

Pantries continue to see increase in donations

Written by By Dominic Aragon Sun Correspondent
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GRANTS — As the need for food from local pantries continues to increase, community members and organizations are stepping up with donations to both The Community Pantry in Gallup and in Grants.

The Community Pantry, founded in 1999, serves Gallup with a branch in Grants, which officially opened in 2000, in the parking lot of the First United Methodist Church (510 First St.).

The Community Pantry in Gallup is located at 1130 Hasler Valley Rd. The Grants Community Pantry is located at 222 Stephens Street.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic hit New Mexico in March, the Gallup pantry has doubled the number of families it helps on a monthly basis from 3,500 families to 7,000.

“We hired three emergency part-time employees, but we’re not caught up. [The Gallup] pantry, this time of year, normally relies on 15-to-20 volunteers a day,” Alice Perez, the executive director for the Gallup pantry, said.

Perez said many of the volunteers who would normally help, come from the community service-based court-mandated programs. Many would work in the warehouse and the garden.

“With this pandemic going on, we don’t know where these people have been, what their health is like, so we have to limit them,” Perez said.

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Maura Schanefelt, president of the pantry board, said donors and organizations have been generous.

“Donations are coming in from organizations that deal with disaster relief, different foundations that care about and want to donate, [and] from organizations that would normally have the pantry write a grant for the funding,” Schanefelt said.

“From private donors, [donations have] been slightly higher. Some of the donations have been gifted from people’s stimulus checks, or portions of those checks.”

One of the donors in Grants is the Knights of Columbus (K of C) Council 3683. The K of C is a Roman Catholic men’s fraternity that focuses on charity and help for all.

Richard Chavez, the grand knight for the council, said, “We usually donate \$1,000 a year to the pantry. This year, we did a little more because of the need for it.” He and his brother knights recently donated an additional \$500 check to the Grants pantry on top of what the organization had already donated this year.

Chavez pointed out that the pantry can buy 600 pounds of food for every \$500 it receives.

How to Help

Help from volunteers at both pantries is always welcomed and encouraged.

“We need people who are healthy for re-packing purposes, helping in our garden area, distribution purposes, cleaning, and the list goes on. We never run out of tasks that need to be accomplished,” Perez said.

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“The pantry definitely expects to be in this new normal for quite some time,” Schanefelt said. “They’re going to be purchasing items, they’re going to be needing supplies for distribution. Monetary donations are fantastic.”

Gallup pantry: e-mail coo@thecommunitypantry.com; (505) 726-8068. Grants pantry: (505) 287-5090.

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