



## Teen Growers Begins Its Second Year!



June 15 our Seed to Feed program kicked off its second year of the Teen Growers Internship. The six-week internship allows 6 Elkhart teens the opportunity to practice gardening and job skills like leadership, teamwork, responsibility, and communication in a safe outdoor learning environment. The program is made possible in part with funding from Monogram Loves Kids Foundation, Beacon Health Systems, Renee and Brian Campbell and Steven and Kathryn Shantz.

Teens are learning about gardening and topics like food justice, food waste, food traditions, climate change and opportunities in agriculture. "We are thrilled to be able to offer this opportunity again this year, though COVID-19 has forced us to make modifications to the program," Chelsea Risser, Seed to Feed Coordinator said. Changes include reducing the number of participants to ensure social distancing is possible, daily temperature taking and masks. Instead of traveling to local gardens and farms together for weekly field trips as previously planned, several speakers will visit Church Community Services and speak to the teens outdoors. As part of the internship, teens are planning, planting and tending to their own garden plot. They are also helping take care of the community garden and greenhouse on site, which provides fresh produce to those who visit the CCS food pantry and other pantries in Elkhart County.

"Our hope is that this internship will empower future generations of our community to create healthy lives for themselves and their families, as well as help youth see agriculture and gardening as a potential career pathway," Risser said.

## COVID-19, Lost Wages and Hurting Families

Maria and her husband were both working full-time and making ends meet when the virus hit and the factory where Maria worked shut down, and her husband, who is self-employed as a mechanic, had no work altogether. For many in our community, living paycheck to paycheck is a reality, and any unexpected bill or financial setback can mean financial ruin. In fact, 37 percent of Indiana households fall below the ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) threshold as defined by United Way. So, while the governor put a moratorium on utility bills and evictions until July 1, when that date comes, bills are still due and many families will be facing a crisis.



Financial Services staff, from left: Vonda Horst, Rita Lane and Amy Brock

Helping families through financial emergencies is what our Financial Services program does. Fortunately, Church Community Services has been awarded several grants to help address the increased need for emergency financial help, including funding from SCAN, Inc. (Stop Childhood Abuse and Neglect), the United Way of Elkhart and Lagrange Counties Thrive Grant and the Community Development Block Grant through the City of Elkhart.

When Maria visited us, she said she is back to work, but her husband is still not getting the business he was accustomed to getting before the pandemic. They needed help with rent and utilities, and we were glad to be able to help. We are seeing many families like Maria's, and in the coming weeks and months we expect that number to grow. "COVID-19 has put a spotlight on many of the fault lines in our country, including the weaknesses in our system to care for those in need. The pandemic is a great inconvenience for middle and upper-income families, but for those already living on the edge, something like this can be devastating," says Vonda Horst, Financial Services Director. "We need to help people with financial emergencies now, but, as always, it is systemic change that is really needed so that fewer people are living on the edge to begin with."

# Feeding the Hungry During a Pandemic

The need for food is essential, and therefore, so is the Church Community Services food pantry. As COVID-19 hit our area, we had to think quickly about ways to make things as safe as possible for those distributing and those receiving the food. The best solution was to move the pantry outdoors. Those early days of spring weren't always pleasant, and we were so grateful to MSC Industrial Supplies for loaning us tents that allowed for coverage of our guests as they waited outdoors in the pouring rain or beating sun.

During the first week of the stay-at-home orders, we saw a 56% increase in the number of new families visiting our food pantry. Our community recognized the need and was ready to help. We appreciate the help we received from so many donors.



Thank you Richard Stevens, Robert Cuppy and Travis Reed of Lippert Components who volunteered to set-up two 10'x 20' tents outside our pantry. Special thank you to MSC Industrial Supplies, Elkhart, for loaning the tents to CCS!



United Way of Elkhart & LaGrange Counties

Church Community Services was awarded \$5,000 a month over 3 months from the COVID-19 Community Response Fund, a partnership between the Community Foundation of Elkhart County and United Way of Elkhart & LaGrange Counties. We are so grateful to have this support!



**CONCORD**  
COMMUNITY SCHOOLS  
PREPARING ALL STUDENTS FOR SUCCESS

Concord Community Schools are wonderful supporters of our food pantry. Throughout the year their schools and school groups donate. This year they donated a total of 10,046 lbs of food and over \$2000. It was wonderful to have our shelves filled when the virus hit.



60 staff members at Gaska Tape joined forces to contribute nearly \$3000 to our food pantry! Thank you!



Thank you City of Elkhart for raising over \$5000 and 440 lbs of food for the Church Community Services food pantry! Pictured from left: Mayor Rod Roberson, Katie Martin, City of Elkhart staff member, and Tom McArthur and Michael Downing, CCS staff.

