



News & Notes

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Eventually the food donations were more than the Albanos could manage in the spare refrigerator they had been using in their home. Pastor Mark and his wife, Dianne, decided to move the storage and distribution process to the parsonage basement which then became the base of operations.

As management at the Wilmette Jewel got to know the Albanos and Taylors, and their appreciation of the couples' consistency and hearts for service grew, they invited them to pick up donated food more often, beginning with once a week and gradually increasing to five days a week.

Within months there were three refrigerators, two sets of shelves and a table in the parsonage basement, often overflowing with donated food.

The number of families served increased as the Albanos and Taylors announced that anyone regardless of financial need could pick up food.

It was good food that would otherwise be thrown in the garbage. While families in need made up most of the "patrons" who came to get food, there were also a number of people who came for food and donated to the fledgling food pantry ministry what they saved on their grocery bills.

By the spring of 2009 it became clear that the ministry was outgrowing the parsonage basement.

Pastor Mark began meeting with the Natural Church Development (now Strategic Planning) team to develop a plan for adopting the food pantry as a sustainable, expanding ministry of Hillside Church that would effectively reach out to the community around the church with the love of Jesus Christ. While the Taylors and Albanos continued picking up and distributing the donated



food, Mike Albano, with a lot of help from Mark Sandstrom and other friends and colleagues, set to work converting the church garage into a food pantry. Maiya Lueptow was appointed to lead the administrative team to recruit and schedule volunteers, develop a record keeping system for patron and volunteer information, and apply for membership with the Greater Chicago Food Depository ("GCFD"), which will allow us to buy non-perishable food for 7- to 25 cents a pound. Dave Husain and Jerry St. Clair were tapped to head the communications team to present the plan for the food pantry as a ministry of the church to the Hillside Church family and help get the word out to the wider community.

By the time the Hillside Community Food Pantry was formally launched as a Hillside Church ministry from the renovated church garage on May 6, 2009, about a dozen volunteers were serving nearly 100 people by providing them with fresh fruit and vegetables, meat, bread and other baked goods.

During our first 14 weeks the food pantry ministry has mushroomed in its growth. With the help of more than two dozen volunteers, we have served over 400 people in a single week. By way of comparison, another Chicago-area food pantry featured in the GCFD's summer newsletter, which has been serving for 20 years, serves an average of 350 people a month. New patrons come every time we open our doors, and we have a growing number of patrons who come every week. We marvel at how God has provided for this ministry and led us in its development and management. By His grace we have never run out of food – everyone who has come has received something, and no one has been turned away empty-handed. For all of this we praise God and ask for your continued prayers and support.

*"Do all the good you can,
By all the means you can,
In all the ways you can,
In all the places you can,
At all the times you can,
To all the people you can,
As long as ever you can."*

*John Wesley, English Evangelist,
Founder of Methodism, 1703 - 1791*

Next month watch for updates on our certification to the Greater Chicago Food Depository and our Second supply store!

To Volunteer contact Rev. Maiya Lueptow – maiya.lueptow@sbcglobal.net