



PantryPulse

NEWS FROM OAK PARK RIVER FOREST FOOD PANTRY

SPRING 2011

Oak Park River Forest Food Pantry

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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

“Size Matters”: Nutrition Education at the Pantry

“What’s the most important number on the back of this bottle?” Maria Delis, registered dietician, was working the crowd at Oak Park River Forest Food Pantry. Holding aloft a 16 oz. bottle of juice, Maria solicited answers from the crowd, offering a prize to whoever guessed right. The answers came flying: Calories! Nope. Sugar! Nope. Portion Size! YES! The lucky winner got to select an item from the “prize bin” full of goodies donated to the Pantry—in this case one of the aprons a volunteer’s employer had donated.

“Exactly right,” Maria enthused. “See the calories say 110 which doesn’t sound too bad, does it? But if you look at the portion



Lisa explains a recipe to Larry, a Wednesday client.
Photo courtesy of Kathy Russell

size, you see it’s only 8 oz. There are TWO servings in this little bottle—that’s 220 calories and 48 grams of sugar! Not so great anymore, especially for anyone you know with diabetes.” Murmurs of surprise and understanding pass through the crowd.

A lot of people here have diabetes. Many have hypertension or heart disease. Maria may be the first person who has ever talked to them in such detail about the relationship between what they eat and how it affects their health concerns. And they are loving it.

Maria came to the Pantry as part of a Kraft Foods Feeding Possibilities grant via Greater Chicago Food Depository. The grant provided funds to develop a program that educates clients on healthful food choices and preparation.

Since October, Maria and a crew of volunteers have been on site during approximately half of our food distributions to provide education, tastings and recipes for commonly available Pantry foods. Covering one topic per month, they have helped educate Food Pantry clients on the importance of including more fruits and vegetables in their diets, on ways to incorporate more whole grains, how to



Maria, registered dietician, reads the nutrition station for Pantry clients. Photo courtesy of Kristi Braun

manage a nutritious thrifty December, reading food labels, and how to make sense of the food guide pyramid.

As the grant period draws to a close, we are working in partnership with local universities (Dominican, Concordia, UIC) as well as Hines VA Hospital to recruit volunteer dietitians and student interns to keep the nutrition education program running. The response from the nutrition community has been wonderful and we hope to expand the program to even more distributions.

Working together to provide hunger relief in our community.

The Pantry welcomes the following NEW DONORS:

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new donors

Who are our clients? Ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances.

Think you'd recognize a food pantry client on the street? You might—they might live on your block. Most clients need the Pantry for a time or two to get over a difficult patch: only 11% of clients have used Oak Park River Forest Food Pantry for more than a year. On a recent Wednesday afternoon we interviewed some Pantry clients to learn about the extraordinary circumstances that brought them here.

- "Jim" is employed, but needed to take unpaid time off to travel to two funerals. He got behind in his rent and needed to come to the Pantry to help catch up.
- "Susan," a 47 year old paralegal, recently lost her job of 20 years. She is trying to makes ends meet on unemployment while

searching for a new job.

- "Nancy" is on disability due to two chronic illnesses, but makes ends meet most of the time. She recently took in her 89 year-old mother who is undergoing chemotherapy and needs constant care.
- "Deborah" worked as a nurse, but fibromyalgia forced an early retirement. She makes just a little too much money for most government benefits and cares for her deceased son's children off and on.
- "Harriet" was employed as a major gift officer, but was laid off in October. She struggles with the price of gas and the price of produce. Most of these folks were initially



Clients wait in the queue for the Pantry shopping area. Photo courtesy of Dawn Altman

ashamed to have to come to the Pantry. But after their visit, they inevitably told us they felt welcomed, respected, and cared for. It is sometimes said that food pantries are only a Band-Aid. But sometimes a Band-Aid is the perfect tool for the job. We are honored to help provide a sustenance Band-Aid for all our ordinary families in their various extraordinary circumstances.

because of you

Because of YOU, we were able to feed 13,916 families in 2010. Your donations allowed us to purchase tuna and soup, canned veggies and pasta—all at less than one-tenth the retail price. But we are most grateful for your help in providing families with the nutrient dense staples of eggs and low-fat milk. Those items are expensive, even for us! Your generous gifts last year allowed ALL of our clients to go home with a dozen eggs and a half gallon of milk. Here's the math:

