



Over Twenty-Five Years of “Neighbors Helping Neighbors”

Notes From The Pantry

From the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

First and foremost, I hope this newsletter finds you and your loved ones safe and well. To say the last few months have been challenging seems almost cliché at this point. Before I get into painting the picture of what the COVID-19 crisis has looked like from our vantage point, I want to begin by saying **thank you!!**

Your support has been truly inspiring, and we are so grateful to have you all as friends and supporters. While there are other programs that provide different levels of food support in the county, there are none comparable to the Interfaith Food Pantry in size and scope and without your help, thousands of people would not have access to the same level of nutrition and related services they receive from us. On behalf of all our clients, thank you for your ongoing commitment to our mission.

At the onset of this crisis we knew there would be a spike in the need for food, and at the same time all the schools, congregations and businesses that donate more than half of the food we distribute on an annual basis, closed. The Letter Carrier’s Food Drive, which raises about 20,000 pounds of food was cancelled. And of course our Spring Gala, which raises about 25% of our annual operating revenue, had to be postponed.

Amid all this uncertainty, we had to pivot and adapt our food distribution model to maintain social distancing. We closed the waiting room and kitchen and changed our operation from Client Choice shopping to prepacked grocery bag distribution. To limit staff exposure and ensure redundancy, we sent half to work from home and started shift work. With everyone’s safety in mind, we furloughed the 250+ volunteers who normally come through the building on a monthly basis. A daily crew of 12 have been conducting all our Pantry operations, including sorting and inspecting food, packing and delivering bags for both pantry locations, answering numerous calls, distributing food, and making deliveries to an expanded network of Mobile Partners.

Mid-March, the requests for temporary emergency food increased dramatically as people began to feel the effects of food shortages and quarantine. Referrals from **Atlantic Health, Zufall Clinic, the Morris County Department of Human Services and the Mental Health Association of Morris/Essex** were the first new clients we saw. The second wave were 200+ seniors who now found themselves homebound with no way of obtaining groceries, many living in the Morris County and the Dover Housing Authority complexes. By the beginning of April, we started to see the effects of unemployment, and over the last 30 days, 197 new families applied for assistance.



Staff pictured above practicing social distancing include: **Carolyn Lake, Val Schuszler, Diana Garcia, Wendy Potkay, Tony Avila, Jessica Revolorio, German Ortiz, David Bean, Allison Sillence, Liliana Herrera and Patrick Mitchell.**

Additionally we faced challenges of our own. Two staff members fell ill and tested positive for the virus, and two others lost loved ones during this period. Yet not one wavered for a moment in their commitment to serving the needs of our community. I am in awe of their courage and dedication.

Despite an environment that sometimes felt chaotic, we faced our challenges and embraced them as opportunities to make changes that sped up our strategic plans, such as improving our facility capacity, streamlining our intake process and expanding our mobile operations. (Details are on the next page!)

A crisis like this can bring out the best and worst in people. We encountered both, but I can assure you that the former far exceeded the latter. So many people in the community reached out to organize food drives, volunteers offered to make additional deliveries to our homebound clients, and our partner Houses of Worship, businesses and foundations, and you, our valued donors, have contributed generously.

Our staff is 100% recovered and we are beginning to bring back a few volunteers, who quite frankly, have been itching to get back to work! I can’t thank all of you enough for being involved and making such a positive impact in our communities. Together, we will continue to ensure that the thousands of families that rely on us for a regular, stable source of nutritious food will never need to go without, and that they can rely on us for the long-term.

With heartfelt gratitude,

Carolyn

**Check out our
Current Food Needs on page 2.**



COVID-19: IFP Response

Pantry Operations

Lately there have been many news reports and images of long lines of cars at food banks across the country as the effects of unemployment shatter the nation's economy and millions seek help to feed their families. Many people have been asking if we have the same long lines. While we have enrolled many new people, we are able to avoid long lines because all our existing and new clients are assigned a specific day and time to come (we make allowances if someone misses their appointment). We provide a full month's worth of groceries in amounts based on their family size, so people only need to visit once per month. With 36 sessions to choose from, including some evenings and weekends, we can accommodate many more people. So instead of one long line, we have multiple short ones, and clients can typically receive their food within 20 minutes.

Our Client Choice model has been temporarily suspended. We do hope to return to this when we can ensure safe distancing for everyone. But in the meantime we are still distributing the same amount of meats, fresh produce, dairy, grains and prepared foods, and accommodating special requests such as low-sodium, gluten free items, diapers and baby food, and even pet food, ensuring all our clients needs are being met!

Healthy Choices Mobile Pantry Network Expands

The **Mobile Pantry Network** is designed to expand the availability of healthy foods, primarily produce, meats and dairy through a network of partner agencies throughout the county. By working with smaller pantries, senior housing units and county nutrition sites, we can make these items available to local communities while avoiding duplication of services. Our Mobile Pantry Network now comprises 26 locations throughout the county! Visit <http://mcifp.org/healthy-choices-mobile-pantry-program/> to find out where, or if you think your local pantry is interested in becoming part of an integrated solution!

