

open the 3rd Thursday every month • registration 4pm-7:30pm • distribution 5pm-8pm



Food, crayons, & hugs

Donna Camp, Director

The first hug I ever received at Wesley Evening Food Pantry was from a 2-year-old. She and an older sister came with their grandmother to get groceries in March 2007, the first time we served more than 100 people. This grandmother was wonderful—she read to the girls, encouraging them to identify letters and pictures. I remember being impressed with how patiently she kept them occupied when she must have been under a lot of stress. The month before we had served 40 people, so we were not expecting people needing to wait for their turn. I found some blank paper and crayons for the girls to color with until it was their turn to shop. When we called their number, the youngest gave me one of the pictures she drew and a big hug.

There have been too many hugs to count since that first one, but many, many memorable ones. A former client hugged me on the sidewalk in downtown Champaign. Someone on their way to the pantry called out as I stepped on an MTD bus “Hey, it’s the food pantry lady. I have a seat for you right here.” and squeezed my hand as I sat down. A UI freshman volunteering as a requirement for a class searched all over the building for me at the end of her shift. When she finally found me, she gave me the biggest hug and said “I just couldn’t leave without telling you how unbelievably special today was. I’ll be back next month!”

Last month, the pantry served almost 1,000 people. One of the people waiting for food gave me a hug and asked me about my family. She introduced me to someone new from her apartment complex that needed help getting by this month. I’m thankful for that introduction because it’s more

difficult now to get to know all the people who come to the pantry for food.

Today, other wonderful volunteers bring the crayons and books, help people with their paperwork, and push the carts while people fill their bags. I still have that first picture, though, which reminds of the hug and how it might feel to need food badly enough to wait for an hour or two before being allowed to shop.



FOOD PANTRY DATES TO **REMEMBER**

(Every Third Thursday of the Month)

November 18

December 16

January 20

February 17

WESLEY EVENING FOOD PANTRY 2006-2010: 4TH ANNIVERSARY

Judith M Unger
Resources Area Coordinator

RETHINK HUNGER

I began volunteering for the food pantry shortly after it began in the fall of 2006.

Sometimes I helped as a shopper, sometimes as a stocker. And sometimes I sat at the registration table and helped people sign in. As families lined up to register and to shop, I watched as a representative from Parkland College and later a person with Circuit Breaker materials “work the line” and offer information about these community resources.

I knew Donna was well aware that families who needed food also had need for other support services. As the food pantry grew and we expanded the waiting area into Watseka Lounge, Donna asked me to help with inviting community representatives to come and share information about their support services.

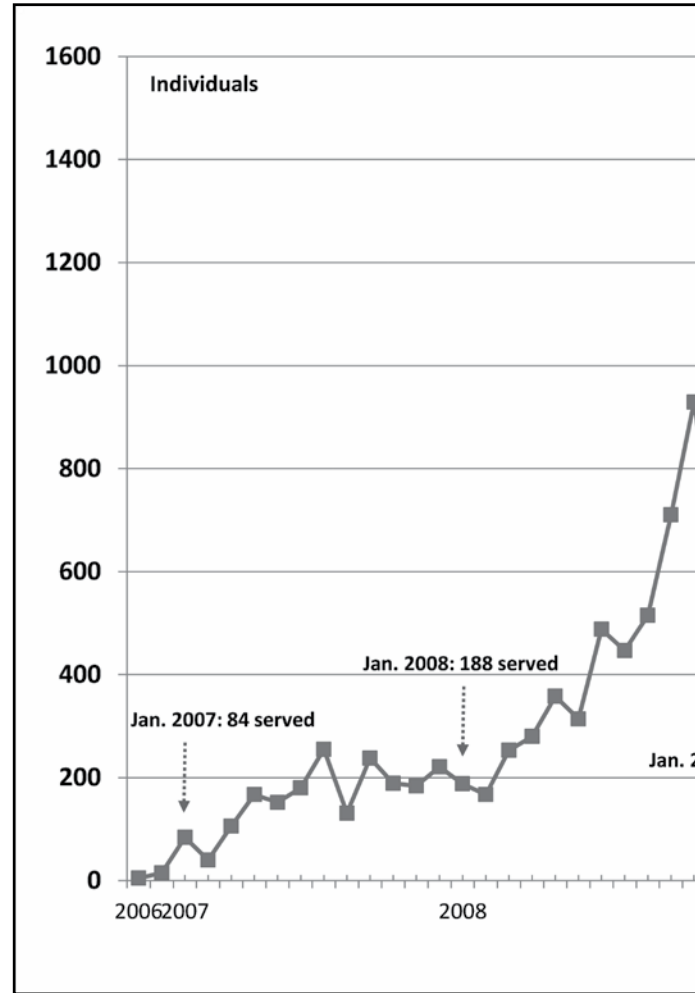
As the food distribution systems have greatly expanded on the first floor, so has the family waiting area, which is now on the second floor in the Great Hall. We regularly provide Resource Information Centers including an Information & Referral Center with social workers, a Health Information Center with a parish nurse, Reading and Activity Centers for adults, a Children’s Activity and Book Center with a free book for each child, and a SNAP Food Stamp Application Center. Additional centers are scheduled with 4-5 community services each month, such as Public Health, LIHEAP, Crisis Nursery, UI Extension, and Parkland College. Some centers deal with seasonal issues, such as back-to-school clothing, voter registration, tax assistance, and home gardening.

We do try to offer a respectful and empowering environment for the families and volunteers who come to share.

