

SOLUTION FEED

Giving Clients a Choice

Transitioning Our Food Pantry to Reduce Waste and Increase Dignity

For the past 29 years, the Wellston Center has been dedicated to distributing **ample, pre-packed food boxes** directly to those in need. The types of food never changed - clients knew exactly what they were getting each time and we knew what to obtain at the grocery store to restock our shelves. While we did fill each food box with nutritious options that reflect current USDA guidelines, we grew to be unsure of whether we were providing the community with options they genuinely wanted.

With support from Operation Food Search, we decided to transition to a **client choice food pantry model**. The basic premise of the client choice food pantry model is just that - allowing people seeking food assistance to choose for themselves what products they receive. This model is a critical part of our effort to **end hunger**. Not only does it provide people the opportunity to choose their own food, it gives clients a sense of pride and control, limits waste (since they tend not to take food they won't use), and allows them to tailor the help they

receive to be the best possible fit for their own home.

Furthermore, letting people choose what goes into their own food boxes offers respect to clients and their wellbeing. **There is no such thing as an average family or need.** Every family we serve is unique. What one eats and what feeds one's family is simply too intimate and too personal to be successfully generalized or averaged.

Our goal was to **bring the clients into the decision-making process** so that their preferences and needs could be addressed more effectively. Now when a client enters our food pantry, they are provided a menu of what food is available so that they can choose what they would like to take home that day. Our volunteers then assemble their groceries based on the items chosen.

While this transition is still relatively new to the community, we're already seeing **an increase in client satisfaction**, a reduction in our own food pantry costs, and more quality volunteer/client interaction.

Asking for food assistance is hard. We are committed to making our clients' experience as dignified and empowering as possible. After all, **the purpose of our work is to help those less fortunate.**

Giving our clients the choice they deserve will only bring our mission to a new level in tackling food insecurity in the community that needs our help the most. Thank you for believing in and supporting our efforts.





A NOTE FROM HALEY

As communities reopen and vaccinations continue, the pandemic's end is on the horizon - and for many, a long-awaited return to normal. At the Wellston Center, we don't want to go back to "normal" because we know that even before the pandemic, hunger was a reality for 1 in 10 people living in St. Louis County and St. Louis City.

Normal won't cut it anymore. We crave transformation. We long for a hunger-free community.

While we know that local food insecurity has grown and that our community's recovery will last much longer than the virus itself, we also know that we have provided record-breaking volumes of food to thousands of people despite facing unprecedented challenges. Thanks to you, we have achieved more than we ever thought possible. Take a look at the opposite page for a snapshot of your impact this year.

With the past year's adaptation and innovation in mind, we believe we have the potential to emerge from this crisis stronger and even better positioned to meet the evolving needs of our community. Together, we can create a new version of normal - a version in which hunger plays no part.

With gratitude,



H. Calabro

Haley Calabro, MSW
Executive Director

Volunteer Spotlight



Betty Hurd

For over 20 years, Betty has been a vital part of helping us feed the Wellston community. Her consistent volunteerism supports our food pantry's ever-changing needs. Whether it is sustaining our effort in distributing food during a pandemic or helping plan each Senior Support Group meeting, Betty's consistent smile and eagerness to help others makes coming to the Center a joyous experience. "I believe that I was sent here for a reason: to make me realize how blessed I am. When I see people and hear their problems when they're down and out, it makes me pray for them and thank the Lord for all my blessings. I'm glad to be here in any way that I can," says Betty. We thank her for her outlook and commitment!

Quarterly Report Highlights

Looking Back & Forging Ahead

\$17,600

in total
utility
assistance
granted to
clients in
need

27

new clients
added to our
food pantry

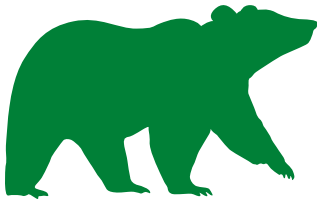


Over 3 months,

1,577

individuals given nutritious groceries

YOU EMPOWERED NEW AND EXPANDED PARTNERSHIPS TO REACH EVEN MORE PEOPLE:



WUSTL approved
the Center as a
field experience
site for social work
students



Incarnate Word
Foundation gifted
our food pantry
grants to help
further our mission



Launched our client
choice food pantry
with help from
Operation Food
Search



St. Richard Catholic
Church donated
adult and child
diapers so we can
help more families

With your continued support, we'll serve the community through ongoing trials and prepare to meet new challenges as they arise. Here's a snapshot of our priorities in the months and years ahead:

1

Continue to meet the increasing need, especially around disproportionately affected populations, while investigating new solutions to expand local food access

2

Educate the community to share information, reach people who need our support for the first time, and destigmatize seeking food support

3

Update our food pantry plan to further address systemic issues in our community

4

Align with policy issues that catalyze a movement against hunger in our communities and preserve hunger-relief programming

MONTHLY DONOR CLUB

**\$25 Monthly =
A month of food
for a family**

Invest in a Hunger-Free Future

The pandemic lifted the curtain on the stark reality of hunger in our communities. For the first time, it seemed that hunger - and how to prevent it - was at the forefront of Americans' minds. Because of this, we were able to prevent hunger for **thousands of our neighbors** throughout the pandemic. In the first year of our COVID-19 response, we provided more food than ever before while innovating through new partnerships and programs to reach even more of our neighbors in need. In order to truly end hunger, we need to make an investment for the long haul.

By joining our Monthly Donor Club and committing to a monthly donation today, you'll be helping to ensure that a return to "normal" doesn't mean a return to food insecurity for the 8,000 people who relied on our network before the pandemic began.

To make a monthly donation, visit our website and click "Donate" to bring you to our giving page. There, you can choose to give on a recurring basis. **Every dollar makes a difference!**

UPCOMING EVENTS

May 5

giveSTL day.org[®]
POWERED BY THE
St. Louis Community
Foundation

This year marks the first year that the Wellston Center is a recipient for Give STL Day donations - a day dedicated to raise money and awareness for local nonprofits. Visit GiveSTLDay.org to look for how to support us.

**Now -
Aug 1**

Backpacks for Kids

We have started collecting school items for our annual Backpacks for Kids program. Each year, we give over **200 backpacks** to local school-aged children in the Wellston area. Email info@wellstoncenter.org for a list of items we're accepting.

Visit www.wellstoncenter.org for more information.

