

LOAVES AND FISHES

FOOD, CLOTHING, AND COMMUNITY

Quarter Two Report 2019

FOOD

During the second quarter of 2019, we gave out 4,101 bags of groceries to our neighbors! That is more than in the first quarter, and this increase puts us on pace to hand out more bags of groceries than we have ever given out before. Not only are we giving out more bags of groceries, we are giving out more pounds of groceries in those bags. Currently this year we have already given out over 135,000 pounds of food, which is 25,000 pounds more than we gave out in the same time in 2018. These increases continue with the trends that we have seen for the past few years. The Food Bank has been offering more food for us to distribute and we are seeing more of our neighbors need our services. We would like to thank our friends at New Haven Farms who have shared the abundance from their local farm here in New Haven including lots of greens, radishes, peppers, turnips, and kohlrabi with our neighbors. New Haven Farms understands the importance of access to nutritious produce for everyone in the city.



We always experience a decrease in volunteers heading into the end of the school year because many of our student groups are focused on finals or have already left for the summer. This year we have had a lot of volunteers who have stepped up to fill that gap including volunteers from the Quinnipiac PA program, Choate Rosemary Hall, Vox Church, and Vertical Church. We really appreciate all of the hard work that our volunteers undertake to keep Loaves and Fishes up and running.

CLOTHING

The spring and early summer brought lots of changing weather, and the clothing closet was up to the task of helping our neighbors get through the final cold days through some wet weeks and into the heat of the summer. This quarter we gave out 11,827 pieces of clothing to our neighbors. It is worth noting that several other clothing closets in the city have been paring back their hours or shutting down completely because of the amount of work that it takes to coordinate the donations, sort and hang the clothes, and be open for shopping hours. We are



committed to staying open and meeting the needs of our neighbors. Even though the time spent is great, we know that it is worth because this quarter we have helped neighbors just getting out of prison find their first clothes, neighbors needing a suit for a funeral, and others getting dressed for job interviews.

The clothing closet also distributes toiletries and disposable menstrual products. Providing these basic products is very important because they can be cost prohibitive to many of our neighbors. If you would like to find out how you can get involved in our clothing closet, please reach out to us.

COMMUNITY

Over the past few months, we have engaged in conversations with the CT Food Bank and The Community Alliance of Research and Engagement about nutrition, health, and the food that we offer. We put a high value on offering 5-8 produce items every week, a policy we instituted last year, and have been looking for ways to expand our emphasis on health and nutrition. We are happy to announce that we have partnered with the aforementioned organizations to institute the Supporting Wellness at Pantries (SWAP) program created by researchers right here in Connecticut. Supporting Wellness at Pantries (SWAP) is a Stoplight Nutrition Ranking System designed to help promote healthy food choices at food banks and food pantries. Basically, foods that we offer are ranked green (choose often), yellow (choose sometimes), or red (choose rarely). This system gives us some data into what foods our neighbors choosing as well as what kinds of foods we are offering.

Loaves and Fishes is one of the first two pantries to pilot this program for the CT Food Bank. We hope to continue to lead pantries into understanding that better food can lead to better health. If you would like to learn more about how you can help us offer more green choices to our neighbors, please reach out to us.



CAPTAINS' CORNER

A bit of Disney magic, after more than a decade, still helps a minor “miracle” blossom every Saturday at Loaves and Fishes food pantry.

Janet and Paul Haringa learned about the pantry, based at St. Paul and St. James Episcopal Church, when responding about 10 years ago to an offer to win a Disney World ticket by volunteering. The couple may have come for a ticket, but they remained to become two of Loaves and Fishes' most committed volunteers, playing instrumental roles in the pantry's weekly miracle of providing food to between 300-400 people and clothes for more than 100.

Janet, one of the initial organizers of the clothing closet, now holds down the bonus table, encouraging guests to bring their own recyclable bags to reduce costs as well as the pantry's ecological footprint. Paul, meanwhile, carries out the crucial role of ordering food supplies and monitoring the pantry inventory.

But these dynamic doers were no strangers to volunteering for a good cause. For many years, they hosted New York City “Fresh Air” children for summer visits at their Monroe home. And when it comes to their annual winter vacation in Florida, the couple regularly volunteers at a food program for people in need, where Paul also gets to use his culinary skills in the kitchen.

They also help organize regular donations of clothing and food from Unquowa School in Fairfield, where Janet is a nurse. Plus, they share their enthusiasm for volunteering by recruiting family and friends to help out Saturday mornings.

Their biggest reward, says Janet, is the volunteers and guests “who we now call friends, like Charles, Walter and Louis ... love them all, big and small, sweet and sassy.”

Now that's real magic. Mickey, eat your heart out.



CURRENT NEEDS

First, we would like to thank all of you who donated to us for the Great Give! We surpassed our \$3,000 goal for the event. This money allows us to operate every week and provide high quality food and clothing to our neighbors who need it the most. Your generosity over the first half of the year shows us that you are as dedicated as we are to helping our neighbors. We hope that you continue that generosity into the second half of the year. If you know of any groups, churches, or organizations that you think might want to support us please reach out to us and our executive director is more than happy to talk with you.

Summer is one of the most difficult times for us at Loaves and Fishes because many of our regular volunteers are away or busy enjoying the few months of warm weather. Something that we are very proud of at Loaves and Fishes is that we are open every week throughout the year and that our services do not experience any interruptions. We can do so thanks to the dedicated volunteers that keep our doors open every week. We are hoping that you might take some time in the coming weeks to join us for a Saturday morning. We promise that you will understand what makes Loaves and Fishes such a special place if you come and experience it yourself.

Volunteer with us!
Learn more at
loavesandfishesnh.com
or come to
Loaves and Fishes
57 Olive Street
New Haven, CT
on Saturday morning!

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

I am excited to announce that after a long and thoughtful process Loaves and Fishes has become a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. The number of neighbors that we serve has increased by around 10% annually for the past few years, and we hope that this transition will allow more opportunities to meet this new demand and continue to expand our offerings as we have in the past two years, such as the addition of a community health worker in attendance every week, the implementation of our produce policy last year, and the rolling out of the SWAP program featured above. We recently received all of the necessary paperwork from the IRS to finish this transition, which will be happening in the next few months.

What this means is that Loaves and Fishes will continue closely working with the parish, with many of our board member coming from St. Paul and St. James. We also have no plans to move locations, and we view our central location as one of our best assets. Our new official name will be Loaves and Fishes New Haven Inc., and all subsequent donations will be tax exempt through this new entity. There will be no interruption in the services that we offer, and I will be staying on as Executive Director.

In early June I was talking with a neighbor at Loaves and Fishes who had just had their blood glucose and blood pressure checked with the Neighborhood Health Project at Loaves and Fishes. The Neighborhood Health Project volunteers suggested some dietary changes that could help mitigate the individual's risk for heart disease and diabetes. Since we had already implemented our SWAP program, it was easy for our neighbor to navigate the food choices available that Saturday to meet the recommendations they had received. We hope to grow under these and other related services under our new organization. As we listen to the needs of our neighbors, we will be able to better serve their needs.

--James Cramer

Please visit our website www.loavesandfishesnh.com for more information about Loaves and Fishes, how to meet and meet the needs of our neighbors, and food insecurity in New Haven.

Loaves and Fishes
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