



CHURCH COMMUNITY SERVICES

inspiring positive change

Summer/Fall 2023



Scan the QR code with your cell phone camera to donate!

Church Community Services Needs Your Help!

Our community is in great need of your assistance. We all know that the local economy has hit a rough patch. Our residents are struggling with everyday needs. We have seen a 60% increase in visits to the food pantry since the first of the year. Last week alone, 312 people in two days came to stand in line for the pantry. Each guest receives around 70 pounds of food per visit. Those 312 people took home 21,840 pounds of food (about the weight of a school bus) in two days, plus as much produce as they needed.

People asking for financial assistance are getting desperate. When they arrive at CCS, they have exhausted every available option for help. They are struggling with utilities being turned off and the threat of eviction. We try our best to help their situation, but we are short of the funds to help them.

When the economy in Elkhart County turns down, Church Community Services visits go up. Our lines will only get longer. We need to be able to help our most vulnerable residents weather this storm, but we cannot serve them without the generosity of our community.

Please consider a donation today... THANK YOU!



On his way to volunteer at an event, Councilman Dwight Fish stopped at our table at the Elkhart Farmers Market to talk to us about his support for Seed to Feed. He tells us that it's because of the people at CCS "who make it fun and exciting and important to be involved in such a grassroots community embrace, if you will. To know that there are people out there that support their fellow citizens with food, fellowship, and training and, overall, just good friendship. It's a good place for me to fit in because I'm all about feeding people. No one should go hungry in this world. We do food delivery very well at Church Community Services/Seed to Feed. It's important for me at a couple of really grassroots levels because I grew up on a farm. I know how important food is. I know how important the Midwest area is in delivering that food to the world. And we are a small part of that, in the city of Elkhart, but our reach has been quite broad. I meet people from all over who know about us because of the work we're doing and the work you're doing."

Councilman Fish encourages everyone to get involved in their own way. "Join. Be a member. Participate. Volunteer. Plant some food and bring it over to us. Let us know how you feel about us in your actions. And I'm not just saying that; that's not just platitude. That's why I show up and do what I do and that's why, as a city councilperson, I want to assist you in your greenhouse development with anything I can through the city, but I'm also a volunteer at the sidewalk level, if you will. I walk into the (CCS) offices, and I'm welcomed. I walk into the greenhouse, and I can get my hands dirty. I participate in food distribution, and it makes me very happy."

Many Hands Make Light Work At Seed To Feed

Garden affirmation for August (and those oh-so-slow tomatoes)

“Everyone is growing at their own rate, in their right time; you’re the exact right size and shape for this moment. Keep going. Keep growing.”

It’s harvest season at Seed to Feed and our community gardens are filling our pantry with the freshest of produce! We have collected a total of 35,557 pounds of vegetables and fruit this year! That’s approximately the weight of 6 elephants! What an impact to our community’s food insecurity! At Seed to Feed it all starts with the seeds, but it’s the countless volunteers that help along the way, at the community gardens, and in the greenhouses and pantry that make the magic happen. A big thank you to all of our community that helped make our growing season such a success.

We have a few updates from our gardens here at CCS. The first is our new Community Garden Nights. We are meeting here at our gardens every Tuesday night, from 5:30 to 7:00, to work alongside our neighbors here in our gardens. We harvest, fellowship, and work together so that our community can be a part of the action and learn about gardening along the way. We will be wrapping up our Community Garden evenings on September 5th for the season, but we look forward to bringing them back next Spring.

We are in the home stretch of our Greenhouse Expansion Project. Thank you to the crews and volunteers that have been dedicated through this weather and heat, and just keep chugging along with construction. We look forward to having crops in the ground this September and throughout the Winter. What a blessing it will be to have fresh produce year round for our pantry guests. Thank you as well to the team at Clay Bottom Farms for teaching us along the way as we bring lean farming to CCS.

Seed to Feed is in the middle of our volunteer campaign, and we are looking to bring our friends and new faces into the garden and our campus. If you are interested in learning more about our current volunteer positions, please contact Erica Coppens, ecoppens@churchcommunityservices.org or (574) 295-3673 ext. 122.



