

Elmhurst-Yorkfield Food Pantry

Food, Compassion, Hope

Another Long Year

To say the least, the fallout from COVID-19's impact on employment interruptions and small business closures continues to challenge us. "Two weeks to bend the curve" has stretched into one hundred weeks and counting. With that said, we are proud to say that we have not missed a distribution shift, run out of food, or turned away anyone in need.

On behalf of the EYFP Board and myself, we want to thank all our volunteers and donors for their unabated support. Your commitment to our mission to provide food, compassion, and hope to our neighbors allows EYFP to continue to help build a stronger community -- ***Kathie Watts, EYFP Executive Director***

COVID Protocols

For almost a decade, EYFP has been a "client choice" pantry -- where clients can select foods that suit their individual family's tastes and dietary needs. The Covid-19 pandemic posed a unique obstacle to this model because clients were no longer able to come inside the pantry to shop for themselves.

Client choice is an important value for EYFP, and we continue to use Covid-19 protocols we specifically designed to give clients freedom of choice -- all while remaining in their cars. After seeing the success at EYFP, other pantries in the area have adopted aspects of our protocols.

Respecting social distancing, volunteers and clients must wear a properly fitting mask at all times when interacting. Clients must also remain in their vehicles during the shopping process. They pull up to the pantry garage door in their car where they are electronically checked in and receive that day's shopping list which is changed at the start of every food distribution shift to reflect the pantry's available inventory. The list is written in English and Spanish. Just like the pre-pandemic days, clients can still choose all the items they prefer. The difference now is that they mark it on the order form and volunteers shop for them inside the pantry. Volunteers then deliver the groceries directly to the trunk of each client's car.



EYFP is proud to have been able to maintain the client choice model without sacrificing the health and safety of clients and volunteers.

Check out our video at <https://www.eyfp.org/videos>

Farm-to-Family

In late Spring of 2020, amidst the barren grocery store produce and dairy shelves, the U.S. farming industry was struggling. With the pandemic's toll on the catering, restaurant, and hotel industries, farmers lost a sizeable portion of their usual business. And they were unfortunately unable to move enough product through the grocery stores. Dairy farmers were forced to literally dump milk down the drain because they could not sell enough of it. Food was going to waste even as food prices skyrocketed in stores.

In an effort to both help the farming industries and help the large number of people who had lost their jobs, the federal government created a farm-to-table program. Farm-to-Family was a federally funded program that bought agricultural and dairy products to keep the farmers in business while also earmarking the products for vulnerable populations.

This meant that food pantries like EYFP were still able to provide fresh, healthy foods to their clients, even when we could not get them through our normal channels.

The program started in late Spring of 2020 and ran until June of 2021. Locally, the Northern Illinois Food Bank (NIFB) was responsible for distributing the Farm-to-Family boxes to pantries.

But the Food Bank understandably didn't have the manpower to make special deliveries just for the new program. We could have the boxes delivered with our normal deliveries from the Food Bank, but that was only twice per month. These boxes were available *weekly*, but we had to pick up on off weeks.

That's where our wonderful volunteer Bob Cieslak stepped in. We rented a U-Haul on the off weeks and Bob went above and beyond, driving out to Geneva to pick up the Farm-to-Family boxes directly from the NIFB warehouse.

For the duration of this program, EYFP was able to receive 150 boxes per week. Each box weighed 35 lbs. and contained dairy products, fresh produce, and frozen processed meats. Each box had to be broken down so its perishable contents could be refrigerated, and frozen items could be properly stored. We wanted to make sure every EYFP client's household could receive these products. Between bi-weekly deliveries and alternate week pickups, we were able to do just that.



ERC Vaccination Event

EYFP joined the Elmhurst Resource Collaboration, which is a group of Elmhurst non-profits, church and civic groups, and school district personnel. Covid-19 Vaccination Events were hosted in collaboration with the Village of Bensenville and the Consul General of Guatemala. On May 29 and June 19, 2021, vaccine resources were made available specifically at the Elm Court apartments in Bensenville.



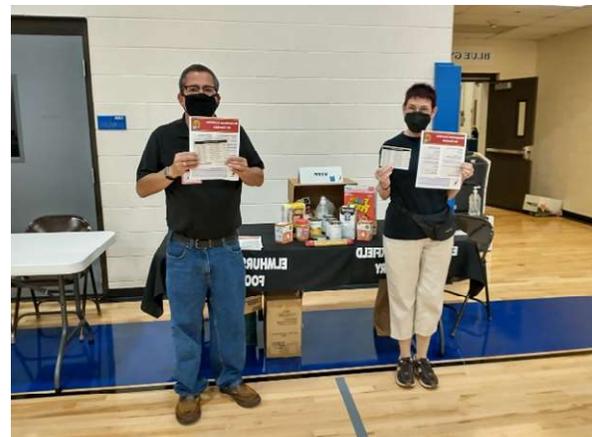
Elm Court has a large concentration of low-income families, many of whom are from Guatemala, and all of whom fall within the Elmhurst School District. The Consul General was instrumental in getting the vaccine resources to the apartment complex. All three vaccines were available on both dates.

