

Article 8.

Giving thanks for a great year at the Calvary Food Pantry

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I look forward to the Christmas season because I can gratefully thank those individuals who daily help me with their continual and steadfast support, so I may achieve my goals of helping hungry people, daily, weekly and year-round.

First, (and always), to my volunteers: I have developed a series of articles telling the community, in this historical town, not only what I do every day but highlighting, for instance, in article No. 4, how much I deeply depend on my volunteers' help. My 50-plus volunteers have repeatedly, day in and day out, all year long, step up to help me. We achieved what our U.S. Congress couldn't: bi-partisan efforts. Strong views and attitudes are left elsewhere. This dynamic group has achieved the following this year:

- We serve food to approximately 220 families a month. It is a mammoth task getting five days' worth of food ready from our pantry and freezers. My volunteers fill plastic bags with food in an organized manner. Each family gets the same food, only a lot more depending on the family size. (A family of six gets more eggs, for instance.) There is no chaos, temperaments and opinions. All volunteers share a common goal: To help those people in crisis and often despair. My volunteers' wonderful work makes my pantry thrive.
- Our Calvary Food Pantry Garden, at BOCES, offered fresh but free produce. As prices jumped beyond any expectations from my families' budgets, Audrey and Ken Mochel, countless volunteers in the fields and I harvested vegetables all summer long.
- Volunteers created an emergency response plan we thought we needed. It is currently in place with a great deal of work, coordination and expertise, but again, without fuss and bother. We are still working on it, but professionalism, and an exceptional effort, will accumulate into something the community needs.
- Our monthly showcases, like November's Turkey Trot, highlighted our fellowship with Auburn's churches. We are all proud that we gave out 230 turkey meals for real Thanksgiving. Many wonderful people helped me unconditionally. Thank you all!
- Then there is the CNY Food Bank. I, my organization and volunteers do not exist without the support of the CNY Food Bank. Thank you for your strong, continuing support to me, my pantry and my families.
- Finally, the series of Heroes for Hunger articles would not have been accomplished without the help of David Wilcox, The Citizen's Lake Life editor. People may have strong opinions about taking on the subject of hunger. Hunger is always with us, a constant that is often driven by

despair and desolation. Thank you, David, for turning a spotlight on the pantry's challenges each month.

The articles have started to have a communal impact. They are being discussed, one of my goals. Moreover, my work has been reinforced this past year by a swell of help from the community with the thousands more canned food from the U.S. Postal drive, the Boy Scout drive and other venues like Capt. Jack's annual Haunted Pirate Ship. I ask you: Where else can a Haunted Pirate Ship thrive, contribute and give back but here in Auburn? You are to be congratulated, David. You are a Hero for Hunger.

Wish list, you ask? It is not a big one: Can you, the community, donate to any Auburn pantry this coming year? See the list with this column. I appreciate those people, off the street, who come in and contribute gifts as clothes, cans, and even cash. Please continue. Furthermore, I have built an "Angel" Christmas tree, filled with angel ornaments, just for those who donate, but you must come in and choose one. My greatest wish, though, in this season of giving is that it continues all year by donating, volunteering and reciprocating, in return. Merry Christmas, and joy to you all.