Healthy Choices/Garden & Produce

Our cooking demonstrations have been suspended, however, our philosophy about food and health remains unchanged. We are continuing to obtain healthy foods and though our cooking classes are on temporary hiatus, we continue to offer tips and recipes to our clients that encourage healthy eating.

We are looking forward to the growing season this year! We have heard from growers of all sizes and ages who said they are working extra hard this year so their crops will yield maximum production to help as many people as possible! It's heartwarming to hear that even under the current circumstances, so many of our regular farms and community gardeners are ready to return. We've posted produce donation guidelines on our website at www.mcifp.org.

Free Farmers Market Returns!

Prior to suspending our very popular **Free Farmers Market** due to the COVID-19 crisis, our clients were receiving extra produce, grains and dairy on a weekly basis. The IFP typically saw about 150 clients at our Executive Drive site and 75 at Speedwell Avenue. Our Mobile FFM at St. Peter's Church in Parsippany was also temporarily suspended. We are so happy to announce that we are resuming the Market, beginning June 5th, at **St. Margaret's Church**, for our Morristown clients and at **GAF Headquarters** in Parsippany for everyone else! The GAF space is enormous, and as long-term supporters they have agreed to provide the labor, signage, refrigeration, and funds to help make this a reality. We are so grateful for their partnership in this endeavor!



Pictured left is one of our very grateful clients stopping by to say thank you; pictured above is **Celeste Stracco** one of our dedicated volunteers stopping by to say hello.

Under Construction

In March, **IFP Board Member Brian Storms** introduced us to **Bill Martin, President** and **Bryan Natale of Highlander Equipment Company**. The company specializes in warehouse optimization and leases forklifts designed to operate in narrow aisles. After hearing our story, the company agreed to donate the forklift, equipment, expertise and labor to reconfigure our 8,000 square foot warehouse and increase our storage capacity by 60%! This will be taking place this Spring/Summer at a time to be announced. We will still be distributing food but may need to ask you to hold off on conducting drives and food donations for a few days while we complete the project. Stay tuned to our website at www.mcifp.org and Social Media pages!

Current Food Needs*

- ▶ Dry Milk (1 qt. pkg.), Evaporated Milk
- ▶ Calcium fortified milk alternatives (soy, rice, almond milk)
- ▶ Soups (hearty, low sodium & condensed)
- ▶ Rice, white/brown
- ▶ Cereal (low sugar, high fiber)
- ▶ Hamburger/Tuna Helper, Rice-a-Roni/Pasta-Roni
- ▶ Pasta & Tomato Sauce/Tomato Products
- ▶ Canned Vegetables & Beans
- ▶ Tuna Fish
- ▶ Canned Meats/Meals, Ravioli, Hash, Stew, Chili
- ▶ Peanut Butter
- ▶ Boost, Boost Glucose Control, Ensure or Glucerna
- ▶ Enfamil Infant Formula (yellow, purple or blue)
- ▶ Baby Food - Stage 1, 2 & 3 Fruits, Vegetables, Meats & Meals

* When shopping consider low-salt, low-sugar and gluten-free items.

COVID-19: The Community Response

Food... Glorious Food!



Since so much of the food we distribute is donated by Houses of Worship, schools, scouts, businesses and civic groups, at the onset of the pandemic we were preparing for the worst: a dramatic decrease in supply converging with an unprecedented increase in demand. During the first few weeks of March, our food donations were already down significantly when we learned the **National Association of Letter Carrier's Food Drive**, which brings in on average 20,000 pounds of food was cancelled.

But our community responded heroically! While we can't thank everyone who helped in the small space we have here, we would like to mention a few, beginning with the **Friendly Sons of Saint Patrick** who arrived, in early April, and seemed to be holding their parade in our parking lot. Vehicle after vehicle pulled up and unloaded close to 3,000 pounds of food! Though the churches were closed, it didn't stop **Beth Vecchio** from **Notre Dame of Mt. Carmel** or **Penny Manser** from **St. Virgils** from organizing drives. Soon after entire towns began contributing food. Municipal food drives took place in **Boonton Township** with the help of Administrator **Doug Cabana** and Mayor **Ron Fancioli** organized another effort in **Hanover**. The **Manley Family** organized a drive in **Morris Plains**, and the **FLAG (Front-Line Appreciation Group)** organized another in **Madison/Chatham**. **Melissa Spiotta**, **HelpMorrisNow**, **FLAG of Morristown/Morris Township** and Mayors **Tim Dougherty** and **Catherine Wilson** also organized efforts. These groups collected more than 40,000 pounds of food! We're so grateful for the hard work and generosity of everyone who donated. We continue to accept donations from everyone, and shelf-stable items may be dropped off in an orange bin at our Morris Plains location: 2 Executive Drive on Monday-Friday, from 9:30am-4:30pm. For current food needs, visit <http://mcifp.org/donate/donate-food/>.

