



THE RIVER

Newsletter of The River Food Pantry
www.theriver-madison.org (608) 442-8815

SPRING 2010

The Best of 2010...so far

Featured Stories

In This Issue:

- Best of 2010 1
- Charity Auction 1
- Client Profile 2
- Volunteer hours 2
- Finance Update 3
- Our Dream 3

We need your email address!!!

Please register your email on our website to receive our monthly eNews and other important River communications.

By Andy Czerkas

We want to thank our wonderful donors and volunteers for their support through the first four months of the year. We have much to celebrate together!

April was another record month for family visits, with 2352. The



Pantry volunteers

pantry frequently serves 150 families in one and a half hours. During the course of any pantry session we make time to speak with

volunteers and they are often amazed at how many people come for help and how well-organized everything seems to be. When one considers all the activities running at the same time and the large number of participants, there is lots of opportunity for breakdowns.

The pantry has begun serving dinner during the Tuesday evening session. Our client families have been very appreciative. They usually shop in the pantry first and then stay for nice family dinner. We still need lots of volunteers to help with the Tuesday dinner from 4:30 - 6:30pm.

Special thanks to a few



Jenny and Andy, Directors, with new pallet jack.

generous individuals who provided the funds for a pallet jack with a scale. This piece of equipment has been high on our needs list for a couple years now. It was a wonderful way to celebrate the 4 year anniversary of The River's opening.

Continued on p. 3

MISSION STATEMENT

"To bring a message of mercy and hope to those in need by providing nutritional basics and encouragement; to be a unifying, servant hearted and community building expression of Jesus Christ in Madison."

By Betsy Ezell

The River is collecting donations of antique and collectible items for a Charity Auction Fundraiser to be held on September 15, 2010.

The idea for an antique auction came together when the River began setting aside donated household items that appeared to be antique or unique (e.g. a set of Princess Di plates, antique Fischer-Price toys, china place settings). We asked an appraiser to take a look at the

items. The appraiser, Greg Klug, owner of Major Wisconsin Auctions, suggested taking things one step further and organizing a charity auction.

We hope to have about 300 items to auction, with auction services donated by Greg. We also plan to have a silent



auction with items from local businesses.

All proceeds will be used to help The River feed and clothe needy families in Dane County.

If you have items to donate, please bring them to the pantry.

The River Food Pantry is a public 501(c)(3) charity registered with the IRS. All donations are tax deductible in accordance with IRS tax laws. ■

Charity Auction Fundraiser

Staff

Director

Jenny Czerkas

Pantry Assistant

Evonne Haak

Kitchen Manager

Shelly Spychalski

Development

Director

Betsy Ezell

Board

Jim Carrier

Andy Czerkas

Jenny Czerkas

Jan McGill

Steve Sachtjen

Advisory Board

Al Bachmann

Ritchie Baumann

Tim Bolhuis

Bridget Bradley

David Gerry

Shane Holden

Charlene Hubble

Jim Mikalson

Martee Mikalson

Carol Miles

Rick Miles

John Plumitis

Tom Thuemling

Brandon Vincent

*"I've been homeless for a year. The River is the only place I know that serves free dinner on Fridays. This place makes a difference. Without the River I wouldn't eat on Friday nights."
-River client*

Larry Vincenski: yoga, God and barefoot jogging

By Jim Carrier

"Any quiche tonight?"

Larry Vincenski is hopeful. A tall fit man who shuns red meat, Larry remembers a delicious egg and vegetable bake served at the River many Fridays ago. Maybe tonight? his eyes ask the cook. That's OK, his smile says. I'll make do with what is offered me.

In 73 years, Larry Vincenski has taken the good with the bad with remarkable serenity. He is, technically, homeless. Yet his life is anything but unrooted. For Larry, a long-time client at the River, peace lies within him, an attitude forged by optimism, yoga, God, bare-



Larry with his van and home

foot jogging, and his '83 Chevy van. He says simply, "I try not to let anything get me down."

