

Food pantry/St. James' volunteers (front l. to r.) Sally Pardee, Shirley Ferris, Sylvia Erlandson, Bev O'Halloran, Deb Belding, and Thomas Finnegan; (back l. to r.) Taylor Triola, Travyn Triola, and Pat Rooney. K. Thornton-De Stafeno / The Observer

Hyde Park Food Pantry thrives with local blessings

by [Kristen Thornton-De Stafeno](#) • September 17, 2014

The Hyde Park Food Pantry, now housed on the grounds of the Regina Coeli Catholic Church, was founded more than 25 years ago by various churches in Hyde Park – and today it continues to thrive with the support of the community and members of the founding congregations.

The food pantry is open every Friday, May-October, from 9:30-11:30am, and is staffed each week by volunteers, including church groups on alternating weeks who come from Hyde Park Reformed Dutch Church, Hyde Park United Methodist Church, Regina Coeli Catholic Church, St. Margaret's Episcopal Church, St. Peter's Catholic Church, and St. James' Episcopal Church.

Barbara Wansor, the head of the pantry, told the Observer that in the month of August, the pantry served 88 families and more than 300 individuals. Each family gets a three-day supply of food, she added.

Every fifth Friday, members of St. James Episcopal Church and the Hyde Park Community Garden volunteer their time at the Hyde Park Food Pantry to distribute groceries and produce to families in the Hyde Park Central School District.

Along with food items, the food pantry sometimes has clothing, and Beverly O'Halloran, a volunteer during St. James' designated week, said that they provided students with backpacks last year.

Town Supervisor Aileen Rohr visited the food pantry on Aug. 29 along with Ward 1 Councilwoman Eriiy Svenson and called it "a fantastic resource for the community." She also commented on the weekly contributions to the pantry from the community garden, saying, "Who wouldn't want fresh tomatoes and produce for their family?"

Wansor said, "The town government doesn't support the food pantry in any way, but the town itself does give the food pantry tremendous support," in that the school district, churches, and the post office all hold food drives for the pantry.

The pantry does receive more than \$3,000 annually in federal funds, and the rest of the donations, including food, come from church groups and others.

All leftover produce from the food pantry is donated to the Hyde Park Meals on Wheels program, where volunteers cook and distribute meals at the United Methodist Church of Hyde Park.

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As Sally Pardee, a member of St. James Episcopal Church and a volunteer at the food pantry since 2002, noted, "It's rewarding to help others, and you never know, we may be in the same boat one day and need someone else's help."

The community garden, which was started in 2012 and is sponsored by St. James' Episcopal Church, has 24 plots this year. Of those, garden committee chair Deborah Belding said, three are designated for the Hyde Park Food Pantry and tended by church members. Some other plots in the garden are used by the Culinary Institute of America, which also contributes some of its produce to the food pantry, she added.

A new addition to the community garden, which will go to help both the gardeners and the produce grown for the food pantry, is the new shed, which was contributed and built by FDR High School architecture students under the direction of their teacher, Doug Egerton.

Joe Baldwin, a member of the community garden, said, "The shed will help keep our veggies clean and dry while they're being stored."

Belding added that the shed will also be used to store gardening tools, which occasionally go missing if they are left outside.



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