By the way, a great alternative to a traditional food drive, especially during this time of social distancing is to hold a virtual food drive! It's easy and allows us to get the food we need, when we need it! **Visit mcifp.org to get started.**

Even Though We Are Apart, Together We Really Did Make an Impact

Though our Spring Gala honoring **Impact 100 Garden State** has been postponed until October 2nd, the Silent Auction took place April 17 – virtually! Thanks to so many of you who bid on wonderful items from your cozy couches, from Jimmy Choo bags to local restaurant gift certificates, participants walked away with terrific items! Thanks to the generosity of everyone who purchased auction items, raffle tickets or made online donations, we raised \$77,000!

Those of you who checked out our Facebook Live broadcasts throughout the evening got an inside look at how IFP has adapted its distribution model so we can serve our clients in this new world. If you stayed up late enough to catch the 50/50 raffle drawing on Facebook Live, you saw a very surprised and very happy Carolyn announce that she had drawn **Rosemary Gilmartin's** ticket! What an apropos ending to a terrific evening. You can see all the Facebook Live posts on our site: <https://www.facebook.com/interfaithfood/videos/528939594711905/>

And FYI: While **Golf Clubs** are open, golf events are still prohibited. IFP's Annual Golf Outing is typically held on the third Monday in September at Mount Tabor Country Club. If golf events are permitted any time soon we will revisit. Stay tuned!



Peer-to-Peer is Powerful

IFP's social media reach has vastly expanded since the onset of CV19. Being stuck at home does not stop the good people of this community from supporting our neighbors! Not only are we seeing an increase in online donations from our loyal supporters, but social media channels are being used to share enthusiasm for the IFP in record numbers.

Big Business Goes Peer-to-Peer

Many of our corporate supporters launched company-branded internal peer-to-peer fundraisers. The idea is to keep employees engaged and connected by supporting a common cause. Remote staff from **MetLife**, **PBF Energy**, **Barclays Bank**, **BASF**, **TEVA Pharmaceuticals** and **GAF** all contributed to their respective online fundraisers. There were some lofty targets! Many thanks to all those who donated and shared.

The outpouring of support during these uncertain and unsettling days has been a heartwarming source of inspiration and encouragement for IFP's staff. A special thank you is extended to Family Foundations and Corporations that generously responded during this time.

Family Foundations include: **Margaret A. Darrin Charitable Trust**, **Gase Family Foundation**, **Richard Gebel Family Charitable Fund**, **Alexandre & Dita Gerber Family, Heller Foundation**, **Hixon Family Charitable Fund**, **Willis & Nancy King Foundation**, **F.M. Kirby Foundation**, **Koehler & Grieco Family Fund**, **Krnothal Family Foundation**, **Wilf Family Foundation**, **Thomas & Sarah McMahon Family Foundation**, **Mushett Family Foundation**, **McGuinn Family Foundation**, **NJ Pandemic Relief Fund**, **Pierson Family Foundation**, **Ruffle Family Foundation**, **Weiss Foundation**.

Corporate Supporters include: **Allergan Foundation**, **BASF**, **Bayer Foundation**, **GAF**, **JCP&L/First Energy Foundation**, **Kings Food Markets**, **Lakeland Bank**, **MetLife**, **NJ National Gas**, **Pfizer**, **PWC** and **Wegmans**.



Board of Trustees

Meets 7:00pm on third Wednesday of the month

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Allison Sillence, volunteer coordinator
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* part time

Our Mission

- ▶ To improve the health and well being of Morris County residents in need by providing access to food, nutrition education and related resources.
- ▶ To provide hands on opportunities for neighbors to help neighbors.
- ▶ To educate the public about the issues of hunger in our area.

Hours

Food Drop-off, Tours & Visitors - Warehouse

2 Executive Drive, Morris Plains

Monday - Thursday 9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Special arrangements by request

Food Distribution - Main Pantry/Warehouse

2 Executive Drive, Morris Plains

The First Four Weeks of the Month Only

Monday through Thursday 1pm - 3pm

Wednesday 6pm - 8pm

Saturday 10am - 12noon

1st & 3rd Tuesday 6pm - 8pm

Food Distribution - Satellite Pantry

190 Speedwell Ave., Morristown

Tuesday 9:30am - 12 noon

Wednesday 9:30am - 12 noon

Thursday 9:30am - 12 noon

2nd & 4th Thursday 5pm - 7pm

Calendar

June

6/7- 6/28 Kings Pantry Apple Program

September

9/21 Golf Outing (tentative)

October

10/2 21st Annual Gala (rescheduled)

November

11/26 Annual Turkey Trot

For details please visit www.mcifp.org

January to April Statistics

Lbs. of food distributed	386,768
Households Served	6,891
New Households	365
Mobile Network Partners	26

Amazon Is All Smiles!

Did you know **Amazon** will donate 0.5% of your eligible purchases to the IFP when you select us as your charity of choice? To shop at **AmazonSmile** simply go to smile.amazon.com and follow the prompts to select IFP. When you shop at smile.amazon.com a portion of your purchase gets put to good use feeding families in our community! We suggest bookmarking the page to make it easy to return for more shopping.

Please let us know if you prefer electronic delivery of our newsletter, or to be removed from our mailing list. Call 973-538-8049 or email interfaithfoodpantry@mcifp.org

TOO MUCH MAIL? 

Return Service Requested

Interfaith Food Pantry
2 Executive Drive
Morris Plains, NJ 07950