



THE CORNER FOOD PANTRY NEWS

The 'Ever Wonder ...?' Issue

Summer 2022

Turning Lemons (and All Manner of Produce) into Lemonade!

In early spring of 2020, when the world ground to a virtual halt due to the pandemic, the board of The Corner Food Pantry was forced to reimagine its pick-up process. New conditions required masking, sanitizing and social distancing, and distribution was further exasperated by problems (now all too familiar) with the supply chains. "There were a lot of moving parts that had to be looked at," remembers Amanda Halle, Co-President and tireless coordinator of the food pantry's volunteers.

Clearly, the process could not remain in its past "OWL's Kitchen" iteration developed three decades

ago; clients lined up in front of the white clapboard building next to St. Mary's Church, chatting with each other, while patiently awaiting their turn to enter and peruse the shelves, fridges and freezers to pick out foods and toiletries specific to their needs.

The board rapidly rose to the unprecedented challenge. Within a few days, a new concept was discussed, developed and deployed, based loosely on the drive-through approach first popularized by McDonald's in 1975. "We never missed a week," says Halle.

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Ever Wonder Who Regularly Supplies Our Farm Fresh Produce in Summer and Fall?

Adamah Farm, Falls Village, CT

Hotchkiss Farm, Lakeville, CT

Gordon Ridgeway, West Cornwall, CT

Q Farms, Sharon, CT

Whippoorwill Farm, Lakeville, CT

The Corner Food Pantry is extremely grateful to have these local farms, and several more on an irregular basis, provide us with a cornucopia of beautiful, appetizing vegetables and fruits, often organic or biodynamically raised, full of the nutrients that only fresh-picked produce can provide.

"Biologically, giving can create a 'warm glow,' activating regions in the brain associated with pleasure, connection with other people and trust.... And like other highs, this one is addictive too." ~ Cleveland Clinic



**Thank You, Mary Taylor,
for Six Remarkable Years
as Our Board President**

Mary has always loved volunteering and having interactive relationships with our clients, which is at the heart of what we do. Under Mary’s leadership, The Corner Food Pantry has not only grown but thrived. Mary’s dedication to our mission and her compassion have always been her guides. She has made sure that every person who comes to the pantry is treated with dignity. Under her watch, a key priority has been providing healthier foods - more fresh vegetables, dairy products, and better protein options. Mary’s sound judgment, business skills and persistence have enabled us to deal with any issue, minuscule or mighty, as it arises. Her strong ties to the community and a solid marketing and communications background have helped us to broaden our reach. With Mary’s leadership, we were able to pivot and continue to serve our clients during the pandemic without interruption. For all of this and more, we thank you.

Mary, you have truly made a difference!

Turning Lemons... from page 1

Clients, now strictly waiting in the safety of their cars, received goods pre-bagged according to family size. As the pandemic pressed on, new iterations evolved with registration forms giving families preferences for their pre-packed bags, which were speedily customized inside the building, and carried outside and loaded into trunks and back seats. In addition, fresh vegetables and other attractive add-ons could be selected from outdoor tables - ranging from fine teas and low-sugar granola to the occasional buffalo jerky, (regularly appreciated by a client in line riding a perfectly polished antique Harley). The new adjustments required more hands to help and Halle steadfastly increased the number of dedicated active helpers from 15 per week pre-pandemic, to 32 per week in 2022. “The beauty of this is that it protects both the clients and the volunteers, which is still a basic requirement,” remarks Halle, happy with the process and the satisfied clients.

In the past two years, The Corner Food Pantry has proven that it can adapt and go with the flow. Fueled by high demand, the line of cars rolling in on Friday afternoons and Saturday mornings continues to grow while The Corner Food Pantry continues to provide.

By the Numbers

Ever wonder how COVID changed the demand for The Corner Food Pantry’s services? There was a dramatic increase in visits at the onset of the pandemic, and these levels have not abated. The numbers below show the yearly activity, comparing 2019 to 2021. In 2021, the pantry supported 80 families per week (representing 325 individuals on average). Figures for 2022 promise to be even higher. In order to meet the rising tide, the need for volunteers has doubled.



