

# FOOD FOR THOUGHT

September 2021



## CONSTRUCTION IS UNDERWAY FOR THE MARKET AT CATHOLIC CHARITIES



Walls are coming down inside and dirt is being moved outside. All of that means construction is in full swing for “The Market at Catholic Charities,” the new client choice concept food pantry!

The significant increase in demand for food brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic drove Catholic Charities Food Pantry planners to alter the process for giving food away at the Tulsa location. Before COVID, clients would arrive, be interviewed by a case manager, and provided a parcel of food in addition to other services that the client might need. When COVID hit, the Food Pantry closed its doors, and reopened with a walk-up model. Sidewalks were marked with 6-foot intervals, but clients still crowded too closely together. The clothing center operation was suspended – for the same health-related issues – and the drive-through food distribution model was introduced. With that model, clients arrive in whatever transportation they have (and we’ve seen all types!), provide basic household information, and receive a shopping cart of groceries. And, as we are painfully aware, all of these interactions transpire out in the weather!

Before COVID, the Food Pantry was serving approximately 80 families per day; after COVID, the number of families jumped to an average of more than

400 per day – an almost 400% increase! Because of the huge increase in the number of families receiving food through this model, the space previously occupied by the clothing center was re-purposed for the Food Pantry. At this time, a decision was made to focus more resources toward distributing food rather than clothing.

Planners briefly considered tweaking the existing Food Pantry/Clothing Center facilities and adding more refrigeration, but decided that a radical change to the model towards a more dignified client shopping experience would better serve the needy in our community.

“The Market at Catholic Charities” requires major renovations to the existing building: these include additional warehouse space, a break room for volunteers, a new produce preparation area, the production kitchen, a new building to house additional refrigeration, a new building for the auto repair shop, a new parking lot to the north, and a new access road directly to the warehouse to be

built. The renovations and additions are being funded through generous donations from people and organizations in the community. Work on getting the contracting and legal instruments in place is complete, and demolition of the existing spaces and infrastructure upgrades are in process now.

Features of the new model include:

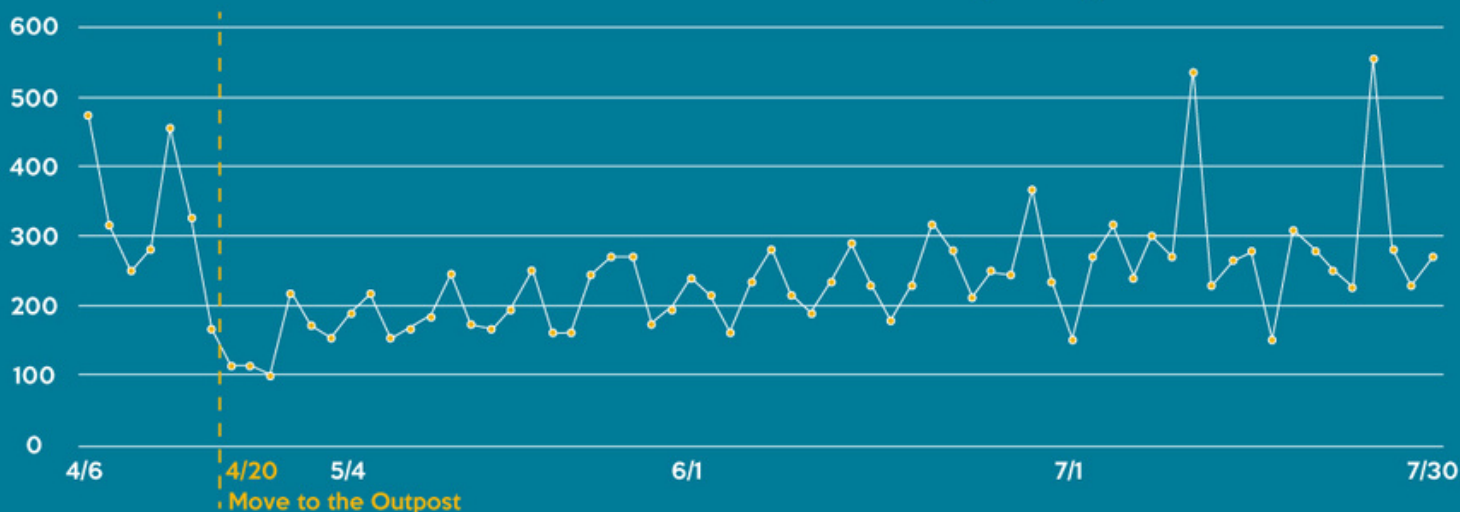
- The separation of food distribution from other Emergency Assistance services - If a client just needs to get groceries, they can do that and leave with their food.
- Online client registration and appointment scheduling - each client will need to have an appointment to receive food, because the new client spaces are able to handle only so many clients at a time. Clients will also know that they can be served at the appointed time; they won't have to wait in line for others ahead of them.
- A client choice model – clients are able to choose, with some limits based on family size, what specific food items they want to receive. Each client will be assisted by a volunteer, who will be engaging with them on a personal level while the client is shopping. The goal is to have volunteers get to know the clients well enough that they can inquire about any additional services that client might need based on their situation. Whether or not a client checks out, and what that experience will be is still under discussion at this stage. Clients will return to their car and load their own groceries. Volunteers will need to go out into the parking lot to retrieve the carts.

