



Serving Cass and Clay Counties
1301 39th St N, Fargo, ND 58102
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MISSION STATEMENT

To provide referred families and individuals
facing emergency situations
with one week's supply of healthy food.

Web address: www.emergencyfoodpantry.com

HISTORY OF THE EMERGENCY FOOD PANTRY

Assembled by Fran Dexter, May 2012

Introduction

A history of the Emergency Food Pantry (hereafter EFP or Pantry) covering 1970-1990 was prepared by Roberta and Edward Lana, who were involved with the Pantry in several capacities over those years. The Lana history, along with various appendices, is housed at the current Pantry location. The history presented here is a summary of that work with additional narrative prepared by Fran Dexter, current Board member. Many more volunteers are recognized in the Lana history than have been incorporated here, and many more volunteered than could be named. More research and additional writing must be done covering the years 1990 to the present to provide a more complete history. That information will appear here as it is completed.

It is important to emphasize that the progress of the EFP from 1970 to 1985 was accomplished solely by volunteers—willing, hard-working, innovative volunteers. It was not until 1985 that a paid Coordinator was hired. In 2010 a part-time Assistant to the Coordinator position was created, but it has not been filled consistently. The philosophy of the Pantry is to put donations to work to provide food for the hungry first and foremost. Salaries and other overhead costs are kept to a minimum.

An Idea is Born—1970-71

The idea of and need for an emergency food pantry was discussed in Dr. Margaret Reed's Moorhead State University class. Pastor Philip Antilla and Dorla Bernu, Volunteers for Community Service Director, became involved. Shelves were built at Bethesda Lutheran Church, Moorhead, to house the food. In March 1971 the pantry relocated to Bernu's basement. Operating the pantry was more than one person could handle, and help was requested from area churches.

Churches Involved; Pantry Moves—1972

On March 25, 1972 representatives from eight area churches of various denominations met at Hope Lutheran Church in Fargo and organized the Fargo-Moorhead Emergency Food Pantry. By the end of the first year 22 churches were involved and had named representatives to the Pantry. During 1972, 180 deliveries to feed 603 people in need were made. Volunteers built new shelves and moved the pantry to Elim Lutheran Church in Fargo, the Pantry's new official home. Paying \$114 for the shelving was a financial challenge. The food was moved from Bernu's basement to the 11 1/2 x 13 1/2 ft room at Elim. Here in this small space food was received; flour, sugar, coffee, and other foods were packaged; and all food was stored. The church graciously paid the electric bills.

Organizational Efforts and Beyond—1973

The first Pantry Chairman, Donald Krenz, outlined the stop-gap purpose of the Pantry, the referral system, and the need for support in a letter and 1972 Annual Report to all Fargo-Moorhead clergy. Periodically over the years, Wayne Lubenow of the *Midweek Eagle* newspaper wrote articles promoting the Pantry and outlining its need in the community. The Pantry received contributions of money, food, and equipment from individuals and area businesses as a result of these articles. The need for volunteers was also made known. A Board of Directors was formed and met monthly, encouraging church representatives to attend the meetings. The Board offices established were President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Publicity Chair, Distribution Chair, Acquisitions Chair, and Pantry Housekeeping Chair, each with distinct duties. Church representatives arranged for monetary and food offerings from their churches on a regular basis. Breaking even was a luxury. By July 1, 1973, the Pantry was \$300 in debt to Red Owl Grocery. The amount of food given out was reduced from a week's supply to a 2-day supply. Appeals were made to churches, and a successful Boy Scout Fund Drive was held, returning the Pantry to full operation with its debt paid. Some private mini-drives were also held to support the Pantry at this time.

A Memorable Year—1974

An early, dedicated volunteer, President Milton Haaland, accepted the Eagles' Good Neighbor of the Year award. Area Boy Scouts had a very successful door-to-door food drive. The Fargo Elks Club donated \$150/month after discontinuing its Christmas basket program, although later on Club members sorted, packaged, and delivered December orders for several years. The Fargo Elks Lodge also donated a freezer that was too large to fit in the Pantry. It was kept on President Haaland's front porch and filled as needed until the Pantry moved to larger quarters. The Fargo-Moorhead Inter-faith Council disbanded and donated its bank balance to the Pantry. The community was becoming aware of the work of the Pantry and helping out.