Yearly Statistics

	2019 (Pre-pandemic)		2021 (Pandemic)	% Increase
Total Family Visits	2,350		3,978	+69%
Total Individuals	9,300		16,218	+74%
Number of Meals	83,700		146,000	+74%
Pounds of Food	100,440		175,000	+74%
Weekly Volunteers	15		32	+113%
Total Cost	\$87,580		\$205,440	+135%

Ever Wonder about The Corner Food Pantry Volunteer Experience?

Board Member Kathy Mera gets right down to it with Alex Wilburn

How has the Food Pantry changed your life in a measurable way?

"I came in December after working from home in the pandemic. As a volunteer, I found a positive interaction with clients and other volunteers. A very different experience from seeing people in the grocery store or coffee shop."

Have you found any sense of community in your time here?

"Definitely. I work outside loading bags into clients' cars. I get to know the families and their pets. We talk about the weather, their work and how the week went. I see many of the same people week to week. We volunteers work closely together, helping each other whenever we can. Sometimes, it's as simple as helping with words in Spanish."

Do you find you think differently of other people due to TCFP experience?

"I did go into New York City during the pandemic and I would often see many people asking for hand-outs. So I started making peanut butter sandwiches and putting them in a bag with a dollar

bill. People always accepted them. Through the Food Pantry, I can help in a larger way. Sometimes, it's hard to ask for help. I respect our clients for reaching out."

What would you do if the Food Pantry closed its doors?

"It would be devastating! I feel it is a public responsibility to provide for those in need. Food insecurity is unacceptable."

Do you wish the Food Pantry addressed anything else in your life?

"I am one of the younger volunteers and I think the pantry should reach out to the schools and young adults for more volunteers. It is a very rewarding experience."

Has TCFP experience changed any of your thoughts about food in the USA?

"Access to basic healthy food should be available to everyone. Too often, it depends on where you live or how much money you have. I'm concerned when I see baby formula in locked cases in grocery stores."



Alex Wilburn is a "lover of large sweaters, foreign films, 19th-century novels, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, golden retrievers and copious amounts of tea." A writer, illustrator and a Senior Associate Editor at the Lakeville Journal, he regularly donates time and enthusiasm to The Corner Food Pantry's task.

TCFP Board of Directors

Nancy Bayersdorfer, Lakeville, CT

Jane Capecelatro, Lakeville, CT

Betsy Clark, Sharon, CT

Kane Clawson, Salisbury, CT

Kaye Garner, Lakeville, CT

Allison Gray, Lakeville, CT

Michele Haab, Millerton, NY

Sue Keim, Nantucket, MA

Kathy Mera, Salisbury, CT

Isabel Sloane, Salisbury, CT

Mary Taylor, Lakeville, CT

Co-Presidents:

Amanda Halle, Salisbury, CT

Holly Kempner, Sharon, CT

Come Visit Our Spiffy New Website!

www.thecornerfoodpantry.org

You can see all the fun things TCFP is up to, get an idea of the foods we need seasonally, sign up to volunteer, and donate directly.



Ever Wonder about The Corner Food Pantry Client Experience?

Board Member Kathy Mera gets right down to it with Ginny Dawson

How has the Food Pantry changed your life in a measurable way?

"It has allowed me to put healthy food on the table for our three-generation family."

Have you found any sense of community in your time here?

"Definitely! I usually come early and have a chance to talk to others who are waiting. Sometimes, I bring clothing and other items to share with other clients who can use them. I've made new friends over the years. We support each other."

Do you find you think differently of other people due to TCFP experience?

"No, I've always been pretty open. I appreciate the volunteers who make this happen."

What would you do if the Food Pantry closed its doors?