- A production kitchen with access to dedicated refrigeration
- Creating portion-sized products that can be stored from perishable donations
- Creating flash-frozen complete – entree, side and vegetable – as a ready-to-go meal
- Functioning as a training kitchen to help clients acquire skills in food preparation
- The ability to cater small dinners onsite – probably in the room that's now behind the existing pantry
- New volunteer roles. These have been defined and are being finalized, and we are excited to hear that much of the work will now be in climate-controlled spaces!

When the Food Pantry moved operations to the warehouse on 59th St., changes were required at all of the process steps from when we received food to packing it in clients' cars. Now that the Food Pantry has been operating out of the warehouse for some months, most of the kinks have been worked out and clients are receiving food – albeit not as many as before the move.

With the changes being contemplated that increase the food storage and refrigeration space, Catholic Charities in Tulsa expects to be a food distribution source, or 'hub' for the rural locations – to function more like a food bank for those locations – in the future. With the increase in food storage space, Catholic Charities can leverage buying power, buy food at seasonally-adjusted prices, and receive and process donations from producers that we couldn't handle with the existing space.

## Total Households Served by Day



## STAFF SPOTLIGHT: Barbara Bird

Barbara has been managing or coordinating the activities of volunteers for non-profit organizations almost her entire adult life. She has volunteered her services at Ronald McDonald, the American Cancer Society, the Mental Health Association, and other organizations here in Tulsa, prior to joining Catholic Charities of Eastern Oklahoma in the Spring of 2020.

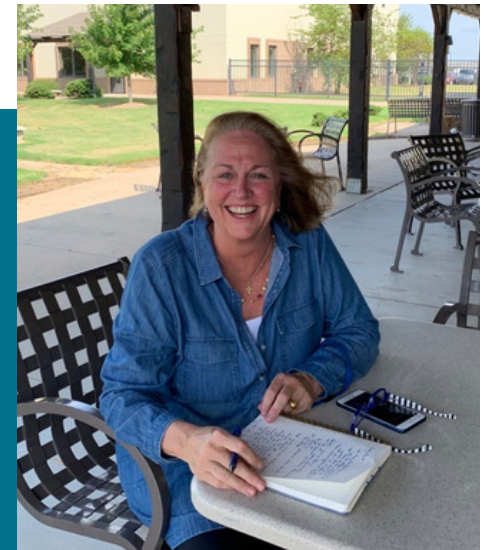
In 2001, she was asked to manage the work of more than 700 volunteers for the merchandise tent at the USGA's US Open, held that year at Southern Hills. The USGA had been using Post-It notes and pads to manage volunteers; Barbara built an Access® database and used it to manage three shifts of volunteers over the 11-day tournament run. She did so well that the USGA asked her back for the following years' tournament at Bethpage (Farmingdale, NY), where she scheduled and managed more than 1,000 volunteers. She continued volunteering her services for the USGA for two additional years, then asked to be paid (imagine that! – and don't anyone get any ideas) to continue. Barbara continued at the USGA for another 11 years, traveling all over the country, schmoozing with the golfing elite, and getting paid to do it.