Thank you to everyone who donated to the United Way of Elkhart & LaGrange Counties United Against Hunger Food Drive! Over 1,000 lbs and \$5000 were donated to feed those in need at the Church Community Services food pantry!



Thank you to Lighthouse Autism Center and the Lighthouse Families First Foundation for a very generous donation to support our Church Community Services food pantry! We are so grateful!



## Not even COVID-19 can stop us from empowering women!

COVID-19 hasn't been easy for anyone to weather, but it is especially challenging when you are a woman facing significant challenges like poverty, a history of substance abuse, physical or mental health issues or strained living conditions, as many of our Soup of Success participants experience.

During the 10 week quarantine the staff reached out and supported the current class with weekly mailings, zoom meetings and teletherapy. We were also very intentional about daily connection with them via Facebook group and chats.

A few of our participants shared some particularly inspiring accomplishments they were able to achieve:

Lorie: "I've continued to succeed during this time by completing my addictions aftercare program. It's a huge accomplishment for me and they [Team 22] cheered me on and congratulated me. I'm still doing everything I have to for drug court as well as started therapy. Lots of good things are still happening even through this difficult time. I feel empowered and proud that I'm still succeeding."



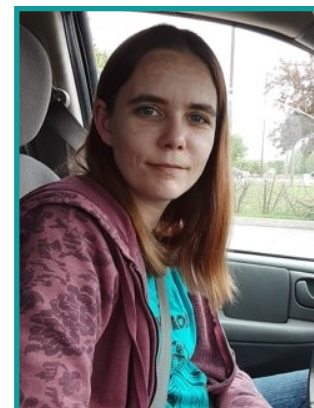
Lorie



Angie

Angie: "I have learned so much about myself since I started the Soup of Success program. And when the quarantine happened, I was able to use some of those life skills that I had forgotten, but that I was just beginning to re-learn at SOS. I've learned to grasp at some long-term goals that I set for myself. For instance, I quit smoking the day that we had our last class together. That was March 17th and I quit smoking that day."

Ranya: "Before SOS I was desperately trying to help anyone and everyone to the point of exhaustion and depletion because my depression and anxiety insisted that if I wasn't useful I wasn't valuable. With the SOS ladies and my Team 22 I've learned that I'm valuable regardless, and that while being of service to others is still important to me, I'm taking care to acknowledge my limitations and take good care of myself because "I have to put on my own mask before helping others with theirs" as Kathy likes to put it. If I'm not okay first I can't help anyone else either."



Ranya

We are so proud of all of our participants, for how they handled our time apart, and how they are handling all the changes now that we are back together. June 1 we began meeting in person again. Classes have been moved to the warehouse where we can work at a safe distance, breaks have been staggered and individual therapy is taking place via zoom with our therapist. The women are working in production in all areas throughout the mornings, learning how to sew, make shower melts, pour candles, assemble soup mixes and fill orders from our website [soupofsuccess.com](http://soupofsuccess.com).

If you are interested in purchasing Soup of Success products, visit our website, or call for a shopping appointment in our store Monday - Friday 9-4. Thank you for your support!



Thank you River Oaks Elkhart for making a generous donation to our food pantry and helping us pay for our Seed to Feed tiller!



Thank you Cornerstone Ministries for donating 100 boxes of food for us to distribute to pantry guests impacted by COVID-19. What wonderful neighbors!

10-year-old Brayden Smith with his grandmother Joy Geiger and our food services director, Michael. Brayden designed shirts that say "2020 Distraction" in response to COVID-19. He is selling them and donating the proceeds to Church Community Services' food pantry! Thank you, Brayden!





From left: Bill Rieth, United Way of Elkhart & LaGrange Counties, Tom McArthur, Church Community Services and Pete McCown, Community Foundation of Elkhart County.

## Santa came early!

Church Community Services was honored to receive a \$100,000 donation as part of a \$300,000 Secret Santa donation that was made to the COVID-19 Community Response Fund administered by United Way of Elkhart & LaGrange Counties and the Community Foundation of Elkhart County. Donations like this will allow us to provide food and emergency financial services to those in need in the coming months as the financial impact of COVID-19 continues to play out.

## Masks and Ear Savers!

Who would have thought a few months ago, we'd need masks?! We are so grateful for a number of people who made masks and ear savers and donated them to Church Community Services for our staff, volunteers and guests, including: Izzy Harbin, Ouida Lampert, and Peg Thornton from First Congregational Church, Shirley Shenk, Carla Chester and Karilyn Kilmer. Barb Vernon and Sue Pippenger crocheted ear savers. In addition, Jeff Lindke from the Elkhart Area Career Center 3-D printed us face shields and ear savers.



