

Feeding our neighbors, one plate at a time.



CLOSTER FOOD PANTRY

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER- FEBRUARY 2020

Donations and volunteer activity through January

February home to Valentine's Day and National Heart Month, which leads us to think of, and sincerely thank, our big-hearted volunteers. It is in the spirit of gratitude that we lead this month's newsletter with a personal account from one of our clients who was kind enough to take the time to share her story. THIS is what your generosity, spirit, and contributions yield.



Q&A WITH A CLOSTER FOOD PANTRY CLIENT

How did you first learn about the Pantry? *I work several jobs and through one of them I met a volunteer from the Pantry. Times were definitely tough for me and my family, but at the very beginning I didn't feel comfortable asking about the Pantry. The more I got to know the volunteer, the more I realized that she is such a good person, and only wants to help, and has no judgment. She has one of the purest hearts of anyone I know. So I finally felt comfortable asking her if I might possibly be a client. Right away, she was so great about getting me into the organization. And when I got there, I realized that all the volunteers were the same way -- genuinely helpful, not at all judgmental. I felt really included. When a client goes into the Pantry, they are not in any way felt put down, but rather, raised up.*

What did it feel like to come to the Pantry? *The first time I was scared. I didn't know how the people would receive me. I have to admit, I felt a little ashamed of myself. Even though I knew in my heart that I was working nonstop in multiple jobs to provide for my family and me. I hated the fact that I needed outside help. I'm not one that easily asks for it. But the lady I knew told me she would be there for my first visit, and that was a relief. Then I walked into the Pantry and met all the other volunteers. And they were just so wonderful and nice and kind that I was immediately put at ease. They definitely embrace you and you walk out of there with a smile on your face (as well as a nice amount of food in your hands). Now I feel very, very comfortable going there. I always know that I will see a few very friendly and reassuring faces.*

Can you tell us a bit about your family and situation? *I'm a single mom of two amazing teenagers. I can honestly say that I've been on both sides of the economic spectrum. When married, we lived an extremely affluent lifestyle. And I actually donated to my local food bank. But life can change on a dime, and that's what happened to us. I had to leave my husband for the safety of me and my children (while they were still very young), and with that came a battle that all but ruined us, except for our heart and souls -- which is really all that matters. We were left in complete financial shambles among other things and on top of that, I have a disability that progressively worsened so it was very hard for me to find a "regular" job. I made due by working (at one point) six different jobs at a*

time. It was exhausting, but I was able to give my children a life that -- for them -- was "normal." We live in a lovely town in Bergen County, they go to great schools, they are involved in the community and have so many friends. Bergen County isn't cheap, as we all know, so it really was a struggle but one I wanted in order for the children to have the normalcy they missed out on for so many of their younger years. Every day I try to land even more on my feet. And I have been able to work a couple less jobs, allowing me to spend time with my children. I'm optimistic for the future, as are they, because we have so many wonderful people standing by us.

What does it feel like to have the support of the Pantry? Honestly, when I first started, it meant the difference of knowing there would be food on the table. I can't stress it enough when I say that these donations are an absolute lifeline for some people -- me included. I was stressed every single month wondering how I could make my food budget stretch. With the Pantry, I know we would be getting the staples that could make a meal. Today, I'm in a little bit of a better situation, but it still makes a huge difference. Today, I still constantly use everything I get. But it also means that my children can have snacks at times (certainly not in my budget), or different types of drinks such as Gatorade (my budget consists of the absolute basics -- milk, dinners, breakfasts... nothing outside of that). So the Pantry allows for some nice treats that many people take for granted as to always having. My children actually look forward to open door night, because they know that they'll be enjoying things that I just can't afford in my food budget.

Was there anything of note relating to support you received over the holidays that you would like to mention? Oh my gosh, the holidays would just not be the same without the Food Pantry. I was absolutely floored with the generosity and kindness of the people who donate when it came to our Thanksgiving and Christmas. I never would have been able to afford all of the amazing food that comes with both. And this Christmas.....we actually had presents under the tree because of the Pantry. And the presents were amazing. Without the Pantry, I have a budget for maybe two presents for each child. But with the Pantry, we were opening gifts for quite some time, and loving each and every one. What I realized with each gift I opened for Christmas was that the people who donate are the ones who really understand the spirit of the holidays. I can't

thank the donators and volunteers enough. They have made my life and my children's lives better. And I'm absolutely enriched to have such wonderful people surrounding me.

Thank you, our supporters, from the bottom of our hearts. You have made this story, as well as countless others, possible.

OUR SUPPORTERS AND VOLUNTEERS ROCK!

NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS

These Kids Care Club (Closter) celebrated Lunar New Year and raised \$315 for the Food Pantry during the event. We applaud these children for consistently supporting the Pantry!



St. Mary's Parish (Closter) once again filled our cart from their Three Squares Ministry (Food for Neighbors in Need) monthly food collection. We thank you, parishoners!



Thanks to **anonymous donors**, our families started the new year off with an assortment of health and beauty products, which are always welcome. Also donated anonymously were one case and one bag of Similac, as well as Ensure drinks.



The Pantry also received the following monetary donations that we use to purchase gift cards or foods we need to fill our shelves. Thank you to those who thought of us, including:

- **Adam and Tracy Collins (Demarest)** for making a donation in honor of their daughter Alexandra's Bat Mitzvah
- **Michael and Marisa Kochover (Englewood Cliffs)** for their donation in honor of their son Zachary's Bar Mitzvah
- **Roberta and Zvi Albert (Tenafly)** for donating in honor of their daughter Dina's Bat Mitzvah.

We thank those who helped to keep the Pantry in order during January, including:

Cresskill

Aline Arslanian
Morgan Messinger

Closter

Christina Chandras
Stratos Chandras

Demarest

Haley Chroman

Tenafly

Farrah Israel

PANTRY ITEMS NEEDED

We especially need the items below, but welcome any donations. Thank you, in advance, for your generosity.

- Mayonnaise
- Instant oatmeal
- Salad dressing
- Canned meats/fish
- Granola bars

FOOD DRIVES/FINANCIAL DONATIONS

If your family, employer, religious or other organization would like to **host a food drive** in the upcoming months, please contact us at fabofcloster@gmail.com for more information and let us help you plan a successful event!

If you would like to **make a financial donation** to the Closter Food Pantry, please make your check out to "Food & Assistance Board of Closter" and mail it to 295 Closter Dock Road, Closter, NJ 07624.



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IMPORTANT: *If you know anyone in Closter who may be in need and is hesitant to come forward or just might not know how, please email us fabofcloster@gmail.com or call (201) 784-0600, extension 429. All inquiries are received in complete confidence. The Closter Food Pantry (CFP) is located on the ground floor level of Borough Hall at 295 Closter Dock Road. On the second Thursday of every month we host "Open Door Night" where families receive the non-perishable food items they need. Our Open Door Night schedule for 2020 is posted on the CFP bulletin board next to the elevator. First-time visitors are welcome with a current form of photo identification and proof of residency.*