In order to encourage families to at least come to the outdoor commons for information on the vaccine, EYFP ordered 250 Farm-to-Family boxes for each event. These boxes were in addition to the usual 150 boxes per week.



ERC Resource Fair

One of EYFP's core principles is helping our children thrive. Accordingly, opportunities to further this end are always exciting for the pantry. That's why we were so proud to be a part of ERC's inaugural school Resource Fair for Elmhurst School District students and their families.



The Resource Fair was held on July 24, 2021, at Churchville Middle School. The event was so large that it took up *both* gyms. The fair's goal: Get District 205 students off to a solid start for the 2021/2022 school year.

Children in vulnerable populations are often unable to start school on time. Frequently, this is because they do not have ready access to the necessary school physicals or required vaccinations to begin the year. In other cases, some parents have difficulty obtaining bilingual assistance with school registration. These are just a few of the many resources the fair was able to provide the families who attended.

In total, 45 local organizations joined the ERC to offer health screenings/school physicals, dental exams, childhood vaccines, school registration assistance, school supplies, career planning assistance, and immigration services. Local social clubs like the Boy and Girl Scouts and the Elmhurst Park District attended to get kids involved in social programs. The YMCA offered vouchers for swim lessons so that students could learn the basics before the swim unit in school.

In addition to school physicals, students were also able to get sports physicals done. This meant that for the first time, many middle and high school students were able to join school sports teams. The physicals and dental exams were done in Churchville's locker rooms to afford privacy.

EYFP was an integral member the fair. We covered the cost of the insurance for the event, provided 300 pre-packed boxes of non-perishable food, and had a table to let the families know about our services. We also helped with the invitations to area organizations to encourage them to participate and offer their resources for the students in our local community.

We are looking forward to participating in the Resource Fair again on August 6, 2022.

Thanksgiving Super Tuesday

Thanksgiving Super Tuesday meal distribution was a five-hour-long affair that served 360 individual families in one day.

Between 2-7 p.m. on November 23, 2021, volunteers distributed food to the families. Each household received a turkey, a large box with side dishes, cake mix, and frosting, as well as dairy and fresh produce. Even though Tuesdays are not normally distribution days, anyone who had not shopped yet in November had the opportunity to shop for their normal groceries in addition to receiving their Thanksgiving meal.



Thanksgiving boxes were also distributed at the Elm Court Apartments in Bensenville with the volunteer support from Nations Roof in Villa Park and We Pop Up.

Greencastle and Mayslake Village

For the first time in EYFP history, we were able to offer Thanksgiving and Holiday meals to our seniors at Greencastle and Mayslake Village, local low-income senior living apartments.



Many seniors do not have family with whom to share the holidays. We were thrilled to be able to offer each of our seniors a bone-in turkey breast along with fresh potatoes and side dishes for each holiday.

This special program was made possible in both November and December by JX Truck Center in Elmhurst. They picked up all of the Thanksgiving and Holiday food, as well as our seniors'

regular monthly grocery deliveries, and helped distribute it.

Holiday Super Thursday

Holiday Super Thursday meal distribution was another five-hour-long event. We served 375 families between 2-7 p.m. on December 23.

Each family chose between a ham or a turkey and received a box with sides, cake mix, and frosting, as well as fresh produce and dairy products. Families who picked up their Holiday meals outside of normal Thursday client service hours were able to shop for their December groceries, as well, if that had not already done so for the month.



And again, holiday meals were also distributed at Elm Court Apartments with volunteer support from We Pop Up. Holiday meals were also distributed to the Brandywine community with help from Elmhurst Christian Reformed Church.

Thank You to Donors

We can't thank our donors enough for their tremendous generosity throughout the year.

We want to extend a special thank you to Ledcor Group. In mid-December, Ledcor presented us with a unique opportunity: a four-day matching gift campaign.

We will put these resources to good use in 2022.

Thank You to Volunteers

We cannot thank our amazing volunteers enough. Without you, none of this would be possible!

By the Numbers (2021)

Unique households served: 1255

Children: > 2,100

Seniors: > 700

Total: 4,600

Food Distributed:

Meals: 653,926

Milk: 7,135 gallons

Eggs: 7,018 dozen

Produce: 104,500 pounds

Volunteers:

Total: 258

Hours: 11,668 hours

Communities Served:

Elmhurst, Addison, Bensenville, Berkeley, Hillside, Lombard, Oakbrook, and Villa Park

Thanks to all of our donors and volunteers - past and present - for your tremendous support. We could not fulfill our mission to provide Food, Compassion, and Hope without YOU.

Kathie Watts, Executive Director



Elmhurst-Yorkfield Food Pantry

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