

WESTCHESTER FOOD PANTRY



WET NOSE PANTRY

Annual Meeting

January 11, 2026

Meeting Agenda

- Quick History Lesson
- Who We Are and How It Works
- Behind the Scenes
- 2025 in Review
 - Clients
 - Food in and out
 - Outreach and Fundraising
 - Challenges and Highlights
 - Volunteer Information
- Goals for 2026
- How you can help



History of the Westchester Food Pantry

1995: Founded to help neighbors in need

2015: The start of the Pantry's evolution and growth

2016: Became a 501(c)3 and member agency of the Greater Chicago Food Depository

2017: Named *Organization of the Year* by the Westchester Chamber of Commerce

2018: Cook County Board of Commissioners Recognized the Pantry for its
Commitment to Serving the Food Insecure in western Cook County



2020: The Village Press Recognized the Pantry Volunteers as *People of the Year* Recipient

2020: Purchased the 1938 S. Mannheim Building – 3,800 sq. ft.

2021: Moved Into the Building - the Start of What the Pantry Looks Like Today

2023: The Village of Westchester Awarded the Pantry with the Village Image Award

2025: Celebrated thirty years of service! September 2025 was declared “Westchester Food Pantry Month” by Village President Greg Hribal.



Who We Are Now

- The Westchester Food Pantry works to end hunger in Illinois.
- The communities of Westchester, Berkeley, Bellwood, Broadview, Hillside, Hines, La Grange Park and Western Springs remain our priority service area, and are eligible for pet food, birthday bags and other special items.



Who We Are Now

- As of July 1, 2025, the Pantry has two paid staff members: Carol and Alice
- The Pantry still relies completely on donations of funds and food to operate.
- Open Wednesdays 4:30-7pm and Saturdays 9-11am



How the Pantry Works

- Clients can come in once each calendar month. We ask clients to bring ID and reusable shopping bags.
- When clients come in, they get a number, get registered and shop for choice items. The entire process takes 10-30 minutes from registration to exit.
- Clients receive pre-packed bags of pantry staples, fresh produce, frozen meat and baked items in addition to choice items.



Behind the Scenes

- Board of Directors – three new this past year
 - President, Secretary, Members
 - Committee Chairs
- Executive Director
- Treasurer
- Pantry Manager, Assistant Pantry Manager and Meat Manager
- Operations Manager
- Building Manager

