

# Friendship Center News



## Hunger in America 2010: Chicago Profile

The Greater Chicago Food Depository conducted extensive research in early 2009 in conjunction with Feeding America, the national food bank network. For the Cook County study, 503 agencies were interviewed, the North Park Friendship Center among them. The report confirms that the need for emergency food assistance continues to grow in Cook County.

Nearly 678,000 people each year rely on emergency and supplemental food provided by the Depository and its member network

of 650 food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters. This figure represents a 36 percent increase over the same study conducted in 2006 and reflects the recession and accompanying rising unemployment rates. Each week, the Greater Chicago Food Depository and its member agencies serve 142,400 men, women, and children.

Consider these difficult realities. The study showed that 47 percent of Depository agency clients had to choose between paying for food or utilities, up from 41 percent in 2006. Thirty-seven percent of clients are children, up from 33 percent in 2006, and 9 percent are children under the age of five.

Our numbers at the North Park Friendship Center certainly mirror these statistics. In 2008 we served an average of 414 households every month. In 2009, that number climbed

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to 455 households. In March of this year, we served a record 547 households. These numbers represent our neighbors in need, each with a story that causes the Friendship Center to bustle with activity! Thank you for your continued prayers, monetary support, donated clothing, and work days at the Depository. You are making a difference in this community!

3448 W. Foster Avenue  
Chicago, Illinois 60625

The North Park  
friendship  
Center



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friendship  
Center

3448 W. Foster Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60625, (773) 267-8395

Web site: [www.npfriendshipcenter.org](http://www.npfriendshipcenter.org) Email: [npfc@sbcglobal.net](mailto:npfc@sbcglobal.net)

Hours: Monday 1:30 p.m.–5 p.m., Wednesday 10 a.m.–noon and 1 p.m.–5:30 p.m., Friday 1 p.m.–5:30 p.m.



The North Park  
**friendship**  
Center

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Friendship Center  
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## Join us to raise funds in the 25th Annual Hunger Walk

### **March against hunger takes place on June 26 at Soldier Field**

Staff and volunteers of the North Park Friendship Center and more than 6,000 others will join the march against hunger on Saturday, June 26 at Soldier Field. The 25th Annual Hunger Walk directly benefits participating food pantries, soup kitchens, and shelters that are member agencies of the Greater Chicago Food Depository, including the North Park Friendship Center. The much needed funds help participating agencies provide nutritious food to the 678,000 people in need in Cook County each year.

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The Hunger Walk is a unique fundraiser that helps agencies support their food programs through an event planned and coordinated by the Food Depository. In addition to the 5K walk, the Hunger Walk features an array of fun for the whole family. Hunger Walk participants receive a T-shirt, goodie bag, beverages and snacks.

Each week, nearly 142,000 people turn to the Food Depository and its network of member agencies, including the North Park Friendship Center, for food assistance. We're seeking walkers and donors for this year's Hunger Walk! Call Joey Ekberg at (773) 267-8395 with any questions. To carpool on the day of the Walk, meet at North Park Covenant Church, 5250 N. Christiana, at 8:00 a.m. Step-off is at 9:30 a.m. Free parking is available on a first-come, first served basis.

**See you at the Hunger Walk!**

## Record needs met through generous support

### **The North Park Friendship Center 2009 Annual Report**

Last year was a busy, challenging, and rewarding one for the Friendship Center. As we approach our 40th anniversary in 2010, the Friendship Center continues to serve the hungry and the hurting in this community. May that work continue with the strong support of our many volunteers and donors.

In the steadily declining economy during 2009, news stories came alive every day at the Friendship Center. Not only were our client visit numbers on the rise, the face of hunger began to change. Solidly middle class families suffering from job loss, reduction in work hours, home foreclosure, or medical crises were among our newest clients. Increased anger and anxiety were present in many people who walked in the front door. We served more families (539 households) during the month of November than at any time in our 40-year history, an increase of 10% from just the previous month. Because of the tremendous support of local churches, individuals, grantors, and business sponsors, the Friendship Center was able to play a key role in feeding and clothing the needy in the North Park and Albany Park neighborhoods.

