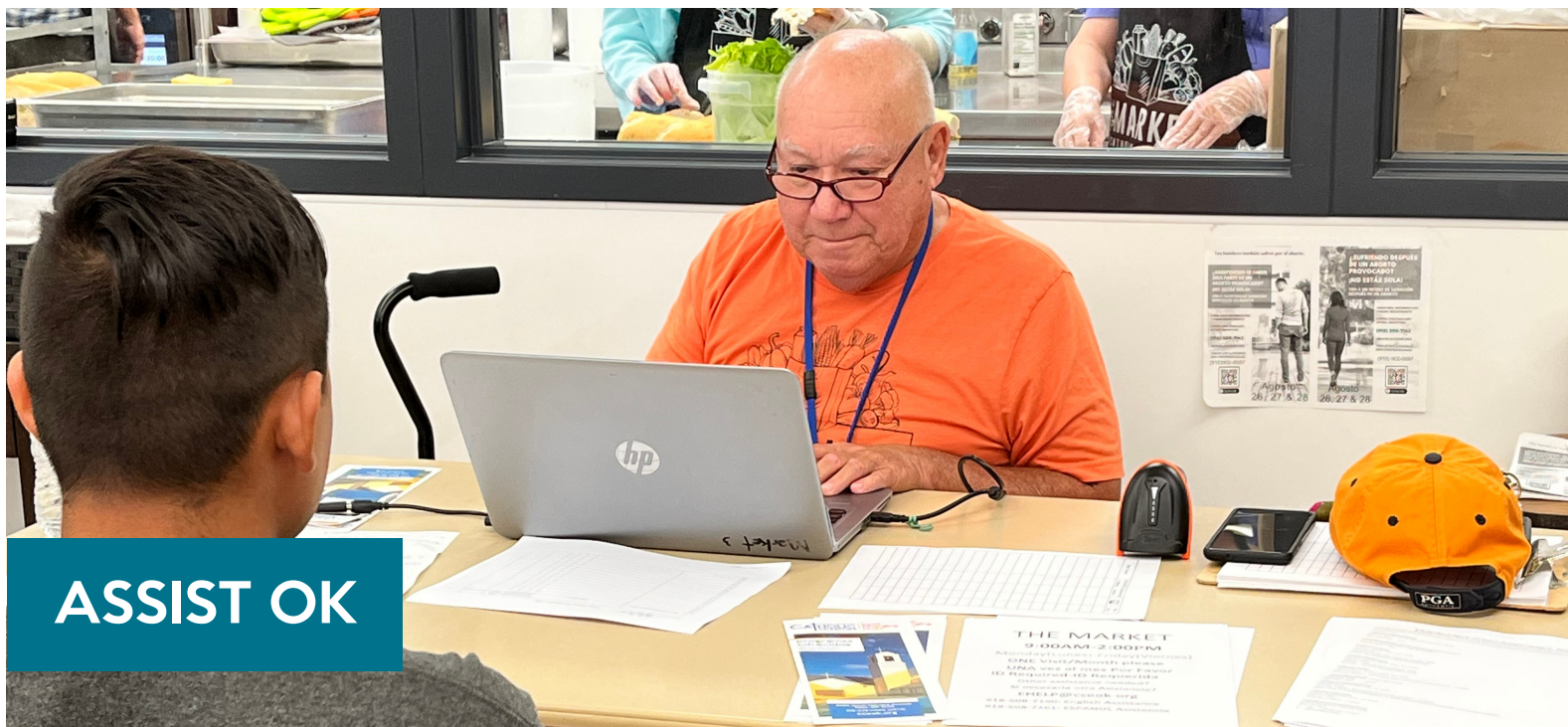


FOOD FOR THOUGHT

August 2022



ASSIST OK

In June, The Market started using a new software package called “AssistOK” to register clients as they arrived for food. The software collects information about each household, and each of the clients within that household, to ensure they are receiving the amount of food they are entitled to, and that we have the data needed to create reports demonstrating our capacity to serve those in need.