Raised in Fort Wayne, Indiana by a Croatian-born father and mother who was a nurse, Larry was a promising scholar, a 6-foot-3 basketball player and golfer, and described by class-

mates as the smartest among them. "Anything Larry says is significant," remembered federal judge Bill Lee, the class president and one of 20 Yale graduates in their Northside High class of 276.

After failing French and dropping out of college, Larry worked as a railroad and highway surveyor, painter, an assistant golf pro, and started a same-day flower delivery business in Chicago. Threatened by the mob who wanted a piece of the profits - they spray painted a pink stripe on his Lincoln

Continental and tried to kill him with a lethal drink - Larry and his partners closed the business. Hearing of Madison's progressive, welcoming attitude, Larry

hitched to town with two duffel bags.

In the years since, he has taken seasonal work at "intentional communities" in the south, and seed companies around Madison, earning enough to rent an apartment. But after volunteering to rebuild Bay St. Louis,

Mississippi after Hurricane Katrina, he found himself back in Madison, nearly 70 years old, with a \$640-a-month Social Security income, and a van.

Blessed with no addictions or

"Each day I make a plan - sometimes before I go to sleep - to try to accomplish that day."

health problems, he drives carefully, afraid of losing his home. Adjusting to the daily hassles of finding a parking spot for the night, a shower and meals, Larry forged a life without bitterness from a daily regime.

"Each day I make a plan - sometimes before I go to sleep - to try to accomplish that day. Be it, calling on jobs in the paper, tips on housing, or sometimes a lecture or a talk that UW is holding in the evening, or a Bible study. It keeps my mind agile."

He lists exercise, jogging, yoga, a diet without red meat, and a faith in Jesus for guidance, as contributing to "perseverance, youthfulness and not getting discouraged." ■

Volunteer Opportunities at The River

There are many different opportunities to volunteer at The River Food Pantry. Below are the days and times that we typically need your help. If you have any questions, please feel free to email us at river@theriver-madison.org or call (608) 442-8815.

Monday: 1-4pm (clean the facilities, sort clothing)

Tuesday: 10:30am-6:30pm (Stock shelves, sort clothing, assist in the food pantry. Pantry session volunteers are needed 10:30am-12:30pm and 4:30-6:30pm).

Thursday: 11:30am-4pm (Stock shelves, sort clothing, clean, assist in the food pantry. Pantry session volunteers are needed 11:30am-1:30pm)

Friday: 1-4pm (cooking, must pre-register); 5-8pm (pantry, children's area and meal servers)

Pantry Financial Need

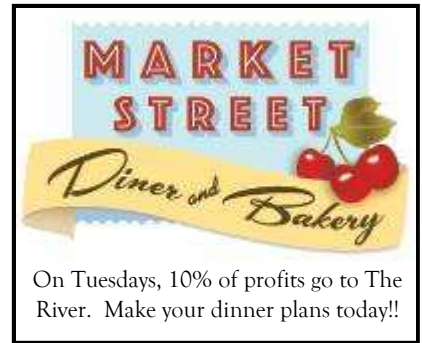
By Andy Czerkas

The River logged 2352 family visits in April 2010, a 57% increase over April 2009 and a new record for pantry visits in one month. Pantry usage has grown 46% in the first 4 months of the year. We don't see this trend slowing down any time soon as people continue to struggle with unemployment.

This means that the pantry is spending more than ever on food. From January to April, our food expense rose 49% over the same period last year, going from \$14,685 in 2009 to \$21,917 in 2010.

As a result of increases in food costs, rent, utilities and other expenses, The River is currently

running a deficit of over \$30,000 through the first four months of the year. We anticipated the increases in our expenditures, though monthly giving has not yet caught up to meet the increase. ■



Our Dream: One Step at a Time

By Jenny Czerkas

If you have ever volunteered at The River, you are well aware of how cramped our current space has become. The River's Board of Directors has been working on a long range facility plan. The board recommended we expand into additional space available in our current building, upgrade our kitchen to commercial status and extend our lease 7 to 10 years.