"It would be terrible! There are other food pantries, but we can count on The Corner Food Pantry for good quality milk, fresh produce and pet food. Many food pantries do not provide these items on a regular basis."

Do you wish the Food Pantry addressed anything else in your life?

"Not really. Healthy food is very important."

Has TCFP experience changed any of your thoughts about food in the USA?

"Food prices have gone up and many things are often unavailable. More needs to be done to make sure *everyone* has access to fresh healthy food."



Ever Wonder If YOU Have What It Takes to Be a Volunteer at The Corner Food Pantry?



Let's check it out....

- Puzzles are all the rage, and if that's your forté, we've always got a plethora of pieces that need to be pried into place on the food pantry shelves.
- Were you a firefighter? That Fireman's Carry can come in handy;-) We've body-sized bags of root veggies to be lugged back and forth from the garage to the pantry several times a week. Just think of the workout you can get in with no gym fees!
- Fancy yourself an expert dry stone wall builder or maybe Jenga is your jam? Come show off your skill stacking meat on our freezer racks! And while you're at it, throw on those steel-toed boots you have gathering dust in the back of your closet, 'cause they're perfect for when a frozen hockey puck of beef (or seven!) come cascading down, heading for your toes! There's always excitement at TCFP!
- Still bragging about that Math SAT score? Come celebrate your powerful left brain, counting our ever multiplying numbers of client bags.
- Do you secretly pride yourself on your ability to tell which Tupperware will best hold the leftovers? We'd love to take advantage of your exceptional spatial perception: "Fit 27 boxes of Mac 'n Cheese into a space for 13 please."
- Kickboxing your thing? Come get some kickin' in breakin' down those nasty chicken boxes! Pow! Bam! Smash!
- Might you be a retired surgeon? We're always looking for precision knife skills, perfect for cutting up those persnickety poultry packages.
- Picture yourself in Vegas showin' off your speedy card dealing skills? Strap on that visor 'cause packing the bags is for you: 'one, one, one, two, two, two, three, three, three....'
- ¿Habla Español? Bueno!!! Siempre estamos buscando hispanohablantes.

We're willing to bet you have a skill we can use. Come show us what ya got!

www.thecornerfoodpantry.org

Ever Wonder Which Foods Are Needed at TCFP?

For Summer we need:

Canned Chicken, Coffee, Condiments, Cooking Oil, Dried Beans and Lentils, Seasonings, Canned Pet Food and Personal Care Items.

Items can be dropped off at TCFP at 80 Sharon Rd. in the bin by the back door or in the garage.

We know it's pesky but...

Please check your items' expiration dates when dropping them off at TCFP.

We cannot distribute food that is expired.

Thank you for your understanding.

Mad Gratitude!

Along with our generous local farms, there are a number of other businesses and individuals who supply us with additional groceries, and we would be negligent not to express our enormous gratitude to them: Animal Farm Foundation; BJ's of Torrington; Flagpole Hatchery; Harney & Sons; Housatonic High School's FFA program; LaBonne's Market (Carlos and his crew!); Old Farm Nursery; Salmon Kill Farm; Sharon Farm Market; and Thomas Nevab. And then there are the daily donations, often from anonymous folks, supplying us with a rich bounty of foodstuffs. **We literally cannot do what WE do without YOU!**

Crunchy or Creamy for the Win???

On The Corner Food Pantry preferences form there are plenty of choices that cater to individual tastes, like oatmeal vs. boxed cereal, canned chicken vs. tuna and dry vs. wet cat food. Ever wonder which style of peanut butter clients prefer? Almost nobody passes on the popular spread and smooth texture seems to be the clear winner: Eighty-one percent choose creamy over crunchy. If you bet on the question I hope you beat the spread!