Thank You!



The Elcona Women’s Golf League raised money for Soup of Success during their Christmas in July golf outing



Genesis Products painted a beautiful mural on our garage

Carrying Hope For Their Futures

On August 24, 2023, approximately 40 people gathered to celebrate our latest class of women on their graduation from the Soup of Success program! The weather outside was steamy, but inside the cool, air-conditioned walls of Trinity on Jackson church, people were comfortable and enjoying a delicious meal of chicken, mac & cheese, salad, bread and fruit kabobs that was donated and served by Waypoint Community Church.

Graduation is always a special time of sharing. The volunteers and staff have an opportunity to share about how proud they are of all the work that the women have put in over the 5 months.

Sue McDonald, Soup of Success counselor, shared that “In the beginning, the class assessments showed that all of the women had fairly low self-esteem and that their level of hope was almost nil.

By the end of the 5 months everyone was bursting with belief in themselves and carrying a lot of hope for their futures!”

The guests can also take the microphone and share about the changes they see in their graduate and how happy they are for them. Parents, friends, significant others, all shared encouraging words and their pride. One little girl delightfully grabbed the mic and said exuberantly, “Great job, Mommy!”

The most impactful part of graduation is when the women themselves share about the changes they have seen in themselves. “I’m going to take all of their (SOS Staff) patience, effort and kindness - everything they’ve taught me - and carry it forever. I’ve learned that my past doesn’t have to define me. That it doesn’t matter what others think of me, it matters what I think of myself. How you feel about yourself reflects on how you treat others. I’m always looking at the big picture. What we put out is what we get back. Like the Soup of Success women. Somehow, someday I’m going to make this world a better place. Yes, I am important, but it’s not just about me. So, from the bottom of my heart, thank you from the women that came before me and that will come after me. I will continue to tell the story of my path to empowerment because women need other women! Thank you all.”



Team 27 graduates celebrate with SOS staff at Waypoint Community Church



Latino Business Expo

CCS participo en la Latino Business Expo el 22 de Agosto de 2023. Yolo López, ex consultor de CCS, dijo que ese día mostramos nuestros servicios a una comunidad creciente y solidaria. Entregamos más de 150 cajas de alimentos preparadas culturalmente he hicimos excelentes conexiones con voluntarios interesados".

CCS participated in the Latino Business Expo on August 22, 2023. Yolo Lopez, a past outreach consultant for CCS, said the day showcased our services to a growing and caring community. We handed out over 150 boxes of prepared culturally specific foods and made great connections with interested volunteers.



Give a gift that gives back!



For only \$125 you can buy a pig for the pantry. Your gift will provide 125 lbs (that's 665 USDA servings) of ground pork to those in need in your community!



Donate online at www.bit.ly/pigsforthepantry by designating \$125 to "Pigs for the Pantry".

Teen Growers Initiative

In August, we said farewell to our Seed to Feed interns, Lydia and Wichita, as they headed off to college. Before they left, they organized and implemented the 5-week Teen Growers Initiative - a sibling to the Teen Growers Program - putting it together themselves from weekly curriculums to fieldtrips. The group visited areas such as DeFries Garden, ACCELL Farm, the Elkhart Environmental Center and learned about ecosystems, sustainable agriculture, ecological footprints, and food sovereignty.

Former STF Director, Gabby Parrish, said about our young leaders, "Wichita and Lydia, you are amazing young women! I'm so proud of you both and I can't wait to see what adventures and mountains you climb next. Thanks for all your hard work!" Current STF Director, Erica Coppens, added, "They have been our support system as we learn the ropes here and we have been grateful for their wisdom and knowledge from their many years in Teen Growers, and their work on our gardens."

Teen Growers had a table at the Elkhart Farmers Market throughout the summer where they met farmers and makers, shared information about Church Community Services and Seed to Feed, and sold their produce. It has been a summer of fun, learning, and rewarding hard work for our interns and Initiative participants. Stay tuned! Teen Growers will return Spring 2024!



Thank You!



