

Food

for thought



The Newsletter of the Rock River Valley Pantry. Northern Illinois' Largest Community Food Pantry.

Do you remember a time when you were hungry from missing a meal?

Do you remember the sound of your stomach growling, the feeling of being tired, or not being able to concentrate because you didn't have enough to eat? For many of our clients that is an issue that they deal with on a daily basis. This isn't something that you or I want anyone to experience, let alone have an elderly family member or a child experience! **We need you to help us continue the fight against hunger in our community!**

This past year we have been able to celebrate several accomplishments, including:

- 1,500,000 pounds of food distributed to families and individuals in need
- More than 70,000 individuals assisted, 2,900 households each month
- A successful Peanut Butter Rally which provided more than 9,000 jars of peanut butter during the summer months
- Six months of milk distribution to families

Now that the end of the year is near please take a moment to help us provide food to those in need. Your support will make a difference in the lives of the working poor, people with disabilities, single parent households, the elderly, and the children of our community. Your support helps us to keep the shelves stocked, the freezers running, and our food rescue effort underway. **With your help a child doesn't have to go to bed hungry.**



Every dollar that you donate stays in our community! For your convenience an envelope has been included for your donation, or you can make an online contribution by going to our website, www.rrvp.org. However you choose, I am confident you will have a sense of being "full filled"...knowing you have truly made a difference.

60% reduction in commodities, 30% cut in FEMA grant funding and an INCREASE of 18% in client use. Whew!

The Rock River Valley Pantry is facing incredible challenges! In July Winnebago County agencies learned that FEMA funding was being reduced by 30%. All approved agencies requesting grant funding for emergency shelter, food, and utility assistance had their grant awards reduced by 30%. Additionally, the Federal budget cuts impacted the amount of funds that are allocated to the state commodity program, titled Emergency Food Program; this reduction which is currently at 66% has greatly impacted the amount of food that has been assigned to local pantries and on site feeding locations. Over the last three years client use has increased by 18%. The saying "Doing more with less!" certainly applies in this situation.

3 Year Client Utilization Comparison	Total
Clients FY11	74459
Clients FY10	72528
Clients FY09	63057

RRVP IMMEDIATE NEEDS:

- Pasta & Rice • Canned Fruits & Vegetables
- Peanut Butter • Cereal • Volunteers



ROCK RIVER VALLEY
PANTRY
Northern Illinois' Largest
Community Food Pantry

RRVP President's Message



A number of months ago, the Rockford Register Star had an article entitled "Toxic mess sends charities scrambling for new homes". Well, with the diligent efforts of our current landlord, Commonwealth Edison, our Executive Director and her staff and the Rock River Valley Board of Directors, a new location has been found. It is close to our current site and will enable the RRVP to continue serving in an area of the city having a great need for pantry services.

Space will also allow the RRVP to continue housing the Children's Clothes Closet and continue as an emergency pet pantry. The amount of time we have to move is very short and much work needs to be done before the move can actually be made.

Despite the challenges associated with the move to a new location, the RRVP continues to confront the realities of a higher volume of people needing food and, at this point, far fewer commodities received through the State of Illinois. The RRVP is averaging over 7,000 persons served each month and, as a comparison, commodities have dropped from almost 70,000 pounds for the period of July through September 2010 to under 30,000 pounds for the same period this year.

As noted, the volume of services provided is often mentioned. The numbers served is, obviously, important but the quality of service isn't overlooked. Twice a year the RRVP has a registered nutritionist audit what is provided in the bags of food distributed. This is done so a determination can be made as to what adjustment, if any, needs to be made to assure the best nutrition possible to all, regardless of household size. In addition, every effort is made to fill the bags with "complete" meals. This is done in two ways. The first is to do things such as including sauce with a box of spaghetti. The second is something the RRVP has done for a couple of years, and that is to give users a choice of foods to supplement what is in the regular bag.

All involved with the RRVP know that we couldn't fight hunger in our community by providing food to those with an urgent need without your generosity. Whether that support is in the form of food donations, monetary contributions or participation in our fund raisers, we again thank you for what you have given and ask for your continued support.

On behalf of all of those involved with the RRVP, we wish you the happiest of holidays and ask that you remember those most in need of our services.

Ken Walker
President, Board of Directors

Pantry On The Move



After more than 15 years of renting at our current location we will be moving this winter. The relocation is due to a scheduled demolition of the building that currently houses our office, warehouse, distribution area, and our two partnering agencies: Kibbles Korner and the Children's Clothes Closet. Our new location at 421 S. Rockton is located in the downtown area and will be easy to access. It will also be more energy efficient and will make better use of the warehouse space.

This move has been made possible due to assistance from Commonwealth Edison and a very generous benefactor. Additionally, only with the help from many of the building and construction trades, volunteers, Fridh Construction, and Gary Anderson & Associates could this be accomplished. ***We are still in need of funding and donations of skilled labor, building materials, and volunteers. If you can help please call!***

248 on Average, 3,000 a Month

Over the last six months we have averaged **248 new households** that need food assistance on a monthly basis. This increases the number of households being assisted each month to **more than 3,000**.

