

Wakefield Food Pantry, Annual Report – October, 2020

Located at 1500 Wakefield Road, Wakefield, NH 03872

Our vision: hunger-free communities

GREATER WAKEFIELD CHAMBER OF COMMERCE 2020 BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

Overview

In March of this year, the state of New Hampshire ordered statewide shutdowns of all but essential businesses to prevent the spread of the novel Coronavirus, now named COVID 19. The Food Pantry declared itself essential and made a commitment to continue to serve the needy populations of our five towns. All but three of the 75 volunteers expressed willingness to do what was needed to get food to our families. From the beginning of the shutdown, until June 17, the pantry building was closed to recipients and all services were delivered outdoors by masked volunteers bringing food boxes to open trunks or back seats so as to stay distant.

Below is how the COVID-19 impacted our numbers:

- Our average weekly number of individuals served in January and February was 134.
- In March we served a weekly average of 175 individuals or a 31% increase over January and February.
- In April we served a weekly average of 173 individuals or a 29% increase over January and February.
- In May we served a weekly average of 157 individuals or a 17% increase over January and February.
- In June we were back to our January and February numbers served.

During that time, we saw many new faces.

On April 15, 2020, The Wakefield Food Pantry reached out to our supporters to help us raise \$10,000 so that we could take advantage of a generous offer to match those funds from the Royal Little Family Foundation. That goal was exceeded. Some people even giving us all or a portion of their stimulus check.

We are currently allowing a limited number of recipients at a time into the building. They are screened, masked and have sanitized hands. All volunteers are also masked. We expect to continue these steps until such time as the virus is no longer a major threat.

Our holiday meal distribution will go on as planned, however, the events will be entirely outdoors.

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We now are distributing food to approximately 55-65 families per week from Wakefield, Brookfield, Milton, Newfield and Effingham.

Comparing our numbers for the year thru September 2020 to the same time frame last year shows a decrease in the number of individuals served by -0.6%, despite the COVID – 19 increases we saw in the beginning of the year. The largest decrease (400 individuals or -6.0%) came from the age group of 19 - 59 years of age. With the presence of a new food pantry in Milton, the number of recipients from that town has dropped 30%.

Our food costs (including toiletries) were down 18.1% compared to last year. Both the USDA and the NH Food Bank have given us more food than ever, thus reducing our need to purchase food.

Board Membership

At the Annual Meeting in October, 2020 the following people were elected/reelected to the Board: Laura Colbath, Bo Keating Elizabeth Conner and Colleen NiCastro.

Food Sources

The vast majority of the food distributed from our pantry continues to come from the New Hampshire Food Bank located in Manchester. We are collaborating with the Hannaford Supermarket in Ossipee to receive food donations twice a week which include meat, bakery, dairy, and produce. As mentioned above we have received free food from the NH Food Bank, which for the first time included fresh milk. These three sources are very important in helping us keep costs down and our food supplies adequate. As a three-day emergency food pantry, we provide nine meals to each individual once a week at a cost of 35 cents per meal. Food is purchased from Hannaford and Lovell Lake Food Center as necessary to keep up the stocks.

Other sources are also very important to us, notably the area churches, McKenzie's Farm, area farmers, the Boy Scouts, schools, post office and community members who drop off food either once a year in a major drive or all year long on a mostly weekly basis. Some of these sources are affected by COVID and will not be doing a collection this year.

Also new this year the NH Food Bank has started a pilot program called NH Feeding NH. We received a \$1,500 grant in September to purchase food from a local farm or farmer's market. The money has to be spent by the end of the year. We contacted the Top of the Hill farm and are purchasing hamburger that comes from their farm.

In 2019, we served families 197 over the two holiday periods with boxes of food containing frozen turkeys, hams, fresh produce and frozen pies.

Organic Garden

Lead by organic gardener, Frank Frazier, our garden had a banner year providing recipients with healthy greens, tomatoes, green beans, cabbage, cucumbers, squash, rhubarb and the raspberries. With the help of Liberty Mutual employees volunteers, we now have an expanded composting system.

Screening Recipients

We normally recertify our recipients in March and April of each year; however because of COVID – 19 we didn't do the screening this year.

Our pantry supports about 600 individuals in five towns at various levels during the past year.

Building/Equipment

The building is a huge improvement over our former location. The volunteers are able to distribute food rapidly to 55 -65 families per week in the same five hours that we have been operating over the last sixteen years.

During 2020 we had to replace two freezers in our distribution area. Pete's Restaurant Equipment in North Conway gave us a great deal on two commercial freezer units and had them available in less than two days.

