

FOOD FOR TODAY  
HOPE FOR TOMORROW



**lakeview pantry**

community • purpose • health • stability

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## Lakeview Pantry Update October 2015

The months-long budget stalemate in Springfield continues to have a negative trickle-down effect on “safety net” services for the unemployed, the working poor and the elderly — a good thumbnail characterization of Lakeview Pantry’s more than 8,200 clients.

As Monique Garcia, wrote in a front-page article in the *Chicago Tribune* Oct. 1, the state government “has [begun] using an obscure rule-making process to repeatedly tighten eligibility requirements for numerous social service programs for children, the elderly and the disabled. . . . [The] latest plan would make it more difficult for people to try to get state services restored once they lose them.” Critics say “thousands of people lose home care or help paying for food and electricity; then they face a harder time proving they really need the help.”

For example: The state Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program was suspended July 1, affecting more than 150,000 families. Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago told the *Tribune* that it closed two shelters and two child development centers and laid off about 40 people because of reductions in state funding. The Illinois Department of Human Services has suspended its expedited payment program for social services agencies because of the budget impasse.

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

- The staff reviewed and revised a new intake form for food clients, the client Bill of Rights, the client grievance procedure, and staff confidentiality guidelines; and began planning for food distribution during the year-end holidays.
- The staff continues to make design decisions for the Pantry’s new home, at 3945 N. Sheridan, focusing on processes in food distribution and specific equipment needs.
- Home Delivery enrolled 3 new clients; the program now serves 155 individuals.
- Social Services provided clients with a total of \$70 in transit passes; \$80 in gift cards to two clients, both for clothing items to complete work uniforms; \$15 for a birth certificate; \$90 for 3 state IDs; and \$148 for orthopedic shoes for a veteran.

On the positive side: The Illinois Hunger Coalition says the state has applied for a waiver that would allow jobless, able-bodied adults without dependents to continue to receive benefits under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (a.k.a. food stamps) past Jan. 1. This group, which numbers about 216,000 people in Illinois and includes many Pantry clients, had faced a three-month limit on SNAP benefits.

**But overall, it’s no surprise** that the number of clients making use of the Pantry’s Social Services program has increased this year. Most in demand are the 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 expects to move into its new home, at 3945 N. Sheridan. The new site has almost twice the space of the Pantry’s current main 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 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. Several retailers 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 has led to the destruction of millions of hens, driving up egg prices. The Food Depository has had much 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 person 68 pounds of food each month, with an estimated value of \$159. (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 67% of the protein, 50% of the fruit, 32% of the vegetables, 16% of the dairy products and 120% of the grains per U.S. Department of Agriculture recommendations. Clients can come in weekly for additional fresh produce and bread.

**Meanwhile, the need for food and services** is constant — or growing. 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. Many (46%) said that they had to choose between buying food and paying rent in the previous year, and 39% 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 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 individual donors, foundations and corporations, and 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.