Our landlord quickly rented the additional space to us, but was not able to provide a long term lease. Upgrading the kitchen will be a significant expense, so this project is on hold for now. A commercial

kitchen will allow us the opportunity to host fundraising events such as a spaghetti dinner or pancake breakfast.

Looking ahead, The River will need to find a permanent home. We want to thank Robin Stroebel, CEO of Interior Logic, who recently donated a comprehensive schematic design for a possible new building. The design for the

"We know what our dream building would look like."

20,000-square-foot building, valued at \$4000, is intended to provide the most efficient use of space for functions including

gardens, a client-based food pantry, a commercial kitchen, a free clothing room, and children's play and stage area.

Robin's generous donation has helped us understand how much space we require for our existing services. And now we know what our dream building would look like.

There are no plans to start a capital campaign in the immediate future. Our first priority is raising enough support to meet our monthly obligations. In the meantime, if you happen to know someone who might want to donate some land on the Northside, feel free to send them on over! ■

Best of 2010 continued from page 1

We are excited to report that we have received two much-needed grants already this year.

The pantry received a grant from the Madison Rotary Foundation to use for the installation of donated HVAC equipment. The total cost for this project is \$9,000, the Rotary grant will cover \$5,500. We still need to raise another

\$3,500. Air conditioning is critical to safe food storage. It is not unusual for the indoor temperature to be 95+ in the summer months.

We were able to purchase a 12 passenger van in April with a generous grant from the Madison Community Foundation. The purchase allows us to offer safe and reliable transportation to

pantry clients and volunteers. Thank you MCF!!

Finally, we are proud to share that in 2009 our overhead costs were calculated by our auditors to be .538%, which means that over 99 cents of every dollar was put directly to supplying food and clothes to needy families. ■

UW volunteers



DONATION HOURS:

Monday:

9:30am—5:30pm

Tuesday:

10:30am—7:30pm

Thursday:

9:30am—7:30pm

Friday:

11am—9pm

NEEDS:

Food:

- Canned Protein (Tuna, Chicken, Spam, etc.)
- Canned Pasta Meals
- Canned Fruit
- Canned Veggies
- Cereal
- Hamburger, Tuna Helper
- Soup
- Pasta
- Canned Pasta Sauces

Personal Items:

- Soap, Lotions, TP, Diapers, Vitamins
- Shampoo & Conditioner
- Feminine Hygiene Items



2201 Darwin Road



HOURS OF OPERATION

(Donation Hours on Page 3)

TUESDAYS

Food & Clothing Pantry: 11 - 12:30 P.M. & 5 - 6:30 P.M.

THURSDAYS

Food & Clothing Pantry: 12 - 1:30 P.M.

FRIDAYS

Registration: 5 - 7:00 P.M.

Pantry, Clothing and Dinner: 6:00 P.M. - Until Everyone is Served

ABOUT THE RIVER FOOD PANTRY

The River Food Pantry was created to serve the low income neighborhoods concentrated along Northport Drive and the NE side of Madison, but the pantry is open to all Dane County residents. We are located in an 11,000 square foot warehouse at the end of Northport Drive, at 2201 Darwin Road, Madison, WI. Hours of operation are on the left of this page. We provide pantry assistance, hot nutritious meals, clothing and household goods and furniture. Your support is absolutely critical to meeting the needs of families in our area. No family should go hungry just because they cannot afford to buy food. We can affect so many lives by giving them hope. Please consider financially supporting the River Food Pantry today. If you are interested in learning more about the River Food Pantry, please contact us at (608) 442-8815 or e-mail us at river@theriver-madison.org. We would be happy to hear from you!

THE RIVER FOOD PANTRY IS A NON-PROFIT 501(C)(3) ORGANIZATION AND YOUR CONTRIBUTION IS TAX DEDUCTIBLE

If you would prefer to be removed from our mailing list please contact us by phone or email.

The River Food Pantry • 2201 Darwin Road • Madison, WI 53704 • Phone: (608) 442-8815 • www.theriver-madison.org