	Retail Cost/family	Pantry Cost/family
Eggs	\$1.49	\$.75
½ Gallon low-fat milk	\$2.39	\$.70
	\$3.88	\$1.49
	x 13,916 families	x 13,916 families
	\$53,994.08	\$20,178.20



Because of YOU nearly 14,000 families received nutritious food at a cost savings of over \$33,000! Photo courtesy of Dawn Altman

Mary Berg pays it forward



Mary Berg
Photo courtesy of Mary Berg

Mary Berg is retired now, but she taught in Oak Park schools for more than 20 years. She and husband Robert are long time residents of River Forest, where they raised two daughters and a son --

Scott and his wife Colleen still live in the area, and are members of First United Church, which provides crucial space and support to the Food Pantry.

In short, Mary is very connected to her community – and very much aware of the struggles the last few years have brought.

“With this economy,” she says, “the Pantry is serving people who in the past might have

been donors themselves, as well as people who may have needed it long term.”

Recently finding herself with a surprise extra bit of cash, Mary decided to use it to help others – and having heard about the Pantry from her daughter-in-law, made her decision fairly quickly.

Mary was particularly drawn to the fact that the Pantry’s purchasing power is so much greater than the average shopper’s. That’s why she hopes “people will start thinking about the Pantry as their main donation.”

“I think it’s really important for people to see there are needs in our surrounding community – it’s not always far away.”

- Elizabeth Rieger
- Diane MacWilliams
- Dirk & Lynda Ficca
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- Nathaniel Rouse
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- Nikki Hale Consulting Inc.
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- Oak Park Fraternal Order of Police
- Out of the Box Holiday Artists' Boutique
- Pam Meyerson
- Pamela Scott
- Patricia & Donald Glazier
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- William Brauneis
- William Clark
- Wise Owl Designs
- Yolande & Garabed Krikorian

Pantry debuts ACH debit program

Want to make recurring donations to the Food Pantry? Now you can do so easily with automatic debit from your bank account!

Over 50% of our monetary donations come during the last 2 months of the year. But the Pantry purchases food every month of the year.

Donating over the course of the year makes it easier for us to plan and shop for food. Call or email Dawn for a debit form at 708-434-0084 or dawn@oprffoodpantry.org.

Thanks for supporting Oak Park River Forest Food Pantry.

help us



Pantry Pulse

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

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*"The more you give,
 the more he gives."*



Philanthropist Alan Feinstein

To spur donations to food pantries, Alan Feinstein donates \$1 million dollars to feed the hungry. Those funds are divided proportionally among competing food pantries through April 30th. Help us get more of Mr. Feinstein's million dollars by making a donation today. Use the envelope enclosed here or go to www.oprfoodpantry.org. Thanks!

Bill and Staci Beam strive to make an immediate difference

Orthodontist Bill Beam moved to the Chicago area twelve years ago, met and married his wife Staci, and started a business. Though he lives in the city, Bill sees patients in Oak Park, a town he's come to love.

"It's a neat community. It kind of pulls the best of urban and suburban together," he says. "We think of the people at our Oak Park practice as our practice family."

Bill and Staci are both big believers in volunteerism and giving back to their community. Staci works with the elderly in the couple's church and serves on their neighborhood committee, and the couple also donates to their local food pantry in the Lakeview neighborhood.

"When the economy took a nosedive," Bill says, "we kind of redirected our charitable donations. We wanted to give to something that's making a more immediate difference."

The couple decided they wanted to help support the community in which Bill works, as well, and so added Oak Park River Forest Food Pantry to their list – "food is such a basic," Bill explains.

"I love my profession," he says, "and I love being able to work where I do. I feel fortunate to be able to give what I give."



Photo courtesy of Bill & Staci Beam

donor spotlight

Thank you for your support!

How to help feed your community

- DONATE via check or PayPal at www.oprfoodpantry.org
- VOLUNTEER click the "Sign Up To Volunteer" button on our website www.oprfoodpantry.org
- PLAN AN EVENT organize a food drive for your birthday party, block party, congregation or child's school
- EDUCATE email info@oprfoodpantry.org to coordinate a presentation by Pantry staff for your congregation, club, workplace or child's school

help us