

Case Study for Session 3 » Hunger at Our Doorstep



CASE STUDY #3

Badgerville Food Pantry

The Badgerville, Wisconsin Food Pantry got its start in the late 1980's in the basement of a Methodist church, after clergy in the area noticed a marked increase in the number of people coming to them for money to buy food. But the space was limited, and elderly and disabled clients had a hard time negotiating the stairs. After several moves, the pantry found quarters in what used to be a small warehouse. The pantry has strong support from area businesses, churches, schools and civic organizations. Over 3000 clients are served each month. Still, it is sometimes a struggle to cover the costs of maintaining the pantry – rent, utilities, staff salaries, insurance, maintenance, etc. – and to keep enough volunteers and food on hand to serve those in need.

Recently the pantry switched to a “client choice” approach. This allows people to choose their own food, rather than handing them a box of pre-selected groceries. The clients now have a greater sense of self-determination and there is less waste of unwanted food. “Birthday Kits” – with cake mix, frosting, candles, balloons, and small gifts – are given to families who can't afford much in the way of celebrations. At Christmastime, poor families are able to pick out toys for their children. The pantry offers nutrition education and personal and financial counseling services. A computer with internet hookup is available at the pantry so that clients can use the ACCESS website to help them determine their eligibility for FoodShare (Wisconsin's SNAP – formerly Food Stamps – program).

The Director of the pantry says, “It is sometimes discouraging to think about how many years we have been in operation and yet the problem of hunger hasn't gone away – and may even be increasing. But I take comfort knowing we've been a blessing to so many, and we have been blessed in return.”

1. In what ways does this pantry show its respect for those who use it? What other practices would be important for treating the pantry's clients with dignity?
2. Why do you think the pantry makes a point of helping clients access government assistance programs?
3. How do you respond to the director's statement? Why do you think the problem of hunger has not gone away? In what ways might the pantry workers have been blessed by those they serve?
4. What kind of support can area businesses and churches give to a food pantry?