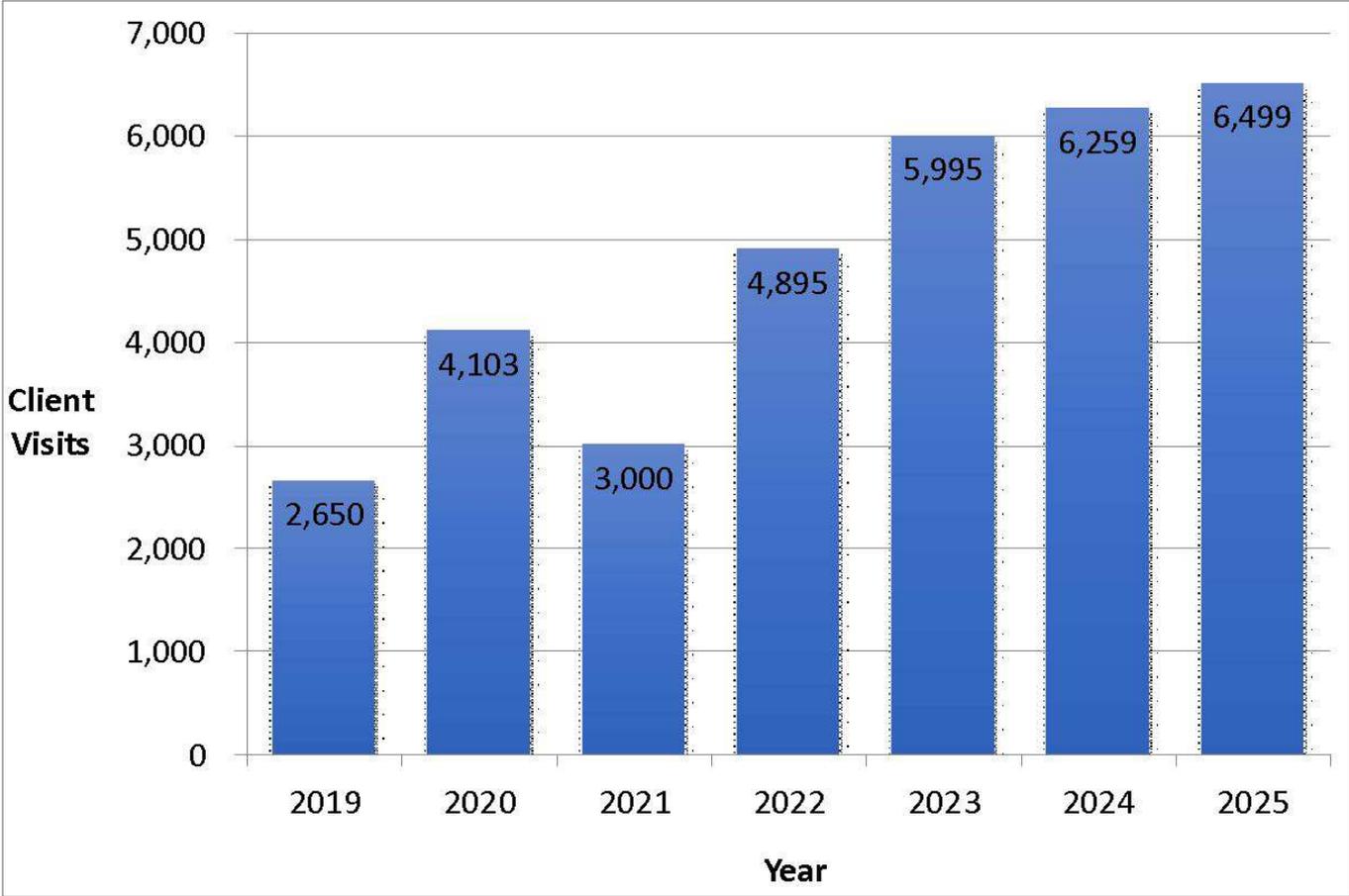


Behind the Scenes

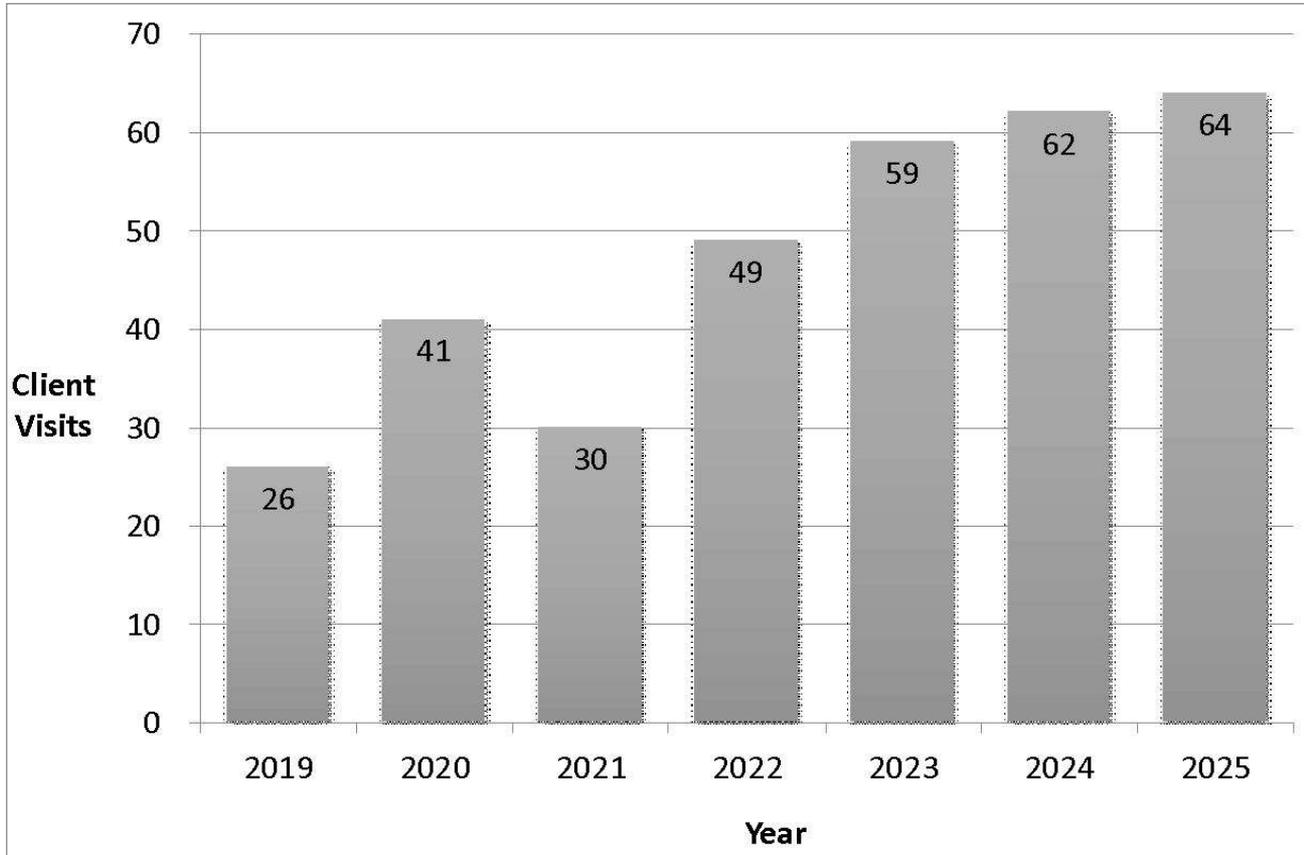
- Back Office (bookkeeping, accounts payable, accounting, taxes, donor/donation management, website administration, risk management, compliance, client and food tracking/analytics, liaison with the Village, legal, basic administration, etc.)



