

feeding our community

THE GLEN ELLYN FOOD PANTRY IS EXPANDING!

For over 40 years, the Glen Ellyn Food Pantry has been distributing groceries to our neighbors in need, working towards “making hunger history” in Glen Ellyn and surrounding communities. Started by a youth group in a closet at Grace Lutheran Church, the food pantry today distributes nearly 1 million pounds of food. Staff, board members, and volunteers alike work five days per week, assisting residents who have lost their job, are disabled and cannot work, are senior citizens receiving a fixed income, or simply have difficulty making ends meet for any number of reasons.

The food pantry is 100% privately funded, receiving no money from the government. The reason for this is that the board did not want to be limited in who they can provide help to, as government funding requires certain income thresholds be met. “When the market crashed in 2009, we literally had people coming from large houses, driving up in expensive cars because they had just lost their job, needed to put the money they still had toward their mortgage and things, but still needed help. This is the reason the food pantry exists. We do not turn anyone away,” states Paula Nugent, president of the board.

COVID-19 has only increased the needs of our community and the demand for food from the pantry. Since March, the food pantry has welcomed more than 400 new clients and is averaging 1,000 visits per month! This has put a strain on resources. But, the residents and local businesses of Glen Ellyn continue to rally behind them, running food drives, posting on social media, and more. “The community has kept us in business and helped us truly feed our neighbors,” Paula thankfully adds.

And the food pantry is again asking for the communities’ help. They have literally run out of room in their current space at Grace Lutheran. A capital campaign was started in 2019 to raise funds to relocate and renovate its future new home at the old parsonage of Faith Lutheran Church at 55 N. Park Blvd., which is necessary to accommodate the growing needs of those experiencing food insecurity. As of November 2020, the food pantry has raised more than \$700,000 in its goal of \$900,000.

“A larger, independent building, which is ADA-compliant, is critical to our day-to-day operations to sort, store, package, and distribute significantly more groceries,” said board member and capital campaign chair Kim Dorn. “The success of this campaign will not only transform our physical space but our ability to provide more services to the community as we progress beyond the pandemic.”

The parsonage, with a plat that was recorded nearly 100 years ago, was donated by Faith Lutheran in 2019, at which point the capital campaign began. The building will continue to look like a residential home from the street but will be renovated to provide easy shopping and delivery access on the side and back of the house, along with other modifications and improvements. The new location will position the pantry closer to the Roosevelt Road corridor and Pace bus routes in the western suburbs. The transformation and relocation will begin in the spring of 2021, with hopes of completion by mid-summer.

The newly remodeled space will include a separate warehouse from its shopping center. This will add nearly 2x the capacity to store and distribute food, and an independent space that will allow the Pantry the flexibility to be open for more evening hours to serve working families. The gardens tended by local refugees will remain.

Although they are getting closer to their goal, the food pantry still needs help. In 2020, several events were held to raise funds, including wine-cheese pairing events with Marche, a drive-in jazz concert, an old-fashioned community telethon with 20 performers, a shopping event with The Gnome Colony Co., customized bricks, and more. More fundraising events will be held throughout this year. In addition, anyone can help out by volunteering, donating food, inviting the Food Pantry to your organization or service group, corporate matching, and in-kind donations. Donations are accepted as a single, lump sum or through any multi-month or year pledge completed by December 31, 2022. Naming options are available by request. Visit www.glenellynfoodpantry.org for more information and to donate online.



A rendering of the front of the new house

