

Comments for the National Commission on Hunger  
2300 Good Hope Road, SE  
Washington, D.C.  
July 14, 2015

Hello, my name is Cindy MacIntyre. I am a Registered Dietitian. For many years with my employment and volunteering in the public schools, church and my civic association, I have spread the word about proper nutrition in health and disease on an individual basis or as it affects public policy. As a Registered Dietitian; there is nothing better than when a somebody gets the idea of taking care of themselves and controls their chronic disease through proper diet and exercise after interacting with a dietitian. I have lived in Northern Virginia almost all of my life; growing up in Alexandria. I am very active within my church especially with service in our food pantry, fresh produce garden for the food pantry and meals for the homeless.

It is because of my dear friend Khacki Berry that got me involved with our church's food pantry and brings us here today. We are members of Grace Episcopal Church, located in Alexandria, Virginia (just across the river). Our food pantry is part of our church's outreach program. During the month of June, our food pantry served 528 individuals which made up 127 households. In May we served 503 individuals which were 109 households and 264 of them were children.

Each household gets a grocery bag with one meat such as tuna, or beef stew; one fruit, one vegetable, 2 starches such as beans, rice or pasta and cereal. All of these are cans or boxes. We try to have some household items such as toilet paper/tooth brushes etc... available as well as bonus items such as soup or crackers etc...

Our actual location is in the church administrative building outside of the office. We consist of two rooms; a larger one where we have the bonus shelves items and a desk greets the clients and get the applications completed. It measures about 6' by 12'. The other is an interior room where the food stuffs are stocked which measures about 5' by 10'. This location was chosen because of its proximity to the front door. Our food pantry is opened three days a week, for a total of 6 hours and is staffed with 25 volunteers working one shift a month with a partner.

Our food comes from various sources. The major source is the food bank located in Lorton, Virginia. We order on Mondays for a Thursday delivery. We usually get two deliveries a month because they charge a \$50.00 delivery fee and we have to order at least 735 pounds per delivery. We spend about \$1,200.00 per month from them. Periodically we ask our parishioners to clean out their shelves which become our bonus shelf items. We also ask for cash donations so that we can give out \$10.00 vouchers to the local grocery for perishable items. Any food items in any shape and size and form have to be received and stocked by volunteer. We have developed a relationship with a grocery store receiving clerk to obtain items which are not out of date but no longer for sale and otherwise would be thrown out. We started a vegetable garden a couple years ago and offer fresh vegetable when they are available. It is usually enough for three families.

As a side note our food pantry was established 25 years ago.

So for innovations which would help us out a lot; here are some suggestions:

1. We would take advantage of the free products from the USDA commodities program but the packaging is too large for us. We tried the rice and tomato sauce. The rice came in one 50 pound bag. It took two of us and a dolly to just move it. We broke it down into one pound zip lock bags but had a lot everywhere. As for the tomato sauce, it comes in what is called a number 10 can. There are six in a case. We do not have the room to store the amount we need. Also most of our clients walk to our pantry, so they would not be able to carry it and the other items home, let alone get it opened. Or like cereal and macaroni and cheese came in individual servings. If the packaging was a little more user friendly, that would be great.

2. We have started to contact grocery stores for any product that they might want to contribute. Most already give to the food bank programs. Remember that if they deliver there is a \$50.00 and a minimum of 735 pounds. We can go and get food items. The food bank for our use is located an hour down the road on a good day with no traffic. Being a suburban area, very few of us drive pickup trucks, so if we get someone to go then they bring back 5 cases due to the size of their car. So a solution might be a warehouse located in close proximity to the community that is served and a more appropriate vehicle to use to transport.

3. Some funds would be great to offer vouchers to get perishables from the local grocery stores. We offer \$10.00 vouchers and the grocery knows what to allow for purchase, not chips or candy etc... because these vouchers are a huge hit on our budget.

Our pantry is totally funded and manned by our church. A little help would go a long way to make our work even more rewarding.

Respectfully submitted by;

*Cindy*

Cindy L. MacIntyre, R.D.