



## Lakeview Pantry Update December 2015

The State of Illinois, now in its sixth month without a budget, has begun releasing some funds for specific purposes — such as paying big winners of the state lottery. But the months-long budget stalemate continues to tear at the social “safety net” and make “big losers” of the unemployed, the working poor and the elderly — a good thumbnail characterization of Lakeview Pantry’s more than 8,200 clients.

These neighbors come in year round to accept two weeks’ worth of free, nutritious food and to

**Between the lines:** A few details from staff reports in the past month:

- A new client at the Broadway site was helped at Counter 1 and thought she was done; when a volunteer told her to go to Counter 2 to get produce and other items, she burst into tears of gratitude.
- Staff, Board members, and volunteers are hard at work with the architects and contractors who are rehabbing the Pantry’s new home on Sheridan. Their focus is on processes in food distribution and specific equipment needs.
- On-line registration for new volunteers is now up and running at [www.lakeviewpantry.org](http://www.lakeviewpantry.org).
- Staff and volunteers continue to visit other pantries to share ideas.
- The Pantry has received a significant in-kind gift for its new site: a builder will donate and install skylights, which will make the new surroundings even more pleasant.

take advantage of the Pantry’s Social Services initiatives, whose most popular offerings are its Job Search and Support Program (about 25% of services provided) and referrals to other agencies for specialized services (19%). Social Services will be able to expand next spring, when the Pantry moves into the new home it has purchased, at 3945 N. Sheridan. The new site has almost twice the space of the Pantry’s current main (leased) location, at 3831 N. Broadway. The Pantry’s site at 1414 W. Oakdale will remain open.

**Still, distributing food to hungry people** remains the Pantry’s principal “business,” and the demand is heaviest, of course, from just before Thanksgiving through the holiday season. The Pantry maintains a number of sources for food in order to keep a steady supply. A significant portion of its food comes from the Greater Chicago Food Depository, which distributes food on behalf of several government agencies and also acts as a wholesale distributor for items such as milk and eggs. A number of retail groceries make generous donations of food, as do faith organizations, schools, and individuals.

The food distribution program functions six days a week, three at each site. Visitors receive a two-

week supply of groceries once per month that includes fresh fruits and vegetables, meat, eggs, dairy products, bread, and non-perishable items, plus hygiene supplies and clothing. For those who lack cooking facilities, the Pantry provides baskets of items with easy-to-open containers and ready-to-eat foods.

However, the food supply can fluctuate. For example, the ongoing drought in the Western U.S. has begun to have an effect on produce and meat prices nationwide. The outbreak of avian influenza in Iowa led to the destruction of millions of hens, driving up egg prices. The Food Depository has had less food available for purchase in recent months than previously; meat and dairy products especially are in short supply. Bottom line: the Pantry has had to buy more food at retail, a strain on its budget.

But the Pantry continues to provide a household of one with 56 pounds of food each month, with an estimated value of \$163 and enough to provide 16 days' worth of meals. (The size of the allotment increases, of course, with the size of the family.) The Pantry tracks quality as well as quantity, and the monthly allotment provides 77% of the protein, 65% of the fruit, 45% of the vegetables, 16% of the dairy products and 98% of the grains per U.S. Department of Agriculture recommendations. Clients can come in weekly for additional fresh produce and bread.

All the Pantry's clients are all low-income people who live in the area bounded by Fullerton on the south, Damen on the west, Lake Michigan on the east, and Montrose Avenue on the north. But the Pantry has visitors from all over the Chicago area. The Pantry serves all first-time visitors with two weeks' worth of food and, if they live outside the Pantry's service area, refers them to an agency nearer to their home.

Almost half (48%) of the Pantry's clients have an annual income of \$12,000 or less, according to responses from a client survey. (The current state income guideline for receipt of food through the Food Depository is \$21,588 a year for a household of one.) The Pantry does not require proof of income, but clients do sign a form attesting that they meet those guidelines. About 5% of the Pantry's clients are homeless, meaning that they are living on the street, or in a shelter, or are staying in multiple locations, often at the homes of relatives or friends. Almost half said that they had to choose between buying food and paying rent in the previous year, and more than one-third had to choose between food and needed medications.

**For those who are unable to come to either Pantry site for food**, the Pantry maintains a Home Delivery program. About 85% of this program's clients are elderly, and Home Delivery's food allotments include specialized packages for people with diabetes, high blood pressure, or heart disease. The program serves more than 160 individuals and makes about 2,000 deliveries a year.

**The Development Department** raised \$1,480,510 in fiscal 2015 for Pantry general operating expenses and \$1,722,000 for the capital campaign to support the purchase and renovation of the Pantry's new site. The campaign total now stands at almost \$2.9 million, 94% of its goal. The department also reports that more than 1,000 new donors have joined the ranks of Pantry supporters in the past year. Most of the Pantry's contributions come from individuals who live within three or four miles of the Pantry.

**And let's not forget about the volunteers**, the Pantry's real heroes. They donated 36,436 hours of expertise and sweat equity in fiscal 2015, the equivalent of 17.5 full-time staff.

In sum, Lakeview Pantry — with the help of generous individual donors, foundations and corporations, and an amazing corps of volunteers — is making significant progress on all fronts, and the outlook for the long term is good. The staff always strive to turn new challenges into new opportunities, and they and the volunteers remain dedicated to fulfilling the Pantry's vision of being a stable presence in the communities it serves, and a model of compassionate, effective, and collaborative service delivery.