Total Number of Client Visits



Average Number Clients Per Service Day



Records for Client Servicing

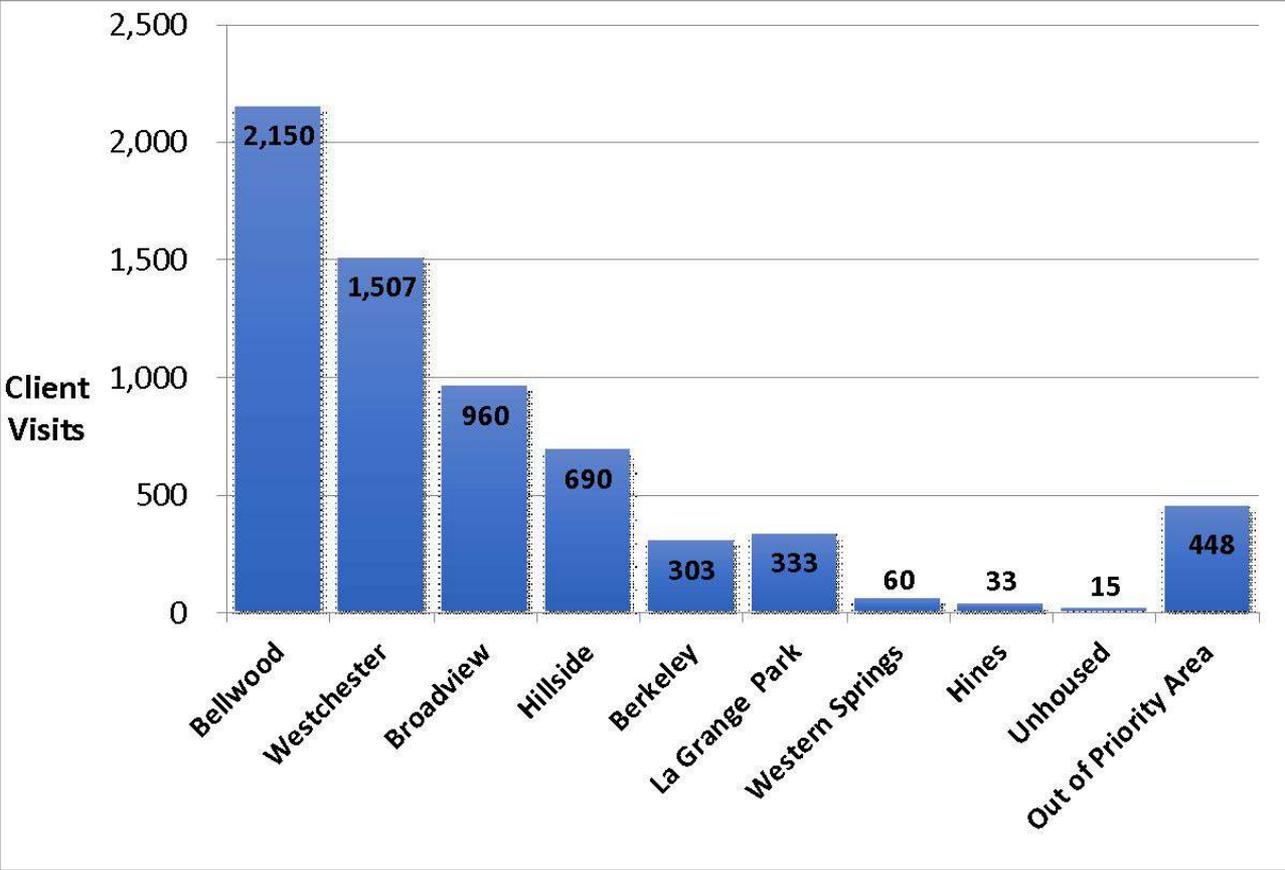
In the month of November 2025, the Pantry served:

662 Client Households

On the service day of November 8, 2025, the Pantry served:

104 Client Households

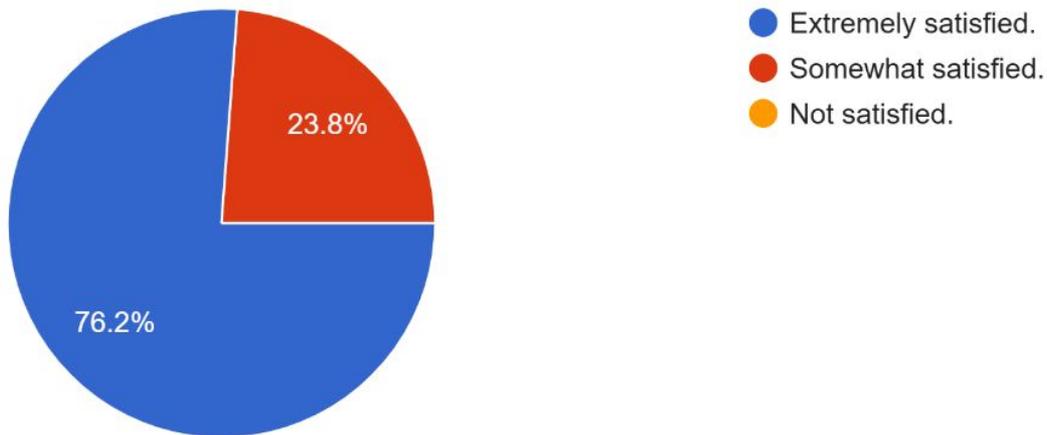
Client Visits by Village - 2025



Client Satisfaction Survey

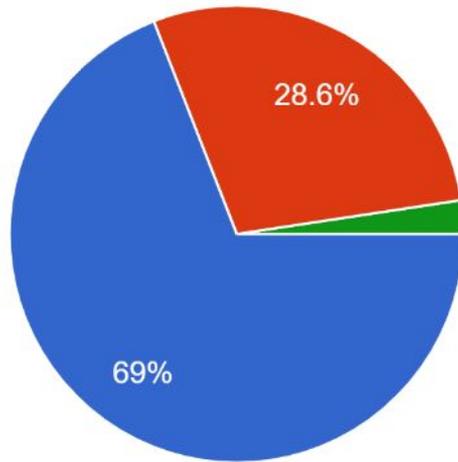
Are you satisfied with the variety of food available (fresh produce, meat, dairy, pantry staples, baked goods, etc.)?

42 responses



Do you feel the food provided meets your household's needs?

