



DAILY BREAD COMMUNITY FOOD PANTRY

BY JENNIFER HETRICK, Content Coordinator



Seeing a need locally in 1997,

Loretta and Joel Stever co-founded Jerusalem Community Food Pantry inside of Schwenksville's Jerusalem Evangelical Lutheran Church. This nonprofit is now known as the Daily Bread Community Food Pantry based in the Collegetown area.

“The concern was raised that there were 40 to 60 families living 50% below the government poverty line in a large primarily rural area between Souderton to the east and Phoenixville to the west, Pottstown to the north and Norristown to the south,” explains Loretta who now serves as executive director.

Today, the pantry serves more than 700 families.

“A project which started with a small group of dedicated volunteers grew to more than 200 volunteers and occupies a 5,600 square feet of space with multiple refrigerators and freezers,” she adds.



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“We receive food from government sources and gather as much as possible through community and civic groups and organizations like Grocers Against Hunger,” Loretta explains. “We have a choice area where families can fill a shopping cart with fresh produce, vegetables, and bread from local stores and restaurants. In addition to food, we try to help families with personal care products, school supplies, holiday gifts and special food, senior boxes, free haircuts by local stylists and barbers, and a free library, among other projects.”

Now, volunteers also prepare specialty bags for clients with diabetes and vegan diets, too.

“We know how difficult it is for people to come to a food pantry and work very hard to protect their dignity,” Loretta says. “We look upon everyone who comes to our doors as family, hoping to help each one as best we can.”

As an example of impact, in July 2019, the pantry totaled almost 2,000 hours of work from 258 volunteers supporting 882 individuals. Of those, 130 were elderly, 460 were adults, and 292 were children. And some were veterans. Numbers increase by the holidays in wintertime.

“In the score of years since we began, we’ve learned something

new about poverty each year,” Loretta reflects. “In our area like ours, the need is largely hidden and unseen, making hunger so very insidious, and we’ve seen how much it beats families down.”

A recent goal is to fundraise enough money to purchase a property in order to move away from the vulnerable varies of leasing, which are hard on a nonprofit.

TO LEARN MORE,

visit www.dailybreadcommunityfoodpantry.org.



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