

## **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ):**

### **What is a Food Pantry?**

A food pantry is an emergency food distribution point supporting the local community. TVFP is a collaboration of individuals, churches, and community organizations responding to the hunger of the Twin Valley area. Conestoga Mennonite Church hosts/sponsors the TVFP.

Thoughts about food pantries – a food pantry cannot be the whim of any particular organization. Once it is in place and functioning, not to mention growing, it is the moral responsibility of the parent organization to see that it continues. Hunger is a daily, life and death issue for some clients. A food pantry cannot be seen as a “hobby” to those running it.

### **Local paper announcement – week of December 7, 2009:**

The Twin Valley Food Pantry will reopen in December 2009 and has begun its transition from the Morgantown Methodist Church to Conestoga Mennonite Church. Morgantown Methodist Church closed the food pantry after more than 15 years of servicing the local community. Conestoga Mennonite Church working with the pantry volunteers plans to continue stewarding this important community mission with the doors reopening on Tuesday, December 22<sup>nd</sup> at 5:00pm at Conestoga Mennonite Church. The Twin Valley Food Pantry was formed in 1994 as an outreach ministry with a mission to supply a food supplement to the community. The food pantry provides 5-7 days of food at its monthly distributions. Conestoga Mennonite Church is located 2779 Main Street (Highway 23), Morgantown, PA. For more information about the food pantry please contact Conestoga Mennonite Church at 610-286-9124. (Tricounty Record and Community Courier)

### **How do you qualify to use the Food Pantry?**

TVFP uses “The Emergency Food Assistance Program” (TEFAP) guidelines in accordance with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) policy, which prohibits discrimination ONLY on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability. Eligibility is based upon the income guidelines listed below:

<u>Household Size</u>	<u>Monthly Income</u>
1	\$1,354.00
2	\$1,821.00
3	\$2,289.00
4	\$2,756.00
5	\$3,224.00
6	\$3,691.00
7	\$4,159.00
8	\$4,626.00

For each additional family member add \$468.00.

*Effective July 1, 2009 to June 30, 2010. These are updated annually.*

The client will be required to sign a “Self Declaration of Need form” – declaring their income level and size of family. This is part of the registration process. Forms are in the back of this packet.

### Questions from the Client:

#### **How is food distributed?**

The Twin Valley Food Pantry uses a “Client Choice” program to deliver food. This program allows clients to choose most of their food items during the distribution process.

#### **What day of the month will distribution be?**

Distribution will continue to be on the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of every month. Hours of operations will be 5:00pm to 7:30pm.

#### **What will I have to do?**

Nothing really. You need to come to the distribution site prepared to pick out, bag, and carry your own items to your vehicle (volunteers will be available to assist those that need help). It is probably a good idea to leave small children at home if at all possible so that you can better focus when registering and selecting food.

### **What door will I use at Conestoga?**

All clients will enter and exit through the East Entrance of the Church - it will be clearly marked with a sign on distribution days. There is ample parking available near the entrance.

### **Do I have to stand in line?**

Yes, but only until the doors open. If the weather is bad – the doors will be opened at 4:30pm for clients to enter and wait – a waiting (sitting) area will be available.

### **Where do I go next?**

As you enter the building a number will be issued and you will be asked to take a seat. Indoor seating will be provided for you in order to make your wait more comfortable. The receptionist providing a number will also provide other information to include – “description of the process”, suggestion box “wish list” forms, and general pantry information.

### **How many numbers should I take?**

Only one number is permitted per family. In the event that you have permission to pick up another clients food; you will have to go through the entire process yourself and return again for the second pick-up. You will not be permitted to take more than one number at a time; this will hold up both the registration and pickup.

### **What if I am picking up food for another client?**

This will only be permitted under special circumstances, such as illness or hospitalization. State guidelines mandate that in such cases written permission be given from the client. A note will be necessary in all cases, with no exceptions. A signed, dated note must be submitted for each distribution stating who is to pick up the food and why.

### **How will I know when it is my turn?**

All clients will be registered one at a time. When your number is called, you will bring to the Registration Table: 1 form of identification – preferably with a picture (e.g. Drivers License) (your Social Security Card may not be used) and update any

personal information that has changed since your last visit. You will then receive a slip of paper stating the size and number of box(es) you will receive for shopping.

### **What if I am a new client?**

When your number is called, you will bring to the Registration table: 1 form of identification – preferably with a picture (e.g. Drivers License) (your Social Security Card may not be used); and fill out a card with your name, address, phone number, the size of your family and their ages. In addition, you will need to fill out a “Self Declaration of Need” form to verify that your income falls within the guidelines set by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture. You will then receive a slip of paper stating the size and number of the box(es) you will receive for shopping.

### **What happens next?**

After your registration has been completed you will proceed to the pick-up table. You will need to hand your slip of paper to the volunteer so that they can ready the box(es) for your shopping.

### **How are the box numbers determined?**

The number of boxes is based on the number in the family. All the boxes are standardized (milk crates) and the determination is based on 5-7 days of food distribution.

