

Office of Concern Supplying 800 Thanksgiving Dinners

Volunteers organized turkeys and nonperishable goods to be given to families ahead of Thanksgiving. | Photo by Hillary Vidars

ENGLEWOOD, N.J.—From Nov. 25–28, the Office of Concern Food Pantry in Englewood will be giving out 800 Thanksgiving turkey dinners to families in need. They have been doing this annual turkey giveaway for 30 years, and each year it makes Thanksgiving dinner a precious reality for families in the Northern Valley.

“If not for the Office of Concern, we would have nothing to eat,” one client said.

Located in St. Cecilia Church on Demarest Avenue, the Office of Concern Food Pantry is dedicated to serving the poorest families in Englewood, Hackensack, Bergenfield and Teaneck. Since 1980, they have been giving food and other basic needs of daily life to people in need regardless of their religion, race or culture.



“We have 45 volunteers who use their professional experience to meet the needs of our community. This allows us to keep our costs low so that nearly every dollar can be spent on our clients,” Donald Wuertz, director of The Office of Concern Food Pantry, said.

At the Office of Concern Food Pantry, non-perishable groceries are received throughout the week and sorted and bagged by “warehouse guys” and stored in a warehouse that is adjacent to the office. Twice a month, they receive a delivery of groceries and frozen foods from the community food bank with minimal cost to them

through federal and state programs. Every Monday, the warehouse guys bag a list of non-perishable groceries that are then distributed Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. by front office volunteers.

“The generosity of community members is amazing,” said Christine Barrett, an Office of Concern Food Pantry board member. “One day, a man drove up and his car was full of groceries. He said, ‘I just celebrated my 60th birthday, and instead of gifts, I asked people to make a donation to you.’”

The Office of Concern Food Pantry also has a year-round Nutrition Plus program. The food distributed includes meat, dairy, bakery and fresh produce. The funding for this program comes from grants received from charitable organizations.

Through their Health and Hygiene Program, the organization distributes toilet paper weekly and periodically soap, shampoo and toothpaste.

The third unique program is the Diaper Program which involves distributing about 30 diapers per week to each child under the age of 3. Starting in 2019, the program expanded to include a monthly supply of baby wipes to those families in the program. In 2019, the Office of Concern Food Pantry had a diaper drive in a number of churches which proved to be successful and will expand to more organizations in 2020 and following years.

Talking Turkey

By Nov. 20, this year’s Thanksgiving drive had brought in 800 turkeys, which were being stored in the freezer at St. Cecilia Church and ready to be distributed on Thanksgiving week. On hand in the kitchen were Pastor Herman Kinzler, Pastor Emeritus Hilary Milton, Wuertz, Christine Barrett and her husband Tom, Frank Tarsney, George McKenna and a host of other helpers.

The office of Concern Food Pantry was filled with volunteers sorting and packaging Thanksgiving dinner items. In addition to 15 to 20 pound turkeys, there were bags filled with yams, potatoes, cranberry sauce, stuffing gravy, milk, rolls, bagels and loaves of bread, bags of shelled walnuts, pitted prunes, raisins, macaroni and cheese, fruit cups and pumpkin pie.

Wuertz was particularly appreciative of NVE Bank’s help with the Thanksgiving drive.

“They supplied us with large green cloth bags for each turkey and an assortment of non-perishables. They also will help deliver some of the food and they sent us staff members to help with the distribution,” he said. “On Monday morning, we expect at least 350 to come for their Thanksgiving foods, so these and other local volunteers are going to really be needed.”

He added, “This is a wonderful cooperative effort. We receive more in donated food than we do from funds from foundations.”

St. Cecilia’s Pastor Rev. Milton was also appreciative of the enormous donations of time, money and food.

“This bounty will bring joy to many families who would not otherwise be able to have Thanksgiving dinner. The church has always taught us to take care of people and to love each other and this is a wonderful way of showing that,” Milton said. “This shows a sense of who we are and that we care deeply about our community.”



Office of Concern volunteers Frank Tarsney, Christine Barrett, Donald Wuertz, Tom Barrett and Rev. Herman Kinzler at one of the food delivery trucks. | Photo by Hillary Vidars

The organization’s greatest source of groceries is through the donations from over a dozen local churches as well as schools, community organizations, businesses and private individuals. Corporate sponsors include NVE Bank, Suez Water New Jersey, MJM Global Services, DMG America, Volvo North America, Englewood ShopRite, Stop and Shop in Tenafly, Cresskill Bagel and Balthazar Bakery. Some of these businesses supply the Office of Concern Food Pantry with food every day.

These donors also lend their support for cereal, soup, Thanksgiving and Christmas drives.

“We also receive monetary gifts from foundations who understand our mission and support us, especially our unique programs, Nutrition Plus, Health and Hygiene and Diapers,” Wuertz said.

Photos by Hillary VidarsVidars, H. (2019, November 27). Office of Concern Supplying 800 Thanksgiving Dinners. Retrieved from <https://thepressgroup.net/office-of-concern-supplying-800-thanksgiving-dinners/>