Members of Living In Yellow packaged soups, spice packets, and labeled bags for Soup of Success



The Concord High School Band brought in over 2,000 pounds of food to CCS



Volunteers Mike and Cheryl donated a new wet/dry vac to the pantry

New Faces at Church Community Services



Sandra Sanchez is the new Bilingual Counselor in Financial Services. She was born in Hidalgo, Mexico and moved to New York when she was 18 years old. She has been working for CCS since February 2023 starting as a volunteer in the food pantry. "I will never forget that day. When I had the interview, everyone was very friendly. Michael, who is the director of the Food Pantry, asked me to start helping him that same day. I was also a Financial Services Volunteer. It was a great opportunity for me. Later, Vonda, who was the Director of the Financial Services department, offered me the opportunity to work with them and I accepted."

Erica Lint-Coppens is joining Seed to Feed as their new director! Erica is a mother of 3 and brings along her lifelong passion and knowledge of gardening. She has experience in commercial food preservation, floral design, and teaching both gardening and cooking classes to local youth. Erica's specialty is therapeutic horticulture, and she loves the fellowship and intentional healing that can come from the garden. She is really looking forward to building the new community garden on the CCS Campus and is hopeful to create a beautiful and safe space for the community to learn and grow.



Tiera Porter-House is the new Garden Education Coordinator. Tiera was raised here in Elkhart, IN by her grandmother, who had a great impact on her passion for gardening and community. Tiera will be coordinating our Spring Teen Growers for 2024!! Her very first job was as an assistant at a daycare. She also has experience working with children at a children's behavioral facility. Outside of work, she is also a mental health advocate and artist. She absolutely loves working with nature and finding different solutions for food hunger within communities. Food for the body, mind, and soul.



Michelle Dupin joins us as the Receptionist for Church Community Services. Michelle was born in the Philippines and grew up in Manila, Japan, and the US. She has three daughters, two of whom graduated from Concord and her youngest is a Sophomore. Michelle was drawn to CCS because she wants to contribute to an organization that helps the community.



Thank You!

The gardens of River Oaks Church have donated 7,465 pounds of produce so far this year



Elkhart Memorial Class of 1983 made a generous donation to CCS



A few of the many Creekside Church volunteers processing the 1246.5 pounds of tomatoes they grew for our food pantry



Students from IUSM -South Bend helped with food surveys, weeding, repainting, and more

Follow Church Community Services
and our Soup of Success program!



Food Pantry Needs

Canned soups, meat and vegetables

Cereals (hot and cold)

Crackers

Rice

Hamburger Helper-like meal helpers

Peanut butter

Jelly

Condiments

Boxed potatoes

Cash donations allow the pantry to purchase items at an unbeatable price of 18 cents a pound.

Diapers

Personal care and hygiene items

Volunteers Needed!

We need volunteers for the following:

- Seed to Feed needs volunteers to help harvest, wash and pack greens from our greenhouse on Monday mornings for food pantry visitors.
- Seed to Feed is looking for someone to come in weekly to help organize and input seed donations.
- Seed to Feed needs individuals or groups to help wash and organize donated garden pots in the greenhouse.
- Sorting and repackaging food and cleaning/organizing for our food pantry.
- Delivering food to homebound individuals. Volunteers are needed the third Wednesday of each month to deliver food in their own car to approximately 6 people.
- Assisting the Food Services Director as we serve our guests Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.
- Spanish speaking bi-lingual interpreter for the food pantry.
- Drivers for our box trucks (26 and 16-foot trucks) and vans for food pick-up. CDL required for 26-foot truck, but not necessary for other vehicles.
- Groups to make Soup of Success Soups. Adopt one Thursday evening a month, 6-7:30 pm. Bring a group of 4-8 people to assemble bags of soup.

If you are interested, visit www.churchcommunityservices.org/vol or email volunteer@churchcommunityservices.org

Financial Services Hours

Monday and Thursday: 9am-11:45am & 1pm-3:45pm

Wednesday: 9am-11:45am



Food Pantry Hours

Monday 11am-3pm

Wednesday 11am-3pm

Thursday 11am-3pm & 4-7pm



Food Pantry