### **Will I be able to pick out my own items?**

Yes, this is what is called “Client Choice”. You will be on the front side of the long row of tables and volunteers will be on the opposite side. You will have complete view of all the items that are available to you. Simply tell each volunteer what item you want. In some cases, but not all, you will also be able to determine how many want. It will be necessary to limit certain items in order to guarantee that all clients can benefit from the pantry.

### **Will I be able to pick any cold or frozen food?**

Yes. There will be a display board listing all the cold and frozen foods available. This is a good example of two food categories that will have some limitations on quantities.

### **How much can I pick?**

You are limited to filling the box(es) with no items protruding above the top edge. It might be handy to scan the room while you are waiting so you have an idea what kind of items you might like. As time goes by you will learn how to “save” space for the items that suit your taste.

### **Will there be any item(s) that all the clients will receive regardless of their box size and number?**

Yes. Depending on availability. There may be “free” items offered, which will not be placed in the boxes and therefore, not take up valuable box space. Bread is an example of a “free” item because every family will receive this when available regardless of their box size or number. Another example will be seasonal vegetables and produce from our local gardens.

### **What happens after my box(es) is/are full?**

You will then move your box(es) to another area (at the end of the shopping area) specifically set up so that you may transfer your food from the box(es) to shopping bags which will be provided. (Volunteers will be available to assist you in bagging groceries).

### **What if I need more time when bagging?**

That is why this area is set up for nothing other than bagging. You may need to make more than one trip to the car if you are by yourself (Volunteers will be available to assist you to your car); however it may be to your advantage to bring someone with you if at all possible.

### **What if I am unable to carry the bags because of physical limitations?**

Volunteers will be available to assist you.

### **What if I have additional questions?**

Your questions, comments, or suggestions are always welcome. Your input is very important to us. You can either ask on distribution evening, call Twin Valley Food Pantry @ Conestoga 610-286-9124, or email: [hamoss@ptd.net](mailto:hamoss@ptd.net) or [camoss@ptd.net](mailto:camoss@ptd.net)

**What area is served by TVFP?**

TVFP was started with an aim of supporting the Twin Valley School District Area but has expanded into East Lancaster County also. If a client has to travel more than 10 miles to the pantry there may be a closer pantry to their home. This information can be obtained by calling:

Berks County: Greater Berks Food Bank 610-926-5802

Chester County: Chester County Cares 610-696-454

Lancaster County: PA Hunger Action Food Information 1-800-FOOD-997

**Do I have to belong to Church to use the Pantry?**

No. We will not turn anyone away. All are welcome.

**Question about Financial Donations:**

**If I want to give monetary donations, who do I make the check out to?**

Donations can be made out to the following:

Twin Valley Food Pantry (memo line of the check – Conestoga Mennonite Church)

Conestoga Mennonite Church (memo line of the check – TVFP)

**Are donations tax deductible?**

The TVFP Hosting organization Conestoga Mennonite Church meets all IRS Regulations for a 501-c-3 organization – qualifying donations for charitable tax deductions.

**Questions about Food Drives:**

**How do I or my organization donate food from our food drive?**

Food drives can be coordinated with Carol Moss @ 610-913-6645 or via email at [hamoss@ptd.net](mailto:hamoss@ptd.net) or [camoss@ptd.net](mailto:camoss@ptd.net) , Food Drives are typically coordinated

during seasonal events (e.g. Christmas or Easter) but we encourage organizations to sponsor food drives throughout the year.

### **What kinds of food do you need?**

Typically non-perishable foods (e.g. can foods – vegetables, canned meats, cereals) are always welcomed but some organizations try to meet other needs that may not be covered by Food Stamps. Such examples would be paper products (e.g. toilet paper, paper towels), personal hygiene items, and low-sugar products for diabetic clients. Baby products are also welcomed.

### **Where and when can we deliver food to Twin Valley Food Pantry?**

Food donations can be dropped off at Conestoga Mennonite Church during normal office hours – please call the office at 610-286-9124. Small donations (e.g. a few bags) can be dropped off at the office. Larger donations can be coordinated and delivered to the East Door of the Church (near the TVFP Stock Room). A mobile cart can be made available to assist in transporting your donation.

### **Questions about Volunteering:**

#### **Who do I contact to volunteer at the Food Pantry?**

Volunteering can be coordinated with Carol Moss @ 610-913-6645 or via email at [hamoss@ptd.net](mailto:hamoss@ptd.net) or [camoss@ptd.net](mailto:camoss@ptd.net) . Volunteering can be arranged throughout the year for individuals or organizations. Carol can also arrange for general communications – handouts, presentations, and arrange organizational talks for those groups interested in supporting TVFP.

#### **What kinds of volunteer positions and activities are available?**

Volunteer activities for the TVFP cover a wide range of activities:

- Running Food Drives

- Support Stocking the Food Pantry: usually occurs the weekend prior to distribution.
- Distribution Day – usually we need around 15-18 volunteers to help set up/tear down the Pantry and distribute food to clients
- Making trips to Greater Berks Food Banks to pick up Free Items the day before Distribution
- Special Events where we will stock the freezers (subdivide large quantities of goods into smaller packets)