The heart of the Friendship Center is our clients. This year, we served an average of 455 households, comprised of an average of 1625 individuals, every month, with a yearly total food distribution of over 118 tons. In comparison to our 2008 statistics, we served an average of 41 more households with an average of 2500 more pounds of food each month in 2009. To receive food on a regular basis, our clients must reside within the boundary streets of Pulaski, California, Lawrence, and Touhy, but we also are bound by law to serve those who live outside of those boundaries one time and then refer them to their local pantry. Those in need know that fact. So again this year, in addition to our steady clients, we served rising numbers of residents of Des Plaines, Cicero, Evanston and from all over Chicago, as well as a growing number of migrant workers and the homeless. Our food comes primarily from the Greater Chicago Food Depository, for whom we are a Commodity Distributor. We are also the grateful recipient of many tons of food from many local school and business food drives, primarily around the Thanksgiving and Christmas holiday season. Contributors this year included Swedish Covenant Hospital, WTTW/WFMT, Galter LifeCenter, Northside College Preparatory High School, Von Stueben Metropolitan Science

Center, Peterson School, North Park Elementary School, the patients of Dr. Greg Tietzer, and Winnetka Evangelical Covenant Church.

Our facility at 3448 W. Foster Avenue was enhanced with new outdoor signage, the generous gift of Mr. Bill Faude of North Park Covenant Church. We became an unofficial warming center for our homeless clients during a brutally cold winter.

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Endless pots of coffee and rescued Starbucks pastries were gratefully consumed. We endured early summer flooding which was rectified with downspout and storm sewer maintenance. On November 3, NBC's *The Biggest Loser* aired a film clip highlighting the work of the Greater Chicago Food Depository. Executive Director Kate Maehr, after an extremely positive site visit to the Friendship Center in October, selected the Friendship Center to be the featured pantry within the clip. Filming occurred at the pantry on Friday, October 16 amidst much excitement! The Mother's Closet continues to receive and distribute a tremendous amount of clothing and household goods. Under the management of Nancy Fisher, communication of needs to local churches and individuals continues, as does the constant task of presenting a clean and orderly resource for our clients. Longtime volunteers John Potamites and Dennis Potamites, and Dennis' son George, have done many repair jobs at the Friendship Center this year, along with their weekly delivery of food to senior residents of North Park Village.

Although we began the year wondering how the economy might affect our donations, the Friendship Center had a sound financial year, finishing the year in the black. A generous anonymous donor's gift once again provided the base for a challenge matching campaign in March. Over \$25,000 was raised towards that goal. Our financial support continues to be strongest from North Park Covenant Church, including monthly rent and benevolence support, as well as the faithful financial support from many members and friends. Winnetka Evangelical Covenant Church increased their budgetary giving to the Friendship Center, as well as taking a weekly "offering" of food, as

North Park Church did. We also received financial and food support from Edgebrook Evangelical Covenant Church, Grace Evangelical Covenant Church, Northbrook Evangelical Covenant Church, and Ravenswood Evangelical Covenant Church. We received grant monies in 2009 from the Epaphroditus Foundation, the Hoellen Family Foundation, the Marx Foundation, the Sulzer Family Foundation, the Washington Square Health

Foundation, the Feinstein Challenge, and Rich Products of Niles, IL and Buffalo, NY.

The Friendship Center could not operate without the faithful support of many volunteers. Residents of A Safe Haven, a private organization specializing in housing for individuals recovering from alcoholism and substance abuse, and individuals assigned to community service work by the Social Service Department of the Circuit Court of Cook County comprise the core of our daily volunteers, as well as many volunteers who over the years have found a family within the Friendship Center. Strong relationships with Northside College Preparatory High School and North Park University have also provided many consistent volunteer hours. An intriguing volunteer base continues to grow among "graduates" of A Safe Haven and community service individuals who find the Friendship Center a place of service and safety. Our monthly work days at the Greater Chicago Food Depository have been very successful, earning hundreds of dollars in food credit there. Wonderful participation in the Greater Chicago Food Depository Hunger Walk in June raised over \$5200 in food credit for us as well.

The future of the North Park Friendship Center is challenging, especially in an economy that is still just recovering. But with a faithful God and many, many faithful donors and volunteers we stand well-poised to continue to be a beacon of help and comfort in this community.

Sincerely,  
JOANNE R. EKBERG, MSW  
*Executive Director*