Pantry is Incorporated—1975-1978

The EFP was incorporated in 1975 with a Board of Directors composed of delegates from local churches, meeting the first Tuesday of each month. Referrals to the Pantry were made by social service agencies and churches. All money donations were used to purchase food. Administrative costs during the 1970's were paid by Volunteers for Community Service, underwritten by United Way. One hundred Christmas baskets were delivered in December 1978 with the help of the Elks.

Years of Growth—1979-1982

The Pantry's finances were strong at the start of 1979. In April the Pantry relocated from Elim to the Unitarian Fellowship building at 18 S 8th St in Fargo, and the freezer was moved from the President's front porch. Rent was \$100/year. American Crystal Sugar began donations of sugar to the Pantry and continues to do so. Elim was given a plaque for being the Pantry's home from 1972 to 1979. Various corporate donations were made to the Pantry during these years and became continuing donations. The work of the Pantry was becoming more visible in the community through displays, appeals, speakers, and other publicity. In May 1980 the Pantry prepared to cover the anticipated gap that would result if the Food Stamp program ceased operation for five months as announced by agreeing to handle 350 individual requests per month through the Cass and Clay county Food Stamp offices. Fortunately, the government Food Stamp program was saved, and the Pantry did not have to step up after all. Milton Haaland received the Fargo-Moorhead Sertoma Service to Mankind Award. In 1980 food deliveries

were up 38% over 1979. Late in 1980, monthly expenses were running approximately \$2,000. More visibility was achieved in December 1981 when the F-M Community Theatre invited the EFP to set up a display in the F-M Community Theater lobby during the production of "A Christmas Carol." December also brought in an unusually large number of volunteers. In 1982 USDA surplus cheese, butter, and powdered milk were first available to the Pantry. Committees reorganized in 1982 were Housekeeping, Acknowledgements, Purchasing, Auditing, Solicitations, and Nominating. A Speakers' Bureau Manual was prepared. November was the busiest month of 1982 with 7-10 deliveries per day, while income was \$2,000 less than received in November of 1981.

New Development—1983

The Pantry Treasurer's position became bonded. Income was derived from the Walk for Hunger, KTHI fund drive, and Dayton's employees' drive for food and money, among other sources. Informational letters were sent to 54 new organizations and 39 churches. Because the Pantry serves both Cass and Clay counties, it began to participate in the Minnesota FoodShare incentive program conducted during March and resulting in extra income for the Pantry. An important development was Lutheran Social Service's creation of the Greater Fargo-Moorhead Area Food Bank (today known as the Great Plains Food Bank). The Pantry continues to educate the community on the difference between a food bank, which provides food to non-profit corporations (like the Pantry), and a pantry, which serves individuals and families only. Deliveries were up 100% over 1982.

Search for Bigger Quarters—1984

The need for new Pantry quarters of approximately 900 sq ft was made known. On one day in July, with the help of many, the Pantry was moved from the Unitarian Fellowship building in Fargo to a house owned by St. Joseph's Church at 217 S 11th St in Moorhead. The Pantry paid only utilities in the new location. A donation of \$700 from IBM was used to purchase a 17.5 cu ft refrigerator and a vacuum cleaner. Owen Voxland donated \$500 toward needed electrical work. Domino's Pizza began many years of Pantry promotions. The Pantry received nearly \$2,841 from CROP. One hundred fifty Christmas baskets were prepared.

A Banner Year—1985

An "Appreciation Blast" for "Mr. Food Pantry," Milton Haaland, was organized by volunteer Carol Koesterman. Municipal Judge Thomas Davies ordered convicted persons to buy \$50 of groceries for the Pantry in addition to fines and jail time. Board members were busy on the speaking circuit. The Pantry had been operating under the auspices of Volunteers for Community Service (VCS) and the United Way since nearly the beginning. In March the Pantry was informed it would need to pay \$500/month for referral services from Volunteers for Community Service, which it did for three months. In April the Pantry gave United Way a notice of separation to take place by October 1. Lucille Kingsley, of VCS, accepted the new paid position as Coordinator of the Pantry. Her office was in the Red Cross building; the food was still stored in Moorhead. As of August 1, the EFP was operating on its own! Personal contact was made with ministers to gain further representatives and support, as the Board did not want to spend food money on administrative fees. Through hard work, the necessary changes were made to incorporate the EFP as an independent unit. A major need was a transport van for food purchases.

