

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

June 2022



THE MARKET AT CATHOLIC CHARITIES IS OPEN!

It's been months of planning, preparation, and prayers. Finally -- after a ribbon-cutting ceremony on April 11th -- The Market at Catholic Charities (CCEOK) opened its doors to the public on Wednesday, April 20th. Although it was a cold and drizzly day, more than 220 families arrived at The Market to shop!

Moving Out of the Outpost

The warehouse space that had been loaned to CCEOK by Joe and Darcey Moran (lovingly known as "the Outpost") needed to be re-claimed to support a new manufacturing venture. At the time, it was a beehive of activity: food preparation and distribution for CCEOK clients on-site and in rural outreach areas; pop-up food preparation and transport; gathering, storage of furniture and household items for Afghan refugee resettlement; car repair and maintenance; on-going warehouse operations; and the home base for many volunteers to support all the above!

Storage space at the Outpost had been expanded with the addition of multi-level pallet racks, and they were loaded. When the time came to vacate the building, hundreds of pallets of food, furniture, and other donations had to find a new home. Although the task was made somewhat simpler with the December closing of the drive-through food distribution, there were complications:

- Removal of the refrigerated trailers
- Restricted access to the front of the building
- A port-a-potty as the only restroom option
- Loss of access to the loading docks at the front of the building

At this point, the looming question became: where can all this stuff go -- and how can food continue to be delivered to outreach locations and feed and move Afghan refugees into permanent housing -- when the new, but much smaller, warehouse at the main campus was still under construction, and while there were only two viable loading docks at the rear of the Outpost?

But, as always, we are a nimble bunch! Close coordination between all parties was key during this phase of the effort.

- Automobile repair work at the warehouse stopped when access was restricted, but the lifts and shop tools were relocated to a new structure on the main campus
- Volunteers working on Afghan resettlement continued to take food, furniture, bedding, lamps, and kitchen and bathroom items from warehouse storage to permanent housing set up for each refugee family
- Regular pop-up food pantry events were held after the Outpost had closed



Eventually, every single item at the Outpost was relocated, used, given away, or discarded (and very little was discarded) so that on the 19th of April the Outpost was finally empty.

After the last Afghan refugees had been moved into permanent housing, there was still furniture and other household goods to be relocated. Temporary space for many non-food items was found at CCEOK's Mary Martha Outreach (CC-MMO) in Bartlesville. Many of the racks at the Outpost were disassembled, trucked to CC-MMO, and reassembled there. Remaining pallet racks were moved to the new warehouse and reassembled as soon as construction allowed.

During the weeks leading up to the opening of the main campus warehouse, the presence of CCEOK trucks was a familiar sight along US-75 to Bartlesville, and along US-169 between the Outpost and the main campus.



Pictured is just one of the trucks unloading in Bartlesville.

Moving into the New Warehouse

The construction of the warehouse and The Market took longer than originally estimated. Delays with permitting,

drainage, and the availability of key materials, and labor, all contributed to a much-longer-than-anticipated timeline.

The newly remodeled warehouse at the main campus has less space than the Outpost, but more than the old one. The expansion accommodates a much larger area for refrigerated and frozen foods, but less space for sorting and repackaging.

While the Outreach ministry is allocated rack and refrigerator space, all remaining is designated to support The Market and Kitchen activities. This includes rack storage for over 200 pallets of dry goods, as well as a new grade-level loading dock, a break room, restrooms, a staff office, and a separate building to house the car repair shop.

Once CCEOK received its occupancy permit for the building, final preparations began in earnest. Quickly, some of the racks, the new forklift, palletized food, and more were moved from the Outpost to the new warehouse. When this transfer began things still weren't completely ready: the loading dock wasn't finished, the driveway needed time to cure, and workmen and their trucks were still partially blocking the only route into the building. After about three weeks of loading and unloading, most of the rack space was filled and what couldn't fit on a rack was placed out of the way. It was hectic!

CC-MMO continued to receive and distribute food while accommodating at least two deliveries a day from the Outpost over a span of about three weeks. In addition, CC-MMO was installing a new refrigerator and reconfiguring their storage to hold what was relocated there. Thanks to our great partners at CC-MMO!

On the very same day that the Outpost was emptied, full use of the dock at the main campus was allowed, and Food Bank deliveries resumed so that The Market could open the following day with fresh food.

Opening The Market

The new space includes a grocery store about a quarter of the size of a Reasor's, a commercial kitchen, bathrooms, display space for fresh vegetables, and reach-in refrigerated and frozen food.

On April 11th, civic leaders, political figures including Mayor G.T. Bynum, Bishop Konderla, donors, Board members, CCEOK employees, volunteers and other invited guests participated in a ribbon-cutting ceremony to officially open The Market at Catholic Charities. Visitors were shown a space that was modern in every respect - all very contemporary and attractive.



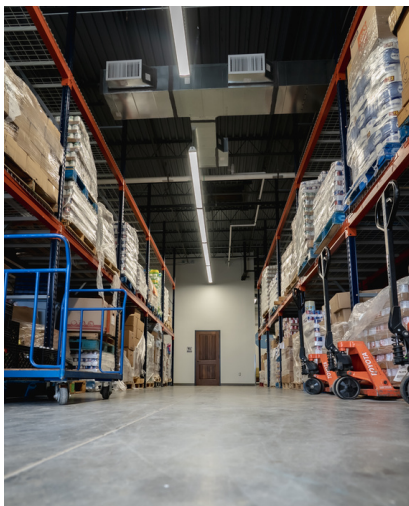
Opening day (April 20) was overcast, wet, and windy, but the weather didn't deter more than 220 families from standing out in the light rain waiting for their turn to enter The Market. At some point, cars waiting to get into the parking lot were queued all the way south on Harvard back to Young St., and there were so many shoppers in The Market that shopping carts ran short.

Shoppers were given a grocery cart with a color-coded tag that informed volunteers of a guest's family size so they could easily guide them regarding product choices and quantities. The shoppers followed a route through The Market that ended with a selection of fresh and refrigerated produce, dairy, and frozen items through glass reach-in doors. When they completed their shopping, escorts were available to assist them with loading their groceries and cart return.

Eventually, shoppers will be asked to register, and potentially set up an appointment, in order to visit The Market. The combination of these two process tweaks should help with the traffic flow, the parking, and the experience in The Market for our guests. In addition, meals prepared and packaged by the Kitchen will also be available in the future.

What a journey it has been! Since the time the concept for The Market was developed, there have been innumerable highs and lows, hurry-ups and slow-downs, hard work, blessings and challenges. As with many things at Catholic Charities, the circumstances were extraordinary, but every critical need was met. Thanks to the coordination and great work by many, The Market and Kitchen are now delivering **Love Changing Lives!**





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