After Barbara's husband died in 2011, and while she was working for the USGA, she found she had to learn the oil business in short order so that the small oil business that her husband owned would continue to be a going concern. After the bottom fell out of the oil

business in 2018, Barbara started to look around for volunteer coordination activities in Tulsa. Barbara applied for, and was eventually hired, to fill the part-time Volunteer Coordinator job opening that was posted in early 2020.

Barbara quickly focused in on the need for volunteer labor at the Food Pantry because the Pantry was serving many more people after the COVID outbreak than before, and the demand for volunteers was critical. COVID caused a steep decline in the number of groups

volunteering, so the shortfall had to be made up somehow. Changes were made to the schedule to balance competing needs and to minimize volunteer burnout as the number of families CCEOK served continued to rise through the COVID pandemic. While the number of individuals who volunteer as part of a group is still down from pre-COVID, there approximately 35-40 regular volunteers in the Food Pantry that continue to show up, rain/snow or shine.



## 2 TRUTHS & A LIE

So now that you know all this, she has two truths and a lie to share. Can you figure out which is the lie?

**HELEN KELLER:** Barbara used her skills in American Sign Language to 'sign' an entire performance of "The Sound of Music" in front of a live audience.

**WOLF OF WALL STREET:** Barbara obtained the licensing for her to sell municipal bonds and US Treasuries to banks (and no, not out of the trunk of her car!)

**KORDA KUTTING:** Barbara qualified for and played in the LPGA for one season.

The answers will be in the next newsletter!

Answers to Anita Mills' Two Truths and a Lie: Anita does practice nãlbinding and did attend the Jefferson Airplane concert, but she did not work as a well logger in Texas.





## COMING SOON: The Outpost After Hours

Beginning September 21st, the Outpost will expand its hours to include some nights and weekends:

**First & Third Tuesdays of each month: 4:30-6:30pm**

**Fourth Saturday of each month: 9am to noon.**

The additional hours will provide opportunities to serve our neighbors in need to volunteers who can't come during the standard weekday hours.

Please consider volunteering and tell friends and family about our expanded opportunities to serve!



Save the Date for  
**Days of Blessings**

**Thanksgiving: Nov. 20th**

**Christmas: Dec. 18th**

### Chef Michael's Recipe of the Month - Roast Sweet Potatoes with Pineapple Butter

#### Ingredients:

- 4 medium sized Sweet potatoes (washed and scrubbed)
- 4 oz. (1 stick) quality unsalted butter
- 1 tbsp. light brown sugar
- ½ tsp vanilla
- 1/8 tsp ground nutmeg
- ½ cup fine chopped "ripe" pineapple (or drained canned)

#### Directions:

1. Roast sweet potatoes at 375f. for 1 hour or until tender (soft)
2. Whip butter in bowl or mixer until soft.
3. Drain finely chopped pineapple and add to whipped butter
4. Add brown sugar, vanilla and nutmeg and mix evenly.
5. Top hot sweet potato with mix when serving.



## GET INVOLVED



Volunteer with us! [cceok.org/volunteer](http://cceok.org/volunteer)  
Join our Facebook Group!

For story ideas, feedback, etc.,  
email: [volcommunications@cceok.org](mailto:volcommunications@cceok.org)