Local farmers, Jean and David Williams, recently directed a \$2,500 America's Farmers Grow Communities donation, sponsored by Bayer Fund, to Church Community Services' Seed to Feed program. We used the funds to purchase seeds for vegetable plant starts that were shared with food pantry guests so they can grow their own fresh produce at home and for plants that will be grown in Seed to Feed gardens and harvested for pantry guests unable to grow their own gardens. We are so grateful for this grant because it will support our efforts to bring fresh produce to people who would usually find it hard to obtain.

A big thank you to the Elkhart Rotary Club and Elkhart Rotary Interact for a \$2500 donation to Church Community Services that will allow us to assist those in need in our community!



## Ace Industrial Engineering

Thank you for your generous donation to help those in need in Elkhart County!

## Changes to the Board

We are excited to welcome aboard Aaron Clow, CEO of Beds by George.

## We have the best volunteers!



While we initially asked volunteers to not come in during COVID-19, some showed up anyway, and it was a huge blessing! We want to especially thank Tera and Precious (far left), Heather Bohn (with Kris Chumas, our food pantry manager, right). Not pictured, but also appreciated are Kay & Marc Dosmann, Barb Fridley, and volunteers from Ministerio Pentecostes Maranatha. We especially want to thank Tricia Lester. Tricia helped in the food pantry daily, filling boxes and handing them out. On occasion she made lunch for volunteers and staff and brought her family and friend to help. She even gathered friends together to help one of our Soup of Success participants furnish her new apartment. Thank you Tricia!

It's been so wonderful to have some of our regular volunteers come back! Mollie Krider and Tricia Lester have reunited (left) and Julie Phillips and Cheryl Schwartz with Michael Downing, Food Services Director (right).

Not pictured, but also appreciated are Deb Krawiec and Beth Bullard.

We are also thrilled to have Linda White and Lucy Dickey sewing Soup of Success products from home and Renie Twedt, Linda Wilson and Sue Pippenger volunteering on-site in textiles and Mollie Krider, Annette Kaczanowski and Lynn Blyly helping on-site with programming.

For those who haven't ventured back, we miss you and hope to see you soon, but we encourage you take care of yourself and only return when you feel safe doing so.



In April, Wellfield Botanic Gardens donated 250 potted plants for us to give to our pantry guests! The yellow daffodils and purple tulips were a perfect way to spread Easter cheer to our guests. Thank you Wellfield Botanic Gardens! From left: Josh Steffen, Horticulture and Facilities Manager, Tom McArthur, CCS Executive Director, and Eric Garton, Robert and Peggy Weed Executive Director of the Wellfield Gardens.

## Church Community Services' Response Against Racism

We are shaken to the core because of senseless, horrific killings of our brothers and sisters of color. We recognize that racism is deeply embedded in the structure of our society. As an agency we are committed to educating our staff and volunteers about racism, bias and privilege. We are asking ourselves how we can promote justice: How can we more effectively prompt change? Who sits at our table? How can we create strong, inclusive partnerships? We encourage others to ask themselves similar questions.

Church Community Services mourns the loss of George Floyd's life and we condemn the acts of violence that took life from George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and countless others. We call for justice for people of color and for reforms that create a society where equality for all is a reality. We stand in solidarity with every community working to bring an end to police brutality, systemic racism, and the profound injustices people of color face in our communities.

Return Service Requested

**We can't serve without YOU.**

**Thank YOU for building  
positive change!**

**Follow Church Community Services  
and our Soup of Success program!**



### **Martin's Supermarkets Food Drive**

July 1—August 31 you can easily make donations to our food pantry by picking up a few non-perishable items while shopping at Martin's stores and putting the food in our barrels! Participating stores are located at:

200 N Nappanee  
CR 4 & Cassopolis

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\*

3800 E. Mishawaka Rd. / Concord  
3700 E. Bristol / Cobblestone Crossing

### **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!**

- Our Seed to Feed Program needs a volunteer to water the greenhouse raised beds every Sunday for 30 minutes. Timing is flexible.
- Our Food Pantry is in need of volunteers to assist the Food Services Director as we serve our guests Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.
- Our Food Pantry needs help in our warehouse with sorting and repackaging food and cleaning/organizing.
- Our Food Pantry needs people to deliver food to homebound individuals. Volunteers are needed the third Wednesday of each month to deliver food in their own car to approximately 6 people.
- Our Food Pantry needs people to drive 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.

If you are interested contact Mary Kneller at 295-3673 ext. 112 or [volunteer@churchcommunityservices.org](mailto: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