



# PantryPulse

NEWS FROM THE OAK PARK RIVER FOREST FOOD PANTRY

WINTER 2010

## Oak Park River Forest Food Pantry

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**Mignon McPherson Nance**  
**Rose Mabwa**  
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### Pantry Staff

**Kathy Russell**  
Executive Director  
**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

OAK LEAVES [www.pioneerlocal.com](http://www.pioneerlocal.com)

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## 'Client Choice' plan helps food pantry help others

More dignity and respect for the client, less waste for the food pantry.

That's how Kathy Russell, executive director of the Oak Park River Forest Food Pantry, characterizes Client Choice.

Client Choice is a procedure that allows food pantry clients to select their groceries, much as they would do at a grocery store, instead of just receiving a bag of groceries.

Clients have been receiving a standard bag of groceries of nonperishable food and been able to select meat, dairy and fresh produce. Under Client Choice, clients will choose all their food, perishable and nonperishable.

"Not everybody wants everything," Russell said. "We used to find some items discarded in the parking lot."

But Client Choice is the direction in which food pantries are going. Client Choice benefits clients by allowing them the freedom and pleasure of choice, and even to try foods new to them. Food may also go further. Some families will not choose some foods, leaving them for others who do want them. And costs may go down, Russell said, "If people don't select an item we'll now know not to buy it."

To begin Client Choice requires staff and volunteers to be trained in how to work with clients as they choose food. More open shelving also is needed so clients can see what choices are available.

The changes at the pantry are made possible by an award from AT&T, a grant from Kraft Feeding Possibilities Program via



Many selections to choose from. *Photo courtesy of Dawn Altman*



Pantry volunteers work with clients in choosing food. *Photo courtesy of Dawn Altman*

the Greater Chicago Food Depository and from gifts honoring the memory of Beth Drews.

The pantry serves approximately 1,200 clients a month. That's a 30 percent increase from last year, on top of a 340 percent increase from 2005 to 2009. Approximately 10,000 to 15,000 pounds of food are delivered each week to the pantry by the Greater Chicago Food Depository. Trader Joe's, Ultra Foods and Whole Foods donate produce to the pantry twice a week. And the pantry has more than 300 volunteers.

Russell said the pantry is grateful for all donations, but that checks are particularly helpful. "We pay \$5.41 for a bag of groceries that would cost \$63 at the store.

"Each person can make a difference," Russell said. "If you help someone with food, that person can redirect what money they have to housing, or medicine, or clothes. You may be helping someone to stay in their home."

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

## Pantry receives gifts from “family foundations”

Donors come in all shapes and sizes: from the 9-year old who donates her birthday money for peanut butter, to the executive who donates thousands of dollars for holiday hams, to community based foundations who support infrastructural needs. Oak Park River Forest Food Pantry has been privileged to receive support from yet another type of donor: The Janning Family Foundation.

Family foundations originated in the late 19th century and today account for a major portion of foundation giving in the United States. Some family foundations have narrow missions, funding in only a limited number of areas, while others have broad missions that can encompass the range of interests the board members may have at any point in time. The common ground is that family members have a substantial role in the foundations’ governance.

Last year, the 3 families comprising the Janning Family Foundation decided to make substantial gifts, each in their own communities. Elizabeth and Jason Janning who had moved to Oak Park only 18 months ago, researched Oak Park nonprofit organizations and chose to support Oak Park River Forest Food Pantry.

Elizabeth was impressed with the work the Pantry described on its website and with its widespread community support. After a recent visit to the Pantry,

donor spotlight

# Living with food insecurity



Marie makes her produce choice.  
Photo courtesy of Kathy Russell

Marie had the first of her three heart attacks when she was 41. A proud woman determined to stand on her own, Marie returned to full time work as a cook and caterer as soon as she could. But her heart disease worsened and she suffered two more heart attacks and developed peripheral artery disease in her legs. Now at age 58 with a pacemaker, stents and limited mobility, she needs to rely on disability payments to support herself and her children. Marie is among the 1200 people

who visit Oak Park River Forest Food Pantry each month for help getting enough to eat on very tight budgets.

Forty-one percent of pantry clients are employed, and many of the others are like Marie: men and women who successfully supported themselves for years before being struck by illness, unemployment, or personal catastrophe. These folks never expected to be struggling to feed themselves and their families. And most are able to get back on their feet quickly. Marie is among minority (20%) of clients who have come regularly for more than one year, and she is deeply appreciative: when asked to interview for this story, she replied, “anything I could do for your cause, you have been such a help to me.”

## Clients and volunteers rave about “Client Choice”

“I love the choices!”

“I have an allergy to some foods, so I can stay away from those foods easier now.”

“This is so much better!”

“Now, if I don’t want an item, I can leave it for someone else.”



Pantry volunteers work closely with clients on food choices.  
Photo courtesy of Dawn Altman

about us

“You talk to each client, amazing interactions with clients.”

“It is a more personalized, friendly atmosphere.”

“Gives volunteers an opportunity to get to know clients.”