The software’s story began when thousands of people were affected by the December 2007 ice storm. Several philanthropists from Tulsa contributed to a fund that would become available to agencies within the area to help those people who needed the basics – food, rent and utilities. Because distributing that money to those affected had to be done quickly and the approach represented a significant change from how aid had been distributed in the past, the funds remained in place. It proved difficult to efficiently get assistance into the hands of those who needed it at that time.

The money sat in place for ten years, until Mark Whitmire, an IT guy from 501Tech (a technical arm of the Tulsa Community Foundation that supplies hardware, software and hosting services to area charitable

organizations) got a group of about 30 agencies together to float the idea of a data-sharing network across all the organizations supplying resources to those in need. The purpose of the network would be to make it easier for each organization that participated to understand more about their clients and what they were receiving and from whom. Information would not be used to deny clients the help they needed but could be used to discover where they were getting financial help and to provide referrals to other resources. This data could also be analyzed to see if there were trends and relationships that would be impossible to discover otherwise.

After about a year of discussions on policies, data entry, and processes, a group of five area relief organizations signed on to create the AssistOK Consortium. Three members of this group in 2018 became the initial users of the software that was built to collect and manage client information. The software was built by Asemio, another local community service-focused organization using funds allocated from the original 2007 fund.

AssistOK (www.assistok.org) has grown to 15 partner organizations that coordinate their delivery of basic

services to those in need within the Tulsa community. The consortiums' use of the software represents three major 'wins': 1) any data about that client or household has already been entered once and doesn't have to be entered again and again, 2) agencies don't have to spend time and resources collecting information that's already available online, and, 3) the data collected is a huge source of information to identify what clients are doing, what needs they have, and if those needs are being met (or not).

Organizations in other large communities have banded together to coordinate housing assistance and have created software systems to help manage that type of assistance – but the approach AssistOK has taken may be

unique. Jeff Jaynes, the Executive Director of Restore Hope Ministries, who spearheaded the development of AssistOK, is unaware of any other similar food-centered consortium operating within the US.

Data collected is not publicly available to anyone outside the participating agencies. Clients must opt-in to allow information about them to be shared amongst the agencies, and clients always have the option of opting out.

While it takes longer to register clients now, hopefully when most are registered, a simple QR code scan will be all that's required next time we welcome our neighbors at The Market!

8,222
of families served
in The Market
from April 20 - July 20, 2022



Don't forget to use Sign Up Genius!
cceok.org/signup



**Congratulations to
Dennis and Diane Hayes!**

An afternoon ice cream social and awards ceremony was held in mid-July to honor Dennis and Diane - some of our CCUSA Volunteer of the Year nominees.

Together, Dennis and Diane are involved in many, many CCEOK programs – everything from the new warehouse inventory system, to working in The Market, to disaster relief and even most of the content of this “Food for Thought” newsletter. Whatever the need is, Dennis and Diane step forward to help. In 2021, they gave over 1,270 hours of their time to helping their neighbors in need.

If you see them around campus, be sure to congratulate Dennis and Diane!

STAFF SPOTLIGHTS: Embry and Rhonda Hood

Embry and Rhonda Hood have been giving generously of their time to Catholic Charities (CC) for many years. Rhonda started when Madonna House was located on Denver Ave., volunteering there from 2006 to 2009 and in recent years at the Main Campus. Her friend Cathy Hill, who managed Madonna House at the time, introduced her to the opportunity. She has worked in several areas including the toy drive, the volunteer office, Emergency Assistance and now provides support to the Development office.

At Madonna House, Rhonda babysat for the moms when they had appointments or classes, drove them to appointments, helped prepare for parties and helped with organizing projects.

While working in the volunteer office from 2019 to 2022, she received and replied to the volunteer request emails offering available opportunities, made ID badges for new volunteers, answered calls about volunteering, trained new volunteers for the volunteer office, inventoried t-shirts, helped with events, contacted area supervisors about information needed for volunteer information and anything else that was needed.