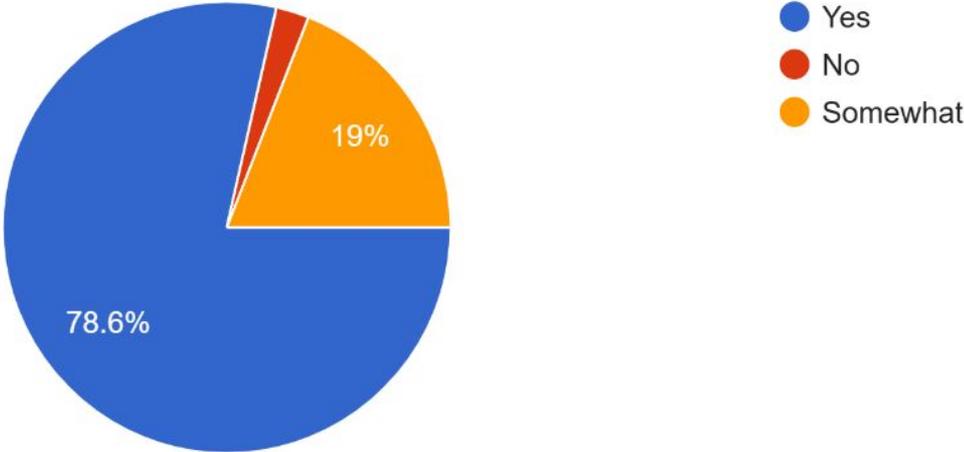
42 responses



- Yes
- Sometimes
- No
- I have made some great meals with these items, always thankful.

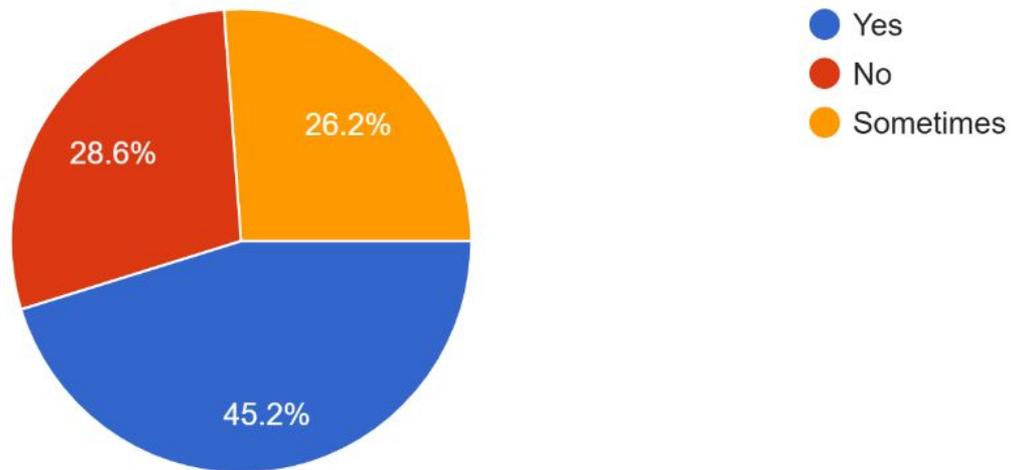
Has the pantry helped relieve financial stress for you and your family?

42 responses



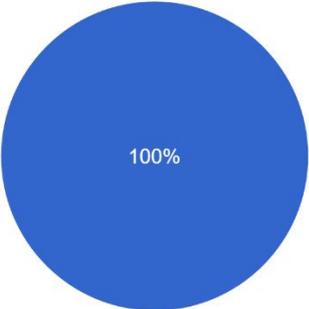
Do you receive enough food to last until your next visit?

42 responses



Do you feel you are treated with dignity and respect when visiting the pantry?

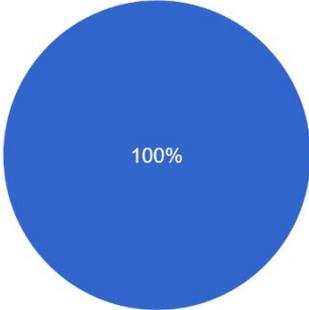
41 responses



- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

Do you feel your privacy is respected during your visits?

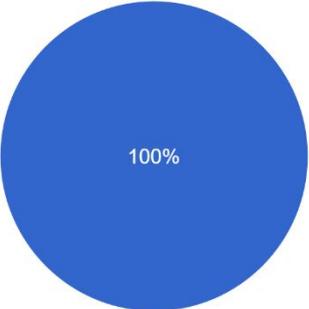
41 responses



- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

Do you feel comfortable interacting with staff and volunteers?