Changes—1986-1987

Northwestern Bell donated a van to the Pantry. Coordinator Lucille Kingsley accepted another position, and Ann Kritzenberger became Temporary Coordinator until Delores Gooselaw was hired. Once again, larger Pantry quarters were needed, and Mayor Lindgren put the issue on the City Commission agenda. The NDSU FarmHouse chapter collected food for the Pantry during Harvest Bowl activities. Three of the EFP's volunteers appeared on local channel 11's Insight program. The 1986 Annual Report showed that expenses were greater than income, indicating that church support needed to be re-emphasized. In 1987 a computer was obtained for office use, primarily to enter names of contacts. The referral system was changed so that a client would use one referral agency only and was eligible for only three deliveries per year. In view of the Pantry's financial situation, the amount of food delivered per client was reduced. A new referral form requiring more client information was created. Hudson Foods began storing excess food, which continued through the years. Money came in from the Town Hall Series and an NDSU student food fast. Minnesota FoodShare gave the Pantry 9,445 lbs of food compared to 5,028 in 1983. In 1987 discussion began with the City of Fargo regarding a new location for the Pantry. Board members voted to make the former fire station in north Fargo the next EFP location. In lieu of Christmas baskets, extra food was given along with orders for the two weeks prior to the holiday. Christmas food drives were conducted by Holiday Mall and Santa Village at Island Park. The Bremer Foundation granted the Pantry \$1,000 for publicity purposes.

Another New Home—1988

After the Board signed a lease on April 1, the former fire station at 1438 N 10th St became the Pantry's new home. Architects and the City of Fargo worked to effect necessary changes in the property including roof replacement. A \$15,000 City of Fargo grant was applied to repairs. Many companies, groups, and foundations helped make the repairs possible at a cost of about \$40,000 plus donations of materials and labor. A walk-in freezer and cooler were supplied through donations. Moving day was August 9, handled by the Lions Club. The monthly lease fee was \$110 during the years of occupation. More community businesses held drives or donated money to the Pantry. A professional video was prepared and shown, and brochures were created. The 1988 Scout food drive was a huge success. In November THE FORUM printed an article differentiating between the Great Plains Food Bank and the Emergency Food Pantry.

A Change in Format—1989-1999

An Open House at the Pantry was held in January 1989. Changes were made to various sections of the Pantry Bylaws. During this time the need for Pantry services grew greatly and clients began to come to the Pantry to pick up the food that had been selected for them by volunteers rather than have it delivered to them. Lists were used that specified quantities of various foods based on the number and ages of family members and special needs. The cart of food awaited the client's arrival with perishable foods added at the last minute.

Stability and More Growth—2000-2010

Linda Clark became Coordinator in 2000 and continues in that position presently. She has developed relationships with area wholesalers, grocers, storage companies, churches, and other organizations to maximize the good that can be done through the Pantry. People have donated fresh vegetables grown in City garden plots. Faithful volunteers have unloaded trucks and collected Daily Bread. Others have

stocked the shelves and shopped for clients. In 2010 the position of Assistant was created and filled by Judy Hultin for one year. Churches, businesses, and civic groups provided extra help at special times.

The Most Exciting Time—2011-2012

As the years passed and the need to feed the hungry of our community grew even greater, it became time to look at relocating once again. Nearly one million dollars has been raised to totally remodel a City of Fargo building (formerly a tire warehouse) at 11th St and 4th Ave N. Moving to this space will double the size of the Pantry's 10th St N location. Fundraising conducted by the Board of Directors continues. Donations have come from churches, individuals (volunteers and friends of the Pantry as well as strangers who recognize the need), granting agencies, local businesses, and city and county governments. During the extensive remodeling phase, which is coming along well, a temporary EFP location has been established at 1301 39th St N, Fargo. The 10th St N location is inaccessible due to road construction. Referral requests are being filled at the temporary location until moving time comes once again, hopefully in Fall 2012.

The Future

The Coordinator, volunteers, and Board of Directors are excited about the future of the EFP. A new facility designed specifically as a food pantry will mean that more clients can be served in clean, bright quarters. More efficient methods of sorting and moving grocery items will be utilized. The office and unloading spaces will be large enough for staff and volunteers to complete their duties. Delivery trucks will be able to access the building easily. Clients will have enough room to park safely. The Emergency Food Pantry will be creating a new chapter in its history, to be reported on in future years.