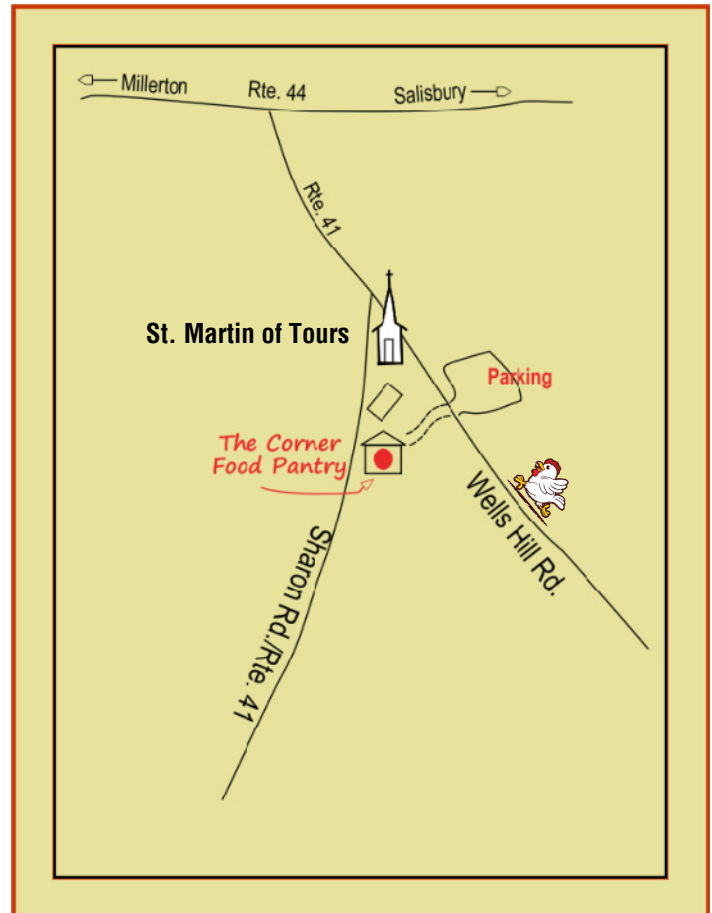
Our Hours of Operation:

Fridays from 3PM - 4:30PM

Saturdays from 9AM - 10AM

Ever Wonder Where We Are Located?

We are tucked away behind the Rectory of St. Martin of Tours Church, with our driveway on Sharon Rd. We also have parking in the lot across Wells Hill Rd.



Where's the Chicken??

This is a constant question around the food pantry these days, and most often posed to our protein procurer (and Co-President) Holly Kempner. The reasons for the decline in poultry availability are many: The effect of COVID on chicken processing plant workers; deadly winter storms in the South affecting those same workers; and wildly swinging feed prices, to name a few. To make up for the dearth of chicken, the food pantry has begun supplementing distributions with different proteins such as beans, lentils and protein-rich vegetables, in addition to the other meats we give out. There are those 'Lemons into Lemonade' again ;-)

For extra credit...

Can you find our five chicks hidden within our newsletter?

THE CORNER FOOD PANTRY

80 Sharon Road
P.O. Box 705
Lakeville, CT 06039



Where's the Chicken?

Going the Extra Mile

Every Thursday at 9:30 in the morning, **Richie Foster**, equipped with a can-do attitude and stylish lime green work gloves, shows up at The Corner Food Pantry. Richie's truck carries goods requested by board member Betsy Clark from **CT Food Share**, a not-for-profit institution in Wallingford, CT, with a mission to provide nutritious food for people in need. **CT Food Share** is a member of **Feeding America**, the nation's largest domestic hunger-relief operation, backed by a powerful and efficient network of 200 food banks across the US. It is also the nation's largest food rescue organization, collecting high-quality provisions that would otherwise go to waste, and redistributing them to those facing food insecurity. Richie, a father of three who totally identifies with his company's vision, makes sure that everything ordered is delivered on time. When things go awry, like an occasional misloaded order, Richie is the first to catch it, and to remedy the situation - even if that means more hours and extra miles to make it right.



We greatly appreciate Richie's commitment to The Corner Food Pantry's cause.