Oshkosh Area Community Pantry - Meeting the Basic Needs of Oshkosh Area Residents – 2013

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Situation: Since the Oshkosh Area Community Pantry opened its doors in April of 2009, the numbers of individuals in our community needing assistance in meeting their basic food needs has grown exponentially. Unemployment rates have remained high, nearly 1 in 5 children live in poverty, food share recipients have increased dramatically and the divide between “haves” and “have nots” has widened. While the number of households visiting the pantry has stabilized this past year, the number of household members has risen as individuals share residences and household size increases.

Response: Since it’s inception in 2007, this faculty member has been actively involved in the development and implementation of the pantry. The first Executive Director was hired in 2008 and remained in the position until fall September 2012. November 9th, 2012, this faculty member became the Chair of the pantry board. November 13th the new Executive Director gave notice, leaving the pantry November 23rd and the role of board chair quickly changed.

- Professional contributions of this faculty member to the board continue to include leading strategic planning processes, board orientation, policy development and food safety training.
- Leadership contributions this past year include working with an interim executive director to “keep things going”, securing a new executive director, staff negotiation, volunteer personnel issues, re-focusing the school back-pack program, re-alignment of the board and up-dating policies
- Volunteer contributions include work at the pantry and pantry fund raisers.

Results:

- 1,279,103 pounds of food distributed in 2013.
- Three mobile food pantries targeted low income schools and the area surrounding UW-Oshkosh.
- 2013 end of year statistic document the following impacts:
  - 2009 15,279 households served 2013/24,130 households served
  - 2009 37,470 people served, 2013/70,130 people served
  - 2009 577,898 pounds of food distributed, 2012/1,279,103 pounds of food distributed
  - 2011 250 backpacks 4 kids delivered weekly/2012 700 delivered weekly through the 2012-2013 school year
  - 2013/198 home deliveries of 5,299 pounds of food
- UW-Extension is an active partner on-site:
  - WNEP Educator introduced the Back Pack.
  - WNEP presents workshops on sight.
o 4-H club service projects (Birthday party kits and play area murals).
  o Vegetable and plant contributions via the Community Gardens and Master Gardeners.
  o VITA counseling and classes.

Evidence:
- Pantry usage is documented by volunteers and reported monthly to the Executive Director and Board.
- Pantry accomplishments, including UWEX contributions have been publicly acknowledged via media, area foundations and business.
- Financial and volunteer support for this effort indicated strong sustainable support for this effort.