

BREADCRUMBS

March 2009

The Newsletter of the Irving Park Community Food Pantry

A REFLECTION ON 25 YEARS...

The following is a note from Nora Byrne, a long time volunteer and Board member of the Pantry. Nora has been the Treasurer for many years and this year is serving as Secretary. Thank you, Nora, for your continued support and this great reflection on the Pantry's history.

"Last week at Bible Study we were talking about the pantry and how it began. That got me to thinking about the first year, 1984. All the churches in the area were getting more and more requests for food. The Methodist Church already had a pantry of sorts and they had a government cheese and butter program in place. (Remember that.) The need was getting to be more than individual churches could handle, so a group got together in April of that year to discuss pooling resources and organizing a pantry. Coral Prebble, a student intern at this church, asked me if I would go as representative of this church, with NO OBLIGATION for future meetings.

I looked up the first Annual Report from 1984. Following are some excerpts:

"In April of this year [1984], a re-organization began, to enable us to better serve the growing hunger needs of the community... Then on June 11, officers were elected and committee assignments were made. Many of us left that meeting feeling completely overwhelmed and totally inadequate for the task ahead. The pantry was almost empty, the treasury was small (\$345).

"By the end of July, we had...no food in the pantry and no money in the treasury. In August & September, we received no cheese or butter... Our coordinator [a volunteer] was unable to give the time needed. We put out a call for help to our churches, and got it--in money, food and volunteers."

It goes on to say that we had a spaghetti dinner fund raiser in September and by the end of October had over \$1,000 in our treasury. In November, we hired our first director and "everything improved immediately."

Notice the date--1984. This means that the Irving Park Food Pantry opened its doors 25 years ago this June. A lot has changed. We now serve over 400 families each month, which is more than double 1984, and the numbers keep increasing. We have a healthy treasury and many wonderful volunteers.

We are known in the industry to be one of the best run pantries on the Northwest side of Chicago.

It is amazing what a small group of "overwhelmed" Christians can do when they see a need and work together for the good of all. I am proud to be a part of this group, as we should all be no matter how small or large the contribution to the whole. As Tiny Time would say, 'God bless us all.'"

Statistics

JANUARY – 1,417 people/479 households

FEBRUARY – 1,486 people/529 households

VOLUNTEER OF THE MONTH



Kate Roche has been a volunteer for the Food Pantry since 2002. Now the Board President, she has served on the Board for the past few years and does publicity mailings for the Pantry. Kate was born in Chicago, raised in Des Plaines and moved back to the city in 1975. Her family can trace its roots in Chicago to before the Civil War. "I'm a mutt – Irish, Danish, French, German and Swiss. My mom's from the South Side and my Dad was from the North Side and he played baseball at Independence Park in the 20's". Prior to moving to Old Irving Park in 2000, she and her husband, Mike, lived with their two (now adult) children, Mick and Madeline in the Lakeview neighborhood. "My kids thought we had moved to the suburbs" when they moved to their current home on Waveland Ave. Her family members have all

volunteered at one point or the other for the Pantry and her husband, Mike helped Bob deliver food to the homebound for a couple of years.

Kate is a Human Resource and recruitment management consultant and in her career she's managed teams that have hired thousands of people. She has also experienced her own share of downsizings and layoffs. "I can relate so well with many of our clients these days – and now it's tougher than it's ever been to get a job". She's currently providing HR support and consulting for a small manufacturing company. When not working or volunteering she loves cooking, gardening and reading.

As Board President, she is working closely with our Executive Director, John Psiharis and the rest of the Board and volunteers on a number of initiatives: improving the volunteer experience, writing a strategic plan and increasing our fundraising and communications capacity. "Volunteering for the Pantry changed my life.", says Kate. "So many of our longtime volunteers are role models to me – on how to give back to the community and live a fuller life." "I enjoy all the wonderful volunteers at the Pantry and look forward to every Wednesday".

NEWS

FEINSTEIN FOUNDATION GRANT

A percentage of monetary donations made to the Pantry during the months of March and April will be matched by the Feinstein Foundation.

HUNGER KNOWS NO SEASON

For the tenth year, the Greater Chicago Food Depository is teaming up with area grocery retailers and food manufacturers for Hunger Knows No Season. Consumer who purchase specially marked products at Jewel-Osco and other stores will benefit the Food Depository's hunger-relief programs. The promotion takes place during April and May. Visit www.Chicagosfoodbank.org for a complete list of products and retailers.

FOOD DRIVES

In April, the following churches will be holding food drives to benefit the Pantry:

Irving Park Lutheran Church, 3938 W. Belle Plaine Ave., Chicago, IL 60618 (773-267-1666)

Irving Park United Methodist Church, 3801 N. Keeler Ave., Chicago, IL 60641 (773-283-6262)

HUNGER WALK

The Greater Chicago Food Depository Hunger Walk will take place on Saturday, June 20, 2009. Money raised by our walkers and sponsors goes directly to our Depository account. That money is used to buy food for our clients. If you would

like to walk for our Pantry or sponsor a walker, please contact the Pantry.

THANK YOU!

Thank you to everyone who helped us with the donations of goodies for the Easter baskets that we are distributing to our Pantry's clients' children during the months of March and April.

Thank you to Irving Park Baptist Church and Schurz High School ROTC for their March food drives.

FOOD STAMPS

Have you noticed that we have had a representative from the Food Depository visiting us to screen our clients for food stamp eligibility once a month? We thought you might be interested in seeing the results of those screenings:

Total number of clients assisted:	68
Total number of clients prescreened:	54
Total number of clients provided application assistance:	46

VOLUNTEER LUNCHEON

Mark your calendars for the Pantry Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon on Wednesday, May 27th at 2:00. All volunteers are invited. More information will follow.

JEWEL-OSCO

As you know, our neighborhood Six Corners Jewel-Osco has become a very valuable partner in our fight against hunger. Last fall, as part of the grand reopening event, the Pantry was the recipient of a \$1,000 donation from Jewel-Osco.



John Psiharis, Director, Irving Park Community Food Pantry, Brad Boyle, Jewel Corporate, Pete Fetzter, store manager, Carol Schultz, Pantry Board of Directors, Bob Hughes, Jewel Corporate and Connie Montes, Osco manager at check presentation ceremony during Jewel grand reopening.

Did you also know that Jewel-Osco donated \$250,000 to area food pantries as part of its Hunger Relief Program? This program supports the daily operation of more than 100 pantries. The Six Corners Jewel is now donating food to our Pantry twice a week. Jim and Rick pick up the food on Mondays and Wednesdays. Thank you Jewel!