

## Article 2.

# How Calvary Food Pantry helps families, and how local businesses help the pantry

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Last Friday, Audrey and Ken Mochel gave their first tour of the Calvary Food Pantry Gardens, part of Calvary Food Pantry's mission to bring healthy food to the most vulnerable of Auburn's population. The cultivated area will be vast by the end of June. Their tireless "magician," Quadir Muntaqim, was there working hard, as was Thomas Wright, a military man who volunteers when he can. Audrey, hatless, seemingly tireless, under bright, hot sun, walked the rows and rows of seeds already planted, and finished her tour at a large row of garlic. Did you know garlic was perennial? Welch Allyn volunteers were due later, with promised food signs for the rows of planting. The United Methodist Church was due Saturday to help plant 140 tomatoes as part of Change the World Day. The Mochels' planting has always been a community event. Volunteers form the backbone of feeding the hungry in the gardens and the pantry, highlighting a grand community effort in this historic town. Volunteerism is all about community action. Without the volunteers, most activities would grind to a halt. I point to my 60 dedicated volunteers who operate the pantry on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. People like Don, Marge and Florence in the gardens are my backbone and, I feel, are just as responsible, as I am, for feeding the hungry in Auburn.

Then, Audrey, volunteer extraordinaire, took time out from her planting schedule to visit Herman Avenue Elementary School, showing how to grow vegetables from seeds. This, her second year, was a resounding success. Students who planted her white patty pan squash last year enthusiastically embraced her handouts this year. Some parent complimented her on their child's eagerness in gardening throughout the year. Audrey points out, "I was tired, dusty and stretched thin with work until those children started to tell me how much they loved last year's planting. I went home invigorated, convinced it was worth it all."

The gardens would not exist if Audrey hadn't come into the pantry to donate money and I proposed the creation of the Calvary Food Pantry Gardens as executive director of this food pantry. That was five years ago.

Here are facts I want the community to know, representing volunteerism and donations:

Calvary Food Pantry has helped 2,771 families in distress this current fiscal year, from July 2012 to July 2013. The pantry has served, so far, 101,400 meals.

The Calvary Food Pantry is a member of the CNY Food Bank that charges 14 cents a pound to deliver donated goods and produce.

When a family is hungry, get help at my pantry by:

Approaching a signup desk that is across from my huge food table, manned by volunteers. You must sign up with a current address. We serve the northeast area and Olympia Terrace Apartments. Most people call first.

We give you three meals for five days of nutritionally balanced foods.

Note: The U.S. Postal Service's recent drive gathered six tons of nonperishable food that was divided amongst the seven food pantries in the Auburn network.

Then individuals can also choose as much as they want from the food table, where donations are abundant:

1. Many local farms like Bradtke, Bob Hosford's and Sharon and Ben Vitale Farms leave goods throughout the year. The farmers market, starting on June 8, will leave day-end goods and continue throughout the season. More farms to be acknowledged next month.
2. Hudson Farms delivers discounted eggs.
3. Panera Breads give pantries, every day of the week, the end-of-day bread. Linda, a volunteer, picks it up for Calvary on Fridays.
4. Wegmans gives produce and baked goods, once a week, and Barbara, another volunteer, picks it up.
5. Walmart gives Calvary and the gardens grant money as part of its national food drive. Employee food drives are gathered once a month and delivered by Sheryl, from Wal Mart.

Kristen Rath, of the CNY Food Bank, on Wednesdays, signs eligible individuals to SNAP, once called food stamps. "Rush Limbaugh stated anyone can buy beer, cigarettes and personal (hygiene) items on 'food stamps.' Sorry Rush, you were misinformed," she said.

Individual can come back once a month.

Then the garden's efforts are delivered to Calvary starting in June when the first plantings appear. Volunteers distribute the fresh vegetables to the local pantries. "Last year's \$12,000 dollars worth of free vegetables were distributed to the pantries. We plan to do more this year," Audrey said.

Want to volunteer here or in the gardens? Call me at 252-7772.