

Friendship Center News

Join us for the 24th Annual Hunger Walk

Saturday, June 20, 2009 in Montrose Harbor

Staff and volunteers of the North Park Friendship Center, along with more than 5,000 others, will join the march against hunger on Saturday, June 20 at Montrose Harbor. The 24th 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. Funds raised help provide nutritious food for hungry people in our community. Food Depository pantries have seen and increase in demand of 33 percent in the past year, including many people who have never turned to a pantry before.

In addition to an approximately 2.5 mile walk, the Hunger Walk features an array of fun activities for the whole family. Festivities include entertainment by the Jesse White Tumblers, choral groups, face painting,

caricature artists, and more. Hunger Walk participants receive an event T-shirt, goodie bag, beverages and snacks.

Every week nearly 90,000 people turn to the Greater Chicago Food Depository and its network agencies, including the North Park Friendship Center, for food assistance. Most agencies are run largely by volunteers and raise their own operating funds in addition to assistance they receive through the Depository. The Hunger Walk is a unique fundraiser which helps agencies support their food programs through an event planned and coordinated by the Greater Chicago Food Depository, Chicago's food bank.

The North Park Friendship Center is seeking walkers and donors for this year's Hunger Walk. To pledge your support, receive registration materials, or have any questions answered, call Joey Ekberg, Executive Director, at (773) 267-8395. Registration on the day of the event begins at 8:00 a.m. and 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!



VOLUNTEER VOICES

"They [the clients] come in with a frown and leave with a smile on their face and bags of groceries in their hands. It makes me smile, too."

— *Lawyer Smith*



The North Park
friendship
Center



VOLUNTEER VOICES

*"People have helped me;
so I want to help other people."*

— Mark Putman

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North Park Covenant Church

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Mr. Jonathan Lind

*Vice President of Operations,
Swedish Covenant Hospital*

*Edgebrook Evangelical
Covenant Church*

The Center plays a critical role in the current economic climate.

The worsening economy is hard to escape these days. Read the newspaper, scan the cereal aisle at Jewel, or seek to balance your home budget and it doesn't look or feel too good. If the Friendship Center were listed on the New York Stock Exchange, you'd be calling your broker first thing in the morning. Not only are our lines longer and our client visit numbers up almost 25 percent in the past year, the stories I hear from clients are achingly poignant. "Can you help me pay my electric bill?" "I lost my job and just got evicted." "I'm living in my car so I can only take food I don't need to cook." I thank God every day that God has called me to this work. I also thank God that so many people have remained faithful to our ministry at the pantry. Here are a few recent examples of that faithfulness. A young high school student used her own money to buy over 100 pairs of mittens last winter for the children of pantry clients. A friend decided she didn't need to attend her condominium holiday party at a local restaurant for the cost of \$40, so donated that \$40 to the pantry, above her regular giving. David Bromley donated a share of the proceeds from his recent pottery sale. Diane Hawkinson's 19 second graders sponsored a holiday food drive at North Park Elementary School and delivered over 1300 pounds of food



to the pantry. Thanks to Cheryl Borgeson, WTTW's holiday food drive was again donated to the pantry. Winnetka Covenant is now taking a food "offering" every week as does North Park Covenant. My sister's fifth grade class in Yorktown Heights, NY has adopted the Friendship Center as a class project for the year. Last fall they collected and mailed 105 reusable grocery bags to me to distribute to pantry clients. They also collected over \$60 in leftover lunch money as a donation. One of Barbara's students e-mailed me and said, "My name is Max and I think that your job is awesome. I donated six dollars to the fund plus one bag. I hope it helps." It did help, Max. And yes, my job is awesome.

Joey Ekberg
Executive Director

The 2008 Annual Report

It is once again an honor and a privilege to write this annual report as the Executive Director of the North Park Friendship Center. I continue to feel the strong call of God to this ministry in this community. The Friendship Center has, for almost 40 years, served the hungry and the hurting in this neighborhood. That work continues, with the strong support of many individuals and churches.

A year ago when I wrote this report, there had been a lot of national press about the "food pantry crisis." The Farm Bill languished in Congress, reducing crop subsidies the government could pass along to the nation's food banks. Food retailers were finding secondary markets for their salvaged food, such as dollar stores. Donations to the Greater Chicago Food Depository were down over 40 percent, greatly reducing what the Friendship Center could purchase and distribute to our clients. Those were the good old days. In the spring of this year, the cost of fuel began to rise, and with it, so did the cost of food. In the fall, the economy began a precipitous downturn. Our client visits during the last six months of 2008 increased 16 percent over the similar period in 2007. The Friendship Center plays a key role in feeding and clothing the needy in the North Park and Albany Park neighborhoods. And through the tremendous support of local churches, individuals, grantors, and business sponsors, we continue to serve this community.

The heart of the Friendship Center is our clients. This year, we served an average of 414 households, comprised of an average of 1,549 individuals, every month, with a yearly total food distribution of over 102 tons. While our regular monthly clients need to live within the boundary streets of Pulaski, California, Lawrence, and Touhy, we 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 increasingly 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, Kindred Hospital, WTTW, Galter LifeCenter, Northside College Preparatory High School, Peterson School, North Park Elementary School, the patients of Dr. Greg Tietzer, the Spring Break-Out event at North Park University for Jr. High students, and Winnetka Covenant Church.

In April we signed a new three-year lease for our facility on Foster Avenue, effective May 1, 2008. The Mother's Closet continues to receive and distribute a tremendous amount of clothing and household goods. Under the management of Nancy Fisher, as well as some designated volunteers, 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.

The Friendship Center had a successful 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 this year, 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, Ravenswood Evangelical Covenant Church, and Northbrook Evangelical Covenant Church. We received grant monies in 2008 from the Epaphroditus Foundation, the Hoellen Family Foundation, the Shaker Family Foundation, the Sulzer Family Foundation, the Washington Square Health Foundation, the Feinstein Challenge, and Rich Products of Niles, Illinois and Buffalo, New York.

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 with 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 is growing 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 of 2008 raised over \$5700 in food credit for us as well.

The future of the North Park Friendship Center is challenging, especially in the worsening economy. Among our clients, anecdotal stories abound from the newly evicted, the homeless, seasonal day laborers, the mentally ill, alcohol and drug abusers, and the many people simply plain angry at their station in life who look to us a beacon in their storm. May God continue to find us faithful in our work.

Sincerely,
Joanne R. Ekberg, MSW
Executive Director

Friendship Center News



The year 2008 was an eventful one for the North Park Friendship Center. Here are some items you may have missed:

Did you know that the Board of Directors at its April meeting adopted a new Mission Statement?

The North Park Friendship Center is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to alleviating hunger and poverty in the Albany Park and North Park neighborhoods of Chicago. Our signature program is a food pantry. We also distribute free clothing and household goods, offer job training to our volunteer staff, and seek to provide or refer clients to needed services. We are supported by individuals, churches, institutions, businesses, grantors and foundations.

Did you know that through the end of March 2009 the Friendship Center distributed almost 30 tons of food to an average of almost 500 households per month?

Did you know that we are waiting to hear from the Epaphroditus Foundation, the Feinstein Foundation, and the Greater Chicago Agency Grants Program regarding grant application awards?

Did you know that we recently received generous food drive donations from Covenant Offices, Curves on Lincoln Avenue, and European Imports?

Did you know that Kristie Athamanah, a student at Northside Prep, keeps our website updated? Check out www.npfriendshipcenter.org.

— Peter Gebraski
"They help a lot of people and I feel good helping too. It's nice to be able to give a little bit back to the community."

VOLUNTEER VOICES

3448 W. Foster Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60625

The North Park
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