



North Liberty Community Food and Clothing Pantry

Program Summary Mid year report 2006

Our mission:

The North Liberty Community Food and Clothing Pantry exists to engage the community in feeding and clothing our neighbors.

January through June 2006:

The pantry has been very successful in the first six months of 2006. We have made a significant change to a new method of food distribution, expanded our programming, enhanced our administrative capabilities, and substantially increased our funding. We continue to focus on providing a warm and welcoming place for those who need our services and on involving the community in serving our neighbors.

The pantry served 205 families in the last six months. We saw a wide variety of families and individuals, who varied in age from less than a year to 84. Families with children accounted for 74% of those served. These families and individuals made a total of 931 visits to the pantry, which was 152 more than the same period last year. Almost half of the visits to the pantry were made by North Liberty families. The number of visits per month varied from 123 to 189 with the second quarter seeing 25% more visits than the first. (see Figure 1).

The pantry gave out more than 10 tons of food and 1900 pieces of clothing in the first half of 2006. More than half of the food was purchased through the HACAP Food Reservoir or local wholesalers, and the rest was donated. Cost of the purchased food was \$2598. Most clothing were donated, with only \$697 spent on purchased clothing, primarily children's underwear for the socks and underwear program described below.

A major advance for the pantry this year has been our change from providing sacked food for families to inviting families to choose their own food. This change to shopping empowers families to select food they want and increases the probability that the food will be used. Both volunteers and families have been very happy with the change. We offer shopping only to North Liberty and surrounding rural areas and have seen a substantial increase in number of visits by North Liberty families. We have decided to delay shopping for Coralville and Iowa City residents until we are able to accommodate the increase in visits we would anticipate from those areas.

The pantry has initiated two new components to our services. Our recipe program provides simple recipes to families that use ingredients available in the pantry. We also responded to requests for children's socks and underwear with a special distribution of purchased items in August. Both these programs have been very well received.

We are also working to increase our connection to the community, through participation in North Liberty Unity and collaboration with the North Liberty Family Resource Center and area churches. We have developed a website and a public service announcement to increase our visibility in the community.

As the pantry grows, we have noted a need for increased administration and infrastructure. To help with these needs, we obtained a Compassion Iowa grant that provides funds for training, consulting, and office equipment. We have established a formal bookkeeping system and are working toward a leadership team and formal board of directors. We have also begun to provide monthly in-service trainings for current volunteers.

We have greatly increased our funding for food for the year, with \$3887 already in hand for food purchases. We have been able to purchase new shelving and are currently collecting funds for the purchase of a commercial freezer. This will allow us to accept more donations of frozen food, which provide better nutrition and more desirable selections. Funding increases were made possible by several generous donations from local individuals, businesses, and organizations and funding from the City of North Liberty and several small grants.

Future plans:

With an increase in visits and an expectation of continued need, we are experiencing stress on our facility. We often exceed our storage space and are forced to store food or clothing in other locations. We also experience crowding in the pantry during the times that we are open to the public.

We have developed a plan for expanding our capacity. In the short term we are planning to increase the number of hours we are open. We are recruiting additional volunteers to staff at least one more 3-hour shift. In the long term we have created the initial plans for a building addition and are seeking funding sources for that expansion.

As a part of our enhancement of pantry infrastructure, we are planning to add paid staff to coordinate the pantry. Program administration is currently facilitated by a coordinator, who is a volunteer, and four area teams. The addition of paid staff will increase consistency and continuity for the program and allow for expanded services. We are actively seeking funding for staff.

Our history:

The pantry is an outreach ministry of the North Liberty First United Methodist Church, but the service area and support are community wide. The primary focus is on service to residents of the North Liberty area, but we also serve other Johnson County families. The pantry was created in 1985 as a response to requests from families in need in our community. Until 2004 the pantry was a small project that served 15 to 20 families who asked for help each month. In response to a growing community and growing need the pantry was expanded in 2004 and has seen rapid growth as a result of three factors: increasing awareness of the pantry, increasing population growth in North Liberty, and increasing economic need.

The pantry is currently open to the public three days each week for a total of eight hours. Anyone in Johnson County can access resources once a week during operating hours to receive food and clothing. There are no restrictions on families that can receive food and clothing, with the exception of government commodities, which cannot be given to families above 185% of poverty.

Figure 1. 2006 Visits January to June