In the Emergency Assistance office, Rhonda helped with inputting client information into the new computer system. And these days, Rhonda works a couple of days each week in the Development office helping with data entry, stuffing envelopes and anything else that the office needs done.

Embry has been a fixture around the food pantry, and now The Market, since February 2018. Embry primarily stocked shelves until one busy night when he was pressed into service interacting with clients. For him, this change in duties

marked a turning point – it became a calling rather than just a task. Even though client visits were limited to four times a year (at that time), some clients recognized Embry and called him out by name. Having that relationship with the clients made him want to serve them even more.

COVID drove some changes in how food was distributed, and Embry was there for all of it. Embry spent several mornings and afternoons a week at the pantry from January 2020 through January 2021 but had to take a step back when a new job required more time during pantry operating hours. This left a “hole” in his life. The food pantry had been a big part of it for the past year and he missed being a part of this ministry. Now Embry is glad to be back in the warehouse on Thursday evenings leading a team of volunteers building rural outreach bags.

Embry has worked several Day of Blessings in whatever capacity is needed. From helping with parking to loading cars to giving directions to clients. There is not a “bad” job for The Day of Blessing and Embry will help wherever he can.

Embry and Rhonda both give tirelessly to help those families in need, one at the ‘receiving end’ for donations, and the other at the ‘dispensing end’, each helping where they can contribute the most. We are fortunate to have both Embry and Rhonda dedicate their time selflessly!



2 TRUTHS & A LIE

Can you figure out
which is the lie?

Embry

- He loves to fish.
- When in elementary school played the lead and sang in a musical.
- Is somewhat of a “workaholic”. ALWAYS must be busy.

Rhonda

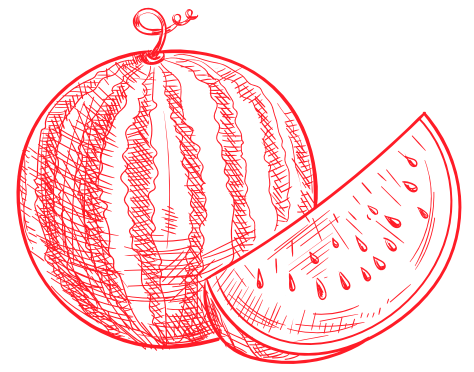
- As a child she was painfully shy.
- She is an empath.
- She is a fanatic about exercise.

The answers will be in the next newsletter!

CHEF MICHAEL'S RECIPE OF THE MONTH: Watermelon Salad

Ingredients:

- 1/2 of a medium, seedless watermelon, cut into bite size cubes
- 1/4 of a small, sweet red onion, thinly sliced
- 1/3 cup fresh chopped mint leaves
- 4 ounces crumbled Feta cheese
- 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 1 small clove garlic, minced
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon fresh ground black pepper



Directions:

1. Divide the chopped watermelon, onion, mint leaves, and Feta cheese on 4 large salad plates.
2. In a 1-cup measuring cup with a spout, whisk together the balsamic vinegar, olive oil, mustard, honey and garlic. Add the salt and pepper and taste to check the seasoning. Add additional honey if desired or more vinegar.
3. Pass the dressing at the table and drizzle on the salads just before serving. Enjoy!

Note: To cut down on the bite of the red onion, soak in ice water for about 15 minutes before serving. Drain well.

Summer is Sizzling with Great Giveaways for Volunteers!

One thing is certain, CCEOK has incredible volunteers! **Summer Sizzle Week** will be **Aug. 13-19**, and we will have an amazing week of raffle drawings to celebrate your dedication and hard work!

All of the great volunteers helping out each day that week - across all CCEOK locations - will be entered into drawings for the MANY prizes, including electronics, housewares, outdoor gear and much, much more.

Be sure to clock in or sign in when you are volunteering because that's how we will get the names for each drawing.



GET INVOLVED

Volunteer with us! cceok.org/volunteer
Join our Facebook Group!

For story ideas, feedback, etc.,
email: volcommunications@cceok.org