We have a service agreement with Laconia Refrigeration to do repairs and preventative maintenance twice a year on all of our refrigeration units as well as our boiler.

The Generator Connection still provides our maintenance on our back-up generator.

Volunteers

The pantry has more than 75 volunteers from the area communities. It is an active network of dedicated community members who volunteer for kitchen prep duties, food distribution, home deliveries, cleaning, registration, food pickup and delivery, trash removal, grounds keeping and gardening. Several volunteers are also pantry recipients.

The pantry delivers food to approximately eight home-bound recipients each week.

In 2019, volunteers gave a total of 6,589 hours and drove 26,329 miles to serve the community.

For the first time in eight years Liberty Mutual could not have their volunteers help us due to the pandemic.

Social Media

We have increased our presence on social media with a dedicated Facebook page. Also in 2018 thanks to MoxDog Media we have a new webpage that is current and informative to potential recipients and donors. The website is wakefieldnhfoodpantry.org.

Children's Programs

The Food Pantry is currently supporting the following:

- **Food in Time (FIT)** is a feeding program to benefit those children who have been nourished through the school breakfast and lunch programs during the school year. In January 2018 the Board decided to expand the FIT program to include the February, April and December holidays, in addition to the summer break.
- The pantry serves these children by providing emergency food to their family using Lovell Lake gift cards. This program costs the pantry approximately \$10,000 a year and is funded through a grant. Each break we have 35-45 children receiving the extra help. We have received extremely positive feedback from the families who participate in this program.
- This year when the schools closed in March, we reinstated the FIT program. For the next 10 weeks we provide Lovell Lake gift cards to the families of these children. The cost for these addition weeks was approximately \$10,000.
- **Effingham Elementary School** This is the fourth year of supporting the food needs of this school. The pantry provides bags of food for 6-10 children each week, delivered to the school for weekend supplementary food for the most needy of their children. (Some of whom live in the local motel with limited kitchen equipment). The cost of this program is estimated to be \$2000 annually and is funded through a grant.
- **The Books Program** We have established and maintained book shelves at the pantry from book donations from the community. We invite children to take books home and to establish their own personal home libraries. We use grant money from the Alden Young Trust to purchase approximately \$500 worth of new books for the annual Christmas Santa Program. We have a volunteer overseeing this effort and she has energetically improved and increased the selection and added a children's table and chair set. However, during the COVID restrictions, we have suspended book sharing.
- **PACS** (Profile Advancing Children's Success) This is a program developed by the Profile Bank in partnership with the pantry to purchase and equip back packs with all the

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school supplies that would be needed for a child specific the age and grade. It is the FIT children and the needy Effingham children who receive these backpacks and they are distributed by the food pantry on the last day of FIT card distribution before school begins.

- **WD-30** (Wipes and Diapers – 30 pack): For the third year, the pantry started a program to distribute wipes and diapers (one package per week) to families with eligible children. The annual cost of this program is approximately \$2000. The funding comes from a grant.

Fundraising Done by the Pantry

Our major/regular fundraising endeavor helps to increase the awareness of the WFP and meet food costs.

- In 2020 we had our second “Annual Appeal” drive sponsored by Bye Insurance; which raised over \$5,026.

Fundraising Done by Others

- **Easter Dinner at Cindy’s Restaurant** (this annual event will not benefit the WFP every year as Cindy plans to rotate her beneficiaries) this year, it netted \$2,500 to the pantry.
- **Amazon Smile** provides a quarterly portion of sales from all online shopping where the customer has directed their benefit to the pantry.
- **Turkey Trot** at the Province Lake Golf Course each October helps to fund the holiday meals. However it will not be held in 2020.
- **Episcogolf** planned and executed by St. John’s Episcopal Church has regularly provided annual grants to support our children’s programs.
- **The Black Panther** football team has an annual collection of cash for the pantry.
- **The Masons and the Lions** regularly have a fundraiser for the pantry.
- **Lovell Lake Food Center** has a holiday drive to help fund bags of donated food.
- **Hannaford** has an annual holiday food drive to help fund “Helping Hands” boxes which come to the pantry for distribution.
- **Churches of the community** provide weekly and ongoing support in the form of food donations
- **Boy Scouts** food drive brings boxes of food for the pantry. This has been suspended this year.
- **Lake Forest Resort** donations from various events netted over \$8,000 for the pantry.

- **Community Relations**

It is no exaggeration to say that the WFP could not exist if it were not for the widespread and deep commitment the community has to the pantry.

Respectfully submitted,

Howie Knight, President

Janet Bye, Vice President

Elizabeth Conner, Treasurer

Marilou MacLean, Secretary