Food Drive Success Stories - The Next One Could Be Yours



It starts with one person hoping to make a difference and grows into companies, churches, businesses, and organizations all contributing to help fight hunger. Over the last six months there were food drives that focused on peanut butter for our communities children, gathered up backyard veggies at Anderson Packaging, offered reduced admission in exchange for food at the Cumulus Chili Shoot Out, and even a "Stuff the Truck" drive coordinated by a concerned individual and held at Logli's on Supermarket on Charles.

It doesn't have to end there. Every box, every can, every bag makes a difference. Your donations stay local and help those living in this area. Please consider hosting a food drive this winter and again in early spring. We'll even supply the barrels and pick them up at the end of your drive. We can also offer great ideas on how to host a drive.

RRVP CAN ALWAYS USE: • Cereal • Pasta & Rice • Canned Fruits and Vegetables

"Got Milk for Kids?!"

With donations from the Norris and Margaret Aldeen Foundation at the Community Foundation of Northern Illinois, BMO Harris Bank, Winnebago County Farm Bureau, and Dr. Jodi Holbrook milk was purchased for families. The distribution was primarily during the summer months when children are out of school, and was also given during traditional school holiday breaks. More than 70% of the public school children are eligible for a free or subsidized lunch and during the summer months those children may not be receiving milk if it weren't for the "Got Milk for Kids?!" program.



Pantry Volunteers Glean Valley Orchard



On November 5th Valley Orchard, in Cherry Valley, invited us to glean a squash field and harvest Rome apples. A call to Rockford Lutheran High School quickly resulted in a group of volunteers willing to help. The students, under the direction of Mr. Sombke, picked 1,200 pounds of squash and 1,400 pounds of apples! This was a tremendous help and has provided fresh, and nutritious, produce to approximately 700 households. Thank you to Valley Orchard and Rockford Lutheran High School!

Crusader Community Health Awards the 2011 Spirit of Caring to the RRVP



On October 21, 2011 the Rock River Valley Pantry was recognized for its role in the community to fight hunger amongst our most vulnerable populations. The depth of the Rock River Valley Pantry's commitment can be measured by the supporters who share the belief that no one should go hungry! The RRVP is the largest community based pantry in northern Illinois and it is because

of the generosity of businesses, service groups, social organizations, schools, churches, foundations, grant providers, and individuals that the RRVP has been so successful. The RRVP has been able to successfully carry out its simple mission for over the last 35 years and hundreds of thousands of people that otherwise would have gone hungry have been fed. We share this award with everyone that has made a monetary donation, donated a loaf of bread, a jar of peanut butter, or planted an extra row in their garden to help feed the hungry. We extend our thanks to our past and present Board of Director's and Advisory Council members, staff, and all of our volunteers. We would not have been recognized for this award if it weren't for your commitment to fight hunger in our community. Thank you to the Crusader Community Health Spirit of Caring committee for this honor.

RRVP Client Quote

"This is a huge help. I've never had to ask for help to feed my family but we are desperate right now. We just need a break to turn things around."

- Jamie

14 Tons of Produce Donated from Gardeners

Potatoes to tomatoes, zucchini to broccoli, and celery to kohlrabi we had it all this summer!

The fresh produce is looked forward to and really enjoyed by the clients, young and old, of the RRVP! We began receiving in the late spring the highly nutritious vegetables and fruit donations and finished mid fall with acorn squash and apples. More than 30 different types of veggies and fruit were donated. Local master gardeners, backyard gardeners, and community gardeners all contributed to a very successful harvest.

Our thanks go out to all who participated in the Plant A Row for the Hungry this season, and to the U of I Extension office and the PAR committee for their coordination of everyone's efforts.





RRVP Mission Statement:

Rock River Valley Pantry fights hunger in the community by providing food to those in urgent need.

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RRVP: Respect, Responding, Valuing, Partnering!



Food For Thought • Winter 2011 Newsletter • Rock River Valley Pantry

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Tiny Morsels...

Your donations of food and monetary support stay local and help individuals and families in our community who are going hungry. Your monetary donations allow us to purchase the food items that we are in urgent need of and our purchasing power allows us to purchase 1/3 more food than you can at the retail price. This is due to the volume of food that we must purchase.

We fill and distribute more than 300 plastic bags each day. If you have extra "green bags" that you would like to donate so as to reduce the amount of plastic being dumped into the landfills, please drop them off at our office. We will provide them to the families and our clients who walk to the RRVP.

More than 40% of all our clients are children and almost 5% are over the age of 70.

Food Pantry or Food Bank?-You Decide!

- Pantries are on the front line providing food to people that are going hungry.
- Food banks do not distribute food directly to those in need; they distribute food to front line providers.
- Pantries are locally based in neighborhoods with the greatest need.
- Food banks can cover one county or more than 10 counties.
- Pantries rely on community donations and local bakeries and grocery stores.
- Food banks receive donations from national food manufactures and participate in Feed America.
- Pantries provide food to people in need for no charge.
- Food banks sell food to pantries, shelters, and on site feeding locations at a nominal fee.

Remember, if you want your monetary or food donation to stay in your community than select a local pantry to donate to!



FaceBook

Check out our FaceBook site, Rock River Valley Pantry, and "like" us to keep informed of the latest statistics, fundraisers, pictures, and needs.

Campaign for Pantry Relocation and Peanut Butter Endowment Update!

If you would like to make a donation that will impact the RRVP and its clients for years and years to come please call us and ask for more information on our current efforts to relocate the pantry or our Peanut Butter Endowment.