“It is more rewarding from a volunteer perspective.”

the Janning Family Foundation for their commitment to involving family members in discussions regarding philanthropy.

# Baird & Warner

## “FILLS THE HOUSE”

In light of recent tough economic times, Baird & Warner Realtors wanted to find a unique way to thank their clients for their ongoing support. In the hopes of building an even stronger community, they wanted to “pay it forward”—opening their hearts and their wallets to help the many local families suffering hardships. They didn’t stop there. Instead they asked their supporters and clients to join them in “FILLING THE HOUSE.”

Project “FILL THE HOUSE” was a drive to raise non-perishable food items, monetary donations and toiletries for Oak Park River Forest Food Pantry clients. Giant cardboard houses were placed in the entry of the Baird & Warner offices and on the final day of the drive were moved to Caputo’s Fresh Market in Elmwood Park. The Baird & Warner

branch office made the first donation to the campaign - \$1000. In all over 1800 non-perishable items and over \$1,936 was raised to help needy families. Thank you Baird & Warner for your donations and for the creative way you worked to raise awareness of hunger in our community.



Delivery day for Baird & Warner.  
Photo courtesy of Steve Scheuring

### The Pantry welcomes the following NEW DONORS:

Leland & Mary Lou Anderson

Lee & Kelly Callaway

Edith Ewert

Anne Ferri

Randy & Karen Gillett

David & Helen Haas

Raleigh Hegwood

Charles Hoch & Susan Stall

Mark & Nancy Jarasek

Catherine Maram

Robert & Michele McAndrews

Patricia & James McNally

H. R. Mellman

Ralph & Sally Muehleisen

Joel & Renee Naffziger

Susie Narkis

Rita Payne

Darius Povilaitis

Julie M. Schneider

David & Orly Slobodkin

Lois & Carmen Tosto

John Wallick

Andrew & Mary Catherine Carlin

new donors

### Upcoming Oak Park River Forest Food Pantry Event

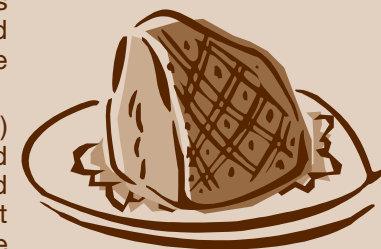
#### 2010 Holiday Food Distributions

On November 22nd, 700 turkeys flew out the door to clients of Oak Park River Forest Food Pantry. And on November 24th over 200 packages of side dishes (cranberries, instant potatoes, gravy, stuffing mix, corn, yams and sweet potatoes) went to families on the eve of Thanksgiving. What a big difference that made to 900 Thanksgiving family celebrations!

In December, we repeat this process on the 20th with 700 holiday hams and on the 22nd with 200 packages of side dishes.

Both volunteers and funds (\$16,000) are needed for successful Holiday Food Distributions. Please consider a year-end donation for Holiday Food or contact [kristi@oprffoodpantry.org](mailto:kristi@oprffoodpantry.org) to participate in the Holiday Ham Giveaway on the afternoon of December 20th.

help us



# Pantry Pulse

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

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



C.J. received a book while at the Pantry during a Wednesday shift. Photo courtesy of Kathy Russell

## BOOKS TO DEVOUR

As Paula Kluth saw it, hungry bodies are attached to hungry minds. Having just co-authored a children's book with her sister, Paula had a stack of advance copies and a plan: give the books out to kids at Oak Park River Forest Food Pantry. That first book distribution blew her away. "It was such a feeling of connection and community," Paula enthused. "We all LOVE books and to see others who shared that love was really great."

Encouraged by the initial offering, she gathered two other book-loving moms—Nora Sanchez and Autumn Hamer--and hatched "Books to Devour," an ongoing service project providing free books to Pantry clients once a month. Gathering "gently used" books from friends, garage sales and classified ads posted online, the group amassed quite a library to give away.

As the books flew off the tables, Paula, Nora and Autumn were struck by the depth of gratitude. Children lit up when they saw the books. Some spent well over an hour paging through their new books, showing them off to siblings and parents. Adults eagerly approached the table, hoping to find their favorite authors and subjects. Clients and volunteers launched into animated discussions of books they'd both read. Clearly more than just bodies were being nourished here. "Like food," Paula notes, "books are sustenance. They can encourage, inspire, entertain, inform, and even keep us company."

Well over 2500 books have now reached the hands of children and adults, sustaining hungry minds as well as bodies at Oak Park River Forest Food Pantry.

To donate your own gently used books, please contact Paula at paula.kluth@gmail.com.



Paula Kluth assists in book selection. Photo courtesy of Kathy Russell



So many books to choose from! Photo courtesy of Kathy Russell

*Thank you for your support!*

## How to help feed your community

DONATE	via check or PayPal at <a href="http://www.oprffoodpantry.org">www.oprffoodpantry.org</a>
VOLUNTEER	click the "Sign Up To Volunteer" button on our website <a href="http://www.oprffoodpantry.org">www.oprffoodpantry.org</a>
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**  
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