



COURTESY OF THE GLEN ELLYN FOOD PANTRY

This rendering shows plans for the new home of the Glen Ellyn Food Pantry.

Glen Ellyn Food Pantry gets village approval for move to new home

BY KATLYN SMITH
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After four decades of sharing space with a downtown church, the Glen Ellyn Food Pantry will welcome the sight of home shelves sometime this fall.

The emptied cupboards will mean the pantry has packed up its operations for the move in its dream home, a new building beginning three years in the making.

Pantry leaders say they're "exceptionally close" to meeting a \$900,000 fundraising goal to turn a former church parsonage into its new headquarters.

And this week, village trustees unanimously approved plans to allow the pantry to renovate and relocate to the parsonage next to Faith Lutheran Church on Park Boulevard. The project will put a critical resource for food insecurity closer to the busy, even road corridor and public transit.

"We can't wait to get there," said Paula Nugent, president of the pantry's board of directors. "It's sort of been this far off dream, and now we just took a step toward that reality."

A champion of the dream, Nugent remained undeterred by the significant challenges of fundraising in a pandemic while demand at the pantry spiked during the crisis. The pantry saw an increase of 800 new clients in the last year and recently made Villa Park one of the 12 communities in its service area.

Of the new families coming in over the summertime, 63% lived in Glen Ellyn. Typically, the pantry distributes about a quarter of its food supply to village residents.

But at the same time, the nonprofit's leaders have been overwhelmed by a spirit of giving benefiting the capital campaign and pantry programs.

In 2020, pantry supporters held nearly 100 food drives — the most ever for an organization with origins going back to 1970. From October through December alone, nearly 23,000 pounds of food were donated.

Schools, churches, neighborhoods and businesses

combined their efforts to collect donations. The Glen Ellyn Park District and Glen Ellyn Police Department also have committed to hosting one food drive each month this year.

"It just shows the level of commitment the community has to the people who are in need," Nugent said. "We're very grateful for that."

The pantry has put out a plea for criminal assistance during what's usually a post-holiday period of donor fatigue. A list of most-needed items is updated every week on the pantry's website and Facebook page.

This week, Glenbard West and Glenbard South high schools are holding a food drive competition organized by the student councils at both campuses. Remote learners or nearby residents can purchase recommended items via a wish list on Amazon and have the food shipped to the schools.

"That whole spirit of competition can be a really fun way to get people excited and to collect even more food than might otherwise be collected," said Laura Ghez, the pantry's executive director.

The pantry, meanwhile, hopes to break ground in the spring and move in this fall at the new location.

Village approval of the project was also a condition of receiving a matching grant for the fundraising campaign to make the move, Nugent said.

Every donation to the capital campaign will be doubled thanks to a match of up to \$50,000 provided by the JCS Arts, Health and Education Fund of the DuPage Foundation.

"Hopefully, that will take us over the \$900,000," Nugent said.

In its original location, the pantry had outgrown its space inside Grace Lutheran Church. The new home allows the pantry to control operating hours and expand its reach. The pantry will lease the site for \$55 a year, a nod to the new address, 50 N. Park Blvd.

"It has been a very long, arduous process, but I will say very thorough," Nugent said. "We wanted to make sure that whenever we ended up that it could grow with us."

 DuPage County

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Glen Ellyn Food Pantry gets village approval for move to new home



Daily Herald, February 25, 2021

By Katlyn Smith (ksmith@dailyherald.com)

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