42 responses



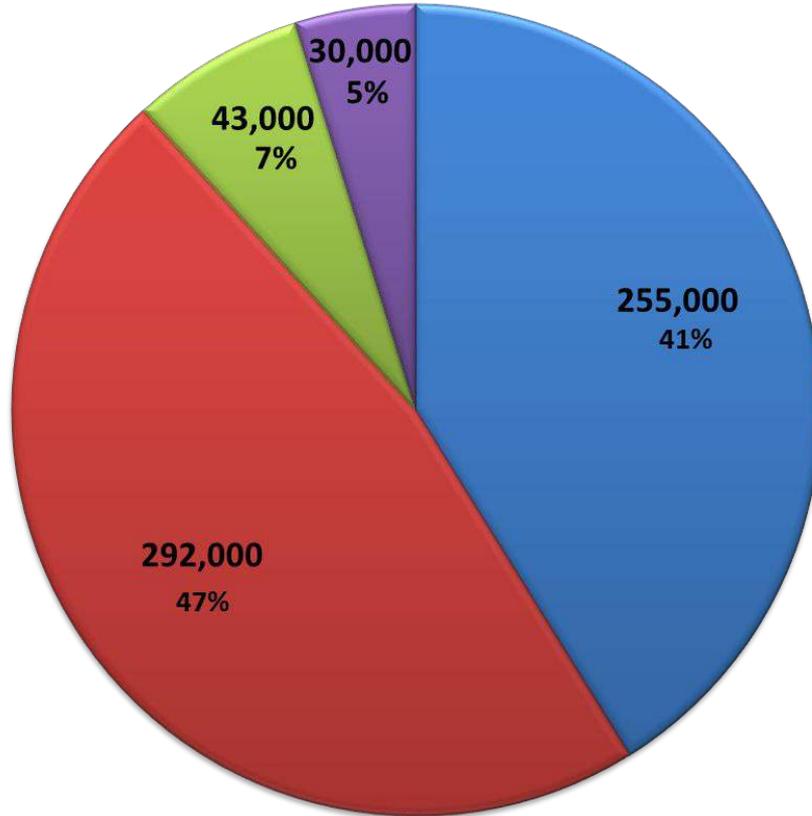
- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

Sources and Pounds of Food Used

2025

Total – 620,000 Pounds

Estimated at \$2.4 Million Retail Cost



■ GCFD/USDA (deliveries the 1st and 3rd Fridays every month)

■ Food Reclamation

■ Food Drives, Food Drop-offs, Other Food Pantries

■ Random Purchases

Top Reclamation Sites in 2025

Jewel (La Grange Park, Westchester)	91,600 lbs.
Target (Broadview)	72,000 lbs.
Aldi (Northlake, North Riverside, La Grange Park)	63,800 lbs.
Kroger Warehouse* (Maywood)	31,800 lbs.
Mariano's (Westchester)	6,600 lbs.
Misfits Market (Northlake)	6,000 lbs.

Per Feeding America, U.S. food pantries and food banks prevent over 3.6 billion pounds of food from going into landfills every year.

Food Drives

Calendar 2025 – 4th Quarter

- Record Number – 59 Food Drives
 - Very Rough Estimate - 20,000 Pounds of Food
- First Three Quarters Totaled – 21 Food Drives
- 4th Quarter Last Year – 27 Foods Drives



Wet Nose Pantry

- Its operation is part of the normal client setup and client servicing
- In 2025, 53% of our clients were provided with pet food
- Pet food is acquired through Rescue Pack, in-kind donations and purchases
- Rescue Pack is our major source of pet food
 - We have been part of their network since March 2020
 - In 2025, we picked up pet food, at their facility, 9 times - total weight of 14,600 pounds
- Still, many times throughout the year, we are in need of pet food





Outreach events

- Reach potential donors, volunteers and clients
- 18+ outreach events in 2025
 - 39 in 2024
 - 60 in 2023
 - 48 in 2022
 - 37 in 2021



Fundraising events

- 2025 Souper Bowl (6th year!)
- Spring Fling Artisan Market
 - Vitalant Bloodmobile
- Grassroots Garden Group's Seedling Sale
- Yard Sale Extravaganza
 - 2025 record = \$17,000
 - Over \$100,000 total
 - Claudia led it for 7 years
 - Larry taking over for 2026
- Mid-Year Letter Campaign



