line. *Photo courtesy of Dawn Altman*

# Pantry Pulse

**Oak Park River Forest Food Pantry's mission is to work together as a community to reduce hunger locally through:**

- direct hunger relief services
- hunger awareness education
- advocacy to influence anti-hunger policy.



Volunteer Manager, Kristi Braun, and her daughter Samantha, prepare to cross the finish line at Hunger Walk 2011. Photo courtesy of Kathy Russel/

## The Crothers-Gee Family invests its time and treasure

Late last spring, Sue Crothers and her husband, Bill Gee, presented a challenge to their two teen daughters: find a local organization where they could provide community service. After some research and family discussion, Sue contacted Oak Park River Forest Food Pantry



Photo courtesy of Crothers-Gee Family

and took her girls to an orientation meeting last summer. Ever since, the Gee family has become a monthly volunteering force during Saturday morning distributions. Bill likes to explain to clients how the Pantry works as they enter; Sue's favorite is helping during check-in; and their girls, Madison, 14, and Kendal, 15, enjoy staffing various food stations.

Their volunteering led the River Forest family to go one step further by becoming a substantial donor. Sue explains, "We feel we've been very fortunate in life, and that it is important to give back and share some of that good fortune with the world at large. We realize that in this economy nearly anyone can be one step away from the need of some form of assistance."

The Gees feel the Pantry's mission and grass-roots style resonate with their values. A typical stint of Saturday volunteering usually ends with a late family breakfast. "We love this time to connect and share our experiences from the morning, which leads to all sorts of socially-minded discussions with the girls," Sue says. "We'd really like to thank the Pantry for all it does to help so many people."

In return, Oak Park River Forest Food Pantry whole-heartedly thanks the Gee family for their generous time and donation.

*Thank you for your support!*

### How to help feed your community

[www.oprffoodpantry.org](http://www.oprffoodpantry.org)

- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| DONATE        | Write a check or use PayPal on our website.   |
| VOLUNTEER     | Click the "Sign Up To Volunteer" button on our website.   |
| PLAN AN EVENT | Organize a food drive for your birthday party, block party, congregation or child's school.   |
| EDUCATE       | Email <a href="mailto:info@oprffoodpantry.org">info@oprffoodpantry.org</a> to coordinate a presentation by Pantry staff for your congregation, club, workplace or child's school. |

help us

**Oak Park River Forest Food Pantry**  
848 Lake Street  
Oak Park, IL 60301

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