

Neighbors Helping Neighbors ENews Brief

7 January 2024

Good morning, everyone!

This is the inaugural edition of the 'Neighbors Helping Neighbors' Newsbrief. I am expanding the Woodstock Pantry ENews Brief to include all our outreach programs, namely Hot Meals, the Clothing Closet and our new Hygiene and Harm Reduction program! Though we each work in different programs, our mission is the same...Neighbors Helping Neighbors!

So, in this newsbrief, I will introduce you all and share the incredible work being done in our different programs.

INTRODUCING OUR PROGRAMS

HOT MEALS

Our Hot Meals program is 40 years old! Every Saturday, through thick and thin...and pandemics...Hot Meals volunteers have served up a steaming hot, nutritious and luscious meal to our neighbors! Hot Meals was originally a collaboration between 4-5 different churches in the area. Each church sponsored a weekend, brought in their volunteers and served up the meal. Then COVID hit and turned life upside-down. Despite the significant challenges imposed by COVID, a small cadre of dedicated volunteers kept the program running. Now, it is back to full operations!

CLOTHING CLOSET

The Clothing Closet was started at the beginning of the pandemic as a resource for our neighbors who can't afford to buy clothes. This program operates mainly behind the scenes, so you may not know about it. Volunteers gathered donations, washed and organized them and shared them with our neighbors once per month.

WOODSTOCK PANTRY

Woodstock Pantry was also started in response to COVID. To establish the program, people wrote grant proposals, purchased a shipping container to store food, developed relationships with Oregon Food Bank and other food suppliers, and gathered volunteers. They served groceries every Friday and Saturday, rain or shine.

HYGIENE & HARM REDUCTION

This brand-new program is a new generation of the original Essential Items Program. Essential Items also started during COVID. Volunteers gathered hygiene products and essential items and shared them with our neighbors every Saturday. Read more below.

2023 ANNUAL REVIEW

Next Sunday, in the dining hall, at 11:15, the Outreach Leadership Team will present an overview of our annual report. You are all welcome to join the fun! After that, I will publish the full report on our webpage.

It has been a phenomenal 17 months! Every program and all 270+ volunteers have been engaged in program development. It has been challenging, learningful, exciting and sometimes downright tiring! And the results are unbelievable! I'll just share a few highlights here.

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Clothing Closet was transformed from a distribution into a supply program. Volunteers still gather, wash and organize clothes. But now, we share clothes with our partners, Cultivate Initiatives and Concordia College Nursing Program, who distribute them.

Hot Meals was redesigned from the ground up. A leadership team was created, new positions were created, and all Saturday teams were staffed up. The program branched into serving both indoor and takeout meals and STILL serves up a wonderful hot meal, every Saturday!

Woodstock Pantry was developed into a full-scale program. A leadership team and shift leads were developed. Volunteers engaged in a continuous quality improvement process to design and test new systems and procedures. Volunteers get food to our neighbors, rain or shine, every Friday and Saturday.

Hygiene & Harm Reduction Essential Items was duplicating services provided by Cultivate Initiatives. So, we transformed it from a distribution into a supply program, wherein we shared supplies with Cultivate Initiatives, who then distributed them. Recently, there have been big changes! See below.

GOING FORWARD

2024 A NEW YEAR

We have come a long way, everyone! We have created, developed and stabilized our programs. We have a fabulous volunteer network! We have amazing community partners. Our neighbors love the work we are doing, and importantly, know they are valued members of our community.

Here are a few highlights of what is coming in 2024. Details are in the Annual Report.

- σ We will improve our programs using continuous quality improvement (CQI). CQI is a strategic process to continually improve our work. We do this collaboratively, so we will all be involved. In fact, we've been doing it all this last year!
- σ Woodstock Pantry will move into our new facility, which is being built right now!
- σ We will further develop ourselves as a Trauma-Informed Food Site.
- σ We will do in-depth leadership development.

Our leadership teams will join me to guide our path forward. We will start taking steps soon with you all!

NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS ENEWS BRIEF

Each week, I will send out a newsbrief, sharing highlights of the weekend, featuring something from our programs and keeping us apprised of larger socio-economic-political dynamics that drive food and housing insecurity in our community.

THIS WEEK'S NEWS

This weekend, we served 344 people at the pantry and 96 meals in Hot Meals. We don't count clothing or hygiene products served, so I won't provide those numbers. We did, however, serve them!

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FEATURED PROGRAM – HYGIENE & HARM REDUCTION

Our brand-new Hygiene & Harm Reduction Team organizes hygiene supplies and serves them in the Cultivate Initiatives booth. They also perform a new service, 'the Walkabout', wherein they walk around the campus, building relationships with our neighbors, checking on their needs and providing whatever support they can. The team will collaborate closely with Concordia College Nurses to provide basic medical and mental health care for our neighbors.

Meet our first interdisciplinary team! They are Hot Meals Maître D's, Brian and Vicki; Pantry Packing volunteer, Linda; Pantry Distribution volunteer, Matt; and our new Nurse Practitioner, Kristen.

Please welcome them and thank them for the work they are doing to develop this vital program! Also, please help cover their work on the shifts so they can perform this important new duty!

VOLUNTEER SIGN-UPS

Woodstock Pantry - Volunteers sign up each week for the shifts they want to work.

[WP SIGN UP SHEET JANUARY](#)

Hot Meals uses Saturday Teams. Team Leads organize volunteers for their Saturday.

Clothing Closet and **Hygiene & Harm Reduction** are individually organized.

The more cross-over we have between programs, e.g., Hot Meals volunteers working pantry shifts, the more opportunities you have to participate in ways that interest you, and the stronger we will be as an organization. So, if you are interested in any of our programs, let me know and I will set you up!

THE WOODSTOCK PANTRY FUNDRAISER & FRIENDRAISER

We are raising funds to pay for our new pantry facility. We need your help!

You can ask people to join us by:

1. contributing on our gofundme.com page, or with this QR code
2. and sharing this request with their colleagues, friends and family as well as community organizations and businesses (add to your social media, send emails, make calls).



THANK YOU ALL FOR EVERYTHING YOU DO!

Celebrate...

It Takes a Community, And We Are It!