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## Hunger Network delivering assistance by the ton

Comments

January 26, 2010

By **TODD SHIELDS** [tshields@pioneerlocal.com](mailto:tshields@pioneerlocal.com)

In less than a year, the sheer number of food tons collected for the needy on Chicago's North Shore convinced Gary Eimerman and others of the importance their cause.

From May to December, the fledgling Hunger Resource Network [hungerresourcenetwork.org](http://hungerresourcenetwork.org), a nonprofit based in Northbrook, has gathered 50 tons of food and other essentials for more than 100 social services, churches and government assistance offices.

[Click to enlarge image](#)



Donated produce fill 25-gallon bins at the Evanston Farmers Market near downtown. Volunteers for Hunger Resource Network are (from left) Susan Eimerman of Northbrook, Dan Jariabka and Linda Jariabka, both of Northfield, and Evanston resident Claire Regan.

Speaking in visuals, Eimerman estimated a ton of food could fill two suburban vans.

"Our mission is to bring food to people who need it and that's what we're really doing. I make deliveries to local food pantries and people shake my hand. It puts a human face on our purpose," said Eimerman, of Northbrook.

In April, the Hunger Resource Network first met at St. Giles Episcopal Church, 3025 Walters Ave., Northbrook, with Eimerman and Northbrook resident Dan Jariabka as two of its founding members.

"We knew St. Giles had been collecting 15 tons a year. If a small church could do that, Dan thought of what a much bigger group could do.

"And we knew all these people who were doing the same thing -- collecting food to help others. So why not organize them all?" Eimerman said.

Soon after, Hunger Resource volunteers fanned and convinced dozens of local grocery stores and restaurants to donate food that otherwise in some cases would get thrown out, such as baked goods and produce. A Northbrook store also recently donated 700 pounds of candy.

"People like to have treats to eat, too, you know," Eimerman said.

In addition, many stores donated containers and wrapping materials for transporting goods.

Eimerman said vendors at farmers markets in several villages have especially generous.

"We had five full vans from just one farmers market," Eimerman recalled.

On the North Shore, the Hunger Resource Network delivers to Northfield Township food pantry in Glenview and Connections for the Homeless and Interfaith Action Commission, both in Evanston that provide many services, such as shelter, permanent housing, job searches and food.

Working for Hunger Resource Network has been a somewhat startling experience for Eimerman, a retired tax manager for a large accounting firm.

"The increased number of people seeking services at Northfield Township is staggering," he said.

"People who helped support the township pantry are now using it to get food for themselves," he said.

From December 2008 to December 2009, families seeking assistance at Northfield Township food pantry has increased from 438 to 570, said Gayle Valatoris, a Northfield Township community coordinator, serving Northfield, Northbrook and Glenview.

She said Hunger Resource Network was the only organized nonprofit that delivered food to the township pantry.

"This group is very valuable to us because they help us operate. We don't always have the resources to go pickup food and bring it back here. Hunger Resource Network covers for us," she said.

Another indication of how much grassroots organizations are needed in today's stumbling economy, Eimerman said the Hunger Resource Network's request for nonprofit status from the Internal Revenue Service was granted in just 10 days.

"Our attorneys said this process normally takes six to eight months. The need for emergency relief is huge these days, and that's why our request was expedited."

For more information on the Hunger Resource Network, call (847) 272-1700.



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