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Created *Dec 23 2010 - 7:38am*

Thursday, December 23, 2010, at 7:38 am by [Jan Smith](#) [1]

Hillside Free Methodist Church Food Pantry Volunteers distributed groceries to hundreds of families Wednesday, providing meat, produce, dairy, deli and bakery items to residents of Evanston and surrounding communities.



Volunteer Katahleen Rettig distributes bags of groceries.

The church, located at 2727 Crawford Ave., opened the pantry as an outreach ministry, according to pantry director Maiya Lueptow. "It grew out of an effort by members Faith and Mike Albano to meet the needs of a few families with donated food stored in an extra refrigerator.

The Hillside Food Pantry opened in May 2009 in the church's renovated garage and served 20 families. Now it's distributing 2,300 grocery bags a month.

The distribution effort is a picture of organized chaos.

By 4 p.m., the church parking lot was filled, and a line of cars waited for spaces, as family members registered in the church hall. After receiving a coupon that indicated the number of family members, families drive to the distribution center where volunteers load their bags of groceries. Over 90 volunteers work with the program, taking applications, directing traffic, picking up and sorting food, and filling

bags with groceries.



Volunteer Myra Gorman carries bags of groceries to waiting vehicles.

The pantry has no income or residency requirements, according to Lueptow. Most families are from Evanston, but many come from Chicago, Des Plaines, Skokie and other communities.



Abe Santa Ana of Skokie, pantry director Maiya Lueptow, and Everith Thompson of Evanston at the Hillside Food Pantry

The food comes from a variety of sources, Lueptow says, including the Chicago Food Depository and Whole Foods, Trader Joe's, and Jewel Osco. The pantry also received the donations from this year's post office one-day food drive in Evanston.

"Lots of people want to help," says Lueptow, "and we can be very creative about what they can do." For example, a group of Cub Scouts wanted to volunteer but the pantry couldn't really accommodate them. Instead, they the scouts put together food kits for tuna casserole, which includes the recipe that requires

only non-perishable items, plus all the food needed for the dish.

Although donations of food are appreciated, cash donations are more effective, according to Lueptow. Food through the Chicago Food Depository is free, or priced between 4 and 7 cents a pound. "We can buy more food with the same dollars through the Food Depository than you can, even at some place like Sam's Club."

Hillside Pantry is building an addition to its current space and is always looking for more volunteers as well as donations. For more information, check the [Hillside Methodist Church Food Pantry](#) [2] website.

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