Paul Unger
Volunteer

The earliest recollections I have of the Evening Food Pantry is about the scope of the need we began to encounter as we started filling food bags. Many other issues surfaced at the same time.

A woman asked me if I would pray for her because she and

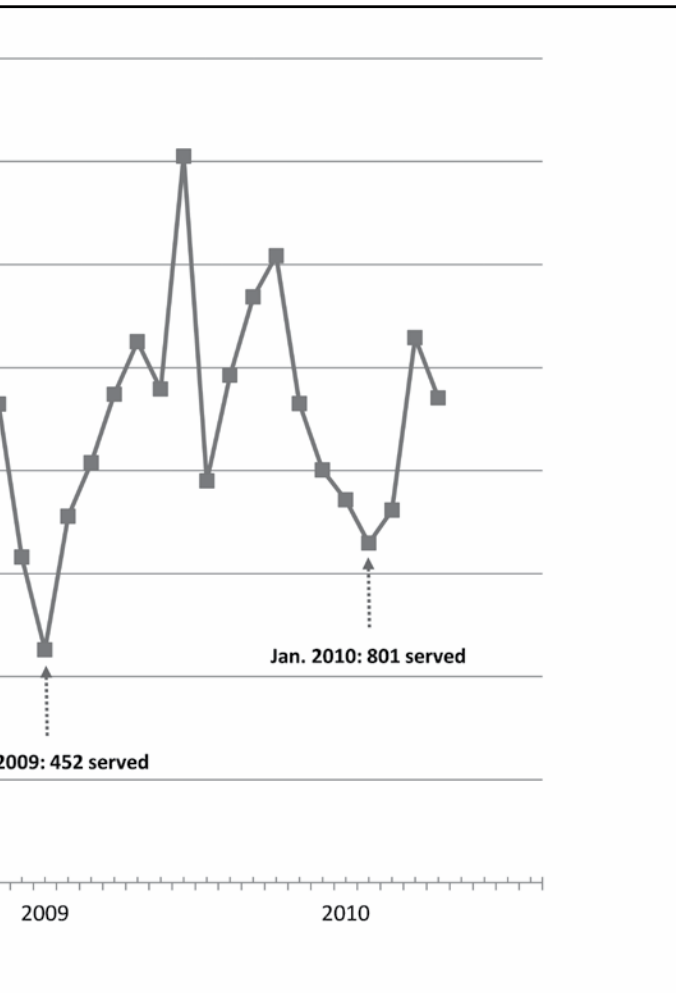


her kids were living out of their car. Another woman was taking care of someone else’s children and shopping for them because someone had shot and killed their mother. One man had multiple handicaps but always remained thankful for the efforts we were making on his behalf and



others. Some regulars liked to call me by my first name and kid around with me because they began feeling a kinship of sorts. I liked that.

More recently I have been excited about our efforts to meet the challenge of the Latinos and Latinas who use the pantry. I have limited Spanish, so when I was saying to the clients, “el



pan esta lastima”, I thought I was saying “The bread is at the end.” Alas, a student who was far more bilingual than I said, “Paul, you are telling them that bread is a pity!” Lastima is pity? Yes! You need to say, “El pan esta al final!” The bread is at the end (final). That is about the time I decided to ask a close friend to come each week to stand right beside and do the translating. Nohra is a Columbian by birth and an angel by nature. She is always at my side now and I know we are much more helpful with her there.

Would someone really want this cake? November 2006

Lee Boyer
Pantry Co-founder

On the first night of the Wesley Evening Food Pantry there was a question on several of the volunteers’ minds. Would anyone want the birthday cake we received from the Eastern Illinois Food Bank? During setup we had intended to pick up bread from EIF. They only had a few used loaves

of bread, I noticed. Not nearly enough for the amount of people we were expecting. They did have a birthday cake in the bread bin, so I took it, certain that we might end up throwing it away.

When time for delivery came the volunteer group put the cake with the few loaves of bread that we had. It turned out that only one family came to pick up food that night. They were so pleased to see the cake. That night was one of the family’s children’s birthdays that night and they would actually be able to have a cake for the celebration.

About the size of two banquet tables. February 2007

During the planning for the first delivery of the Wesley Evening Food Pantry the volunteers had several meetings with staff from the Eastern Illinois Food Bank. Several of the volunteers asked how much space a typical delivery would take up so that we could plan where to set up the food. The EIF staff figured that we would need to set aside space for food about the same size as two folding banquet tables. We thought that sounded just fine. Weren’t we all surprised when a couple of months later, seven pallets of food arrived, about three times the initial estimate from our meetings. About 14 pallets is the typical amount for a delivery now for the pantry.

Erin Heath
Coordinator

Since I became volunteer coordinator, I know that just telling people that I am involved has helped out the food pantry. When people hear about a cause like this that helps the community so directly, and that I care about it, opportunities come up. For example, I have mentioned the pantry to my advisor several times. When she was signing up to participate in I-share this year, she saw the food pantry, and because I was involved she decided to contribute to the pantry.

I also participate in the Graduate Employees Organization, and when I mentioned that I help out here, one of the officers mentioned that they have a solidarity fund that contributes to community causes. All I had to do was fill out a one page form and the GEO gave \$625 to the pantry.

wesley evening 
FOOD PANTRY
Wesley United Methodist Church
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Urbana, IL 61801

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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Plastic Knit Bags

In the beginning, people coming to get food used recycled plastic grocery bags. After the first year, we had to purchase plastic bags to keep up with the number of people who were coming (bad for the planet!).

Now, we give people paper bags to fill and use recycled bags to create beautiful new bags to give to people who donate \$20 or more.