Fundraising events

- Independence Day Parade
- Party in the Park
- Grassroots Garden Group's Garden Walk
- Harvesting Hope—30th Anniversary





Fundraising events

- Pints for a Purpose
- Fall Photo Project
- Thanksgiving Fundraising at Jewel*
- Winter Wonderland Holiday Market
 - Vitalant Bloodmobile
- End-of-Year Letter Campaign





New in 2025

- Turned lobby into waiting area
- Rearranged client choice area to provide even more food options
- New service area (July)
- Two paid staff members (July)
- Rebooted the client enewsletter
- Added more community drop-off locations
- Coat and blanket giveaway (Dec)

Challenges and Highlights for 2025

- Threat of ICE, Government Shutdown and SNAP Interruption
- For the period of October 22 thru November 22 we had 807 client visits
 - typically average a little over 500 client visits per month
- 193 (24%) of these clients were new to the Pantry
 - typically average about 60 (7%) clients new each month
- All provided with \$350+ of food
- We had to rearrange Pantry operations, and bring in more volunteers for the parking lot, clients service, set up and registration.
- The communities really supported us with food and funds
- Volunteers were (as always!) amazing—people came out to help!

Challenges (Still) Facing Food Pantries

- Rising Demands for Services
 - Increased food insecurity due to inflation and economic downturns
 - Changes in government support programs like SNAP
 - More families, seniors and individuals seeking assistance
- Volunteer Recruitment and Retention
 - Aging volunteer base: Difficulty attracting younger volunteers
 - Fewer people available for long-term commitments
 - Burnout: Over-reliance on a small staff/small group of volunteers
- Infrastructure Limitations
 - Insufficient space for perishable and non-perishable food
 - Inadequate facility to efficiently serve and/or expand the growing need
 - Inadequate facility to operate efficiently as a ‘business’

Challenges (Still) Facing Food Pantries

- Funding Challenges
 - Preventing donor fatigue – reduced contribution from individuals, community organizations and businesses
 - Increased demand on limited grant funding
 - Rising cost for food, utilities, insurance, supplies, etc.
- Community Awareness and Engagement (major strides being made)
 - Lack of understanding about food insecurity
 - Difficulty connecting with potential donors and supporters
 - Challenges in mobilizing our communities for sustained support
- Together, We Can Make a Difference
 - By continuing to address these challenges, and other encounters, will we build a resilient food pantry for 2026 and far beyond

Volunteers—the Heart of the Pantry!

- In 2025, over 18,000 volunteer hours to operate the Pantry
- The Pantry is a wonderful place because our volunteers live their values:
 - We serve every client with dignity, empathy and respect
 - We recognize and honor the diversity of our community
 - Access to healthy, nutritious food is essential to well-being
 - Hunger and food insecurity are not acceptable in our community
 - We work with partners, donors and volunteers to deliver our services and expand our impact
- Together, we accomplish more than we could alone



Photo: Jim Judkis

“ We live in a world in which we need to share responsibility. It's easy to say “It's not my child, not my community, not my world, not my problem.” Then there are those who see the need and respond. I consider those people my heroes.”

~ Fred Rogers

Coming in 2026

- Lobby Shop Pop-Ups
- CPR and AED Classes
 - for volunteers and clients
- New group guidelines
- Social events for volunteers
- Guide to volunteering
- Volunteer roundtable



Continuing Goal: Empower Volunteers to Lead

- Why Leadership Matters
 - Develop skills and confidence among volunteers
 - Build stronger committees and the overall Pantry
 - **Ensure sustainability and succession planning (key)**
- Opportunities for Volunteer Leadership
 - Lead fundraising and outreach endeavors
 - Take ownership of back office activities
 - Once confident, mentor new volunteers
- How We Will Support
 - Allowing attendance in applicable training programs
 - Access to any needed tools and mentorship by existing staff

We are looking for volunteers to take leadership roles:

- Grant Writer
- Food Reclamation
- Meat/Walk-in Freezer Management
- Facebook Marketplace Lead
- Turn the Core 4 into the Exciting 8
- Turn the Fab 5 into the Terrific 10
- and more!



Do not be daunted by the enormity
of the world's grief.

Do justly, now.

Love mercy, now.

Walk humbly now.

You are not obligated to complete
the work, but neither are you free
to abandon it.

(the Talmud)