



History

Building on its mutual history of caring for the hungry in Mesa, Arizona, St. Mark's Episcopal Church joined with Sprinzi/Murphy Volunteer Group in 2008 to operate a combined food pantry. The St. Mark's Food Pantry was created with the purpose of providing regular food distribution services to those in need in the local Mesa community. Operating out of the parish hall at St. Mark's, the mission of the Food Pantry from the beginning was to address ongoing hunger concerns for those in our local community rather than just providing for their emergency needs. On opening day, March 4th, 2008, 36 families were provided with a box of non-perishable food items.

Growth

Over the months subsequent to opening, the Food Pantry saw the need to increase food assistance given significantly. By the end of 2008, the number of client families served had doubled. In the lat-

ter part of 2008 as the economy waned, the Food Pantry began to see clients who had never before been in such a state of need. Through 2010 the Food Pantry has distributed over 7,300 family food units, representing over 37,000 receiving individuals. By 2010, the monthly average number of families served was 170, representing 875 receiving individuals.



Resources

The people of St. Mark's have generously supported the Food Pantry with individual food donations and allowing the Food Pantry to use the church facilities to distribute the food and provide storage space. The Food Pantry has a dedicated group of about ten St. Mark's volunteers who volunteer 2 to 10 hours per week. The Sprinzi/Murphy Volunteer Group brought considerable resources to this effort. Not only did they have 15 to 20 volunteers, they brought administrative and operational infrastructure that included multilingual interviewers, both in-kind and monetary donation networks,

and an identified needy clientele residing in the city of Mesa. As a result of the merger, St. Mark's was approved to purchase food from United Food Bank at considerable cost savings and was entitled to food supplies administered by government programs and agencies such as FEMA and TEFAP.

Operation

The Food Pantry operates every second and fourth Tuesday, from 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Clients are asked to bring photo identification showing they are local residents of Mesa. We distribute to each family a grocery bag of canned and boxed food. In addition, when available, bread and pastry items, fresh produce and frozen meat are given. If needed, clients may also obtain toiletries, pet food, and diapers. The administrative infrastructure also includes referrals to other community services including other food banks. Many of the people we serve express the need to talk to our volunteers about themselves and their situations. We strive to offer encouragement and spiritual sustenance by being good listeners.



Join Us!

Since our collaboration in 2008, St. Mark's and Sprinzi/Murphy volunteers have developed a warm friendship in working for and sharing in this mutual effort. Admittedly, what the St. Mark's Food Pantry offers provides only a small bridge to people on a path to self-sufficiency, and we know there are substantially larger food bank operations in the area. Nevertheless, we believe we offer a uniquely different and spiritually nurturing experience to those we serve through this ministry, and we challenge anyone who wants to volunteer to find a better activity for the soul. For more information contact Penny Place at pennyjplace@q.com, talk to any Food Pantry volunteer, or visit St. Mark's web site at:

www.stmarksmesa.org



"Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink?...."

Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."

Matt 25:37, 40

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Food Pantry



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