



December Update

Dear Community Partners,

The Community Center's services have never been more in demand as we seek to improve the well-being and self-sufficiency of our neighbors in need. The entire community has worked tirelessly to help us meet their urgent needs, responding in extraordinary ways to ensure that we are able to provide robust support for all who turn to us for help. We are filled with gratitude for the kindness and generosity.

The Need:

The number of food insecure families turning to us for support has increased dramatically. By this time last year, we had approximately 285 new families seek our assistance. This year we have welcomed over 1,100 new families, many have never turned to a food pantry before.

Last year we served 1,778 families throughout the year.

We anticipate serving almost 3,000 families by the end of this year.

We have had 14,449 pantry visits/home deliveries so far this year compared with 8,381 visits last year, providing food assistance for 48,531 total people of whom 16,704 are children and 3,640 seniors. This compares with 27,237 people receiving food in 2019, of whom 9,485 were children and 2,091 were seniors.

Food:

We are providing 10 days' worth of food once or twice a month depending on need. We include plentiful fresh produce, shelf stable food items, meat and eggs, prepared meals, toiletries, face masks and hand sanitizer for everyone and offer diapers, wipes and baby food for those with babies and toddlers. All supplies are pre-bagged and distributed outdoors at our back door.

We provide home delivery of food and essential items to seniors, those with underlying health issues, those who are sick or in quarantine and those who lack transportation. Approximately 1500 home deliveries by volunteer drivers have been made. We remain in touch with all these households to check in, reduce isolation and to tailor the food bundles to their unique needs. Additional essential supplies are also delivered - whether pet food, warm blankets or winter coats.

Clothing:

Due to the increased risk of coronavirus, we have changed the model of our clothing support again. No longer inviting clients into the boutique by appointment, we are now taking phone call requests for essential winter wear and filling wish lists with front door pick up. The system seems to be working well and hundreds of families have so far received gently used winter coats, boots, sweaters, hats, gloves and scarves.

Personal Support:

More families struggling this year have more complex needs. We have continued to provide personalized support by meeting at a distance outdoors or talking by phone. We are helping individuals and families with applications for SNAP benefits, making referrals for physical and mental health needs or legal needs, assisting with the navigation of additional government benefits and social services and providing access to community resources. We have also continued our job counselling services helping one person at a time - assisting with resumes and job applications and connecting those seeking work with employers reaching out to us. We are pleased to have successfully helped numerous of our clients in securing new employment.

Seasonal Drives:

Holiday Food was provided through November, in addition to regular food supplies, to 1,236 families so that families could more easily prepare a celebratory meal at home.

Share the Warmth is underway, and all children are receiving brand new pajamas or blankets, hats, gloves and socks - these are pre-bagged this year and given out with food at the pantry door. To date approx. 1,000 children have received Share the Warmth packets. All are thrilled to receive them!

Partnerships to both meet needs and have needs met:

We continue to work with others to meet the needs of the community in the best possible way. We are providing 40 bags of groceries for food insecure families of students of Latino U, providing winter clothing for the homeless who are using the Emergency Shelter Partnership, have connected 60 families in need with the Westchester Christmas Dinner to receive meals delivered on Christmas Day, worked with St. Mary's Church to identify 32 families to receive Christmas gifts through their Adopt A Family program, and coordinated with Bicycle World of Mt. Kisco to match clients in need with refurbished donated bicycles. We have regular conversations with County Executives and Town officials, NWH and Open Door Medical Centers, senior programs and many other community agencies to learn of needs and share resources.

Volunteers:

It is still necessary to restrict the number of volunteers on site for safety and those who come to keep the operations running are working harder than ever. We miss so many of our longstanding volunteers but appreciate their need to stay home, and for those who are serving at this time we are truly grateful for without them none of our work would be possible. They keep up with the increased demand, manage the increased donations and deliveries and adapt to our regularly changing models of support. They have also been working in all weathers. Currently wrapped in their coats and hats and gloves while providing compassionate service to all who come for help, they embody the spirit of caring at the Community Center.

Donations:

We are amazed by the ongoing and generous support of the community by bringing food and clothing donations and providing funding support. This year we have received over 250,000 lbs. food which is a 40% increase over last year. Thank you!

The Community Shop:

Our Community Shop remains open and is doing well. The number of shoppers at one time is limited and safety protocols followed, The Shop will be closed Dec 25th - Jan 1st

Help we need:

- **Communication** - If you or someone you know needs help, please contact the Community Center of Northern Westchester (914) 232 6572 Ext 110, or visit us during our regular hours.
- **Food donations** – we are always in need of food donations and are currently looking for canned sardines, salmon, tuna, microwavable meals and Ensure for our seniors who no longer cook, hot and cold cereal, cans of hearty soup and beef stew and chili.
- **Clothing - ONLY winter clothing please.** To help us sort, organize and distribute warm winter clothing please do not donate out of season clothing, clothing in poor condition, housewares, toys or books. We will be far better able to serve those in need if we have more time and space to do so!

Thank you for being there to help us help our neighbors, especially during this very difficult year. We so appreciate all the support you provide and truly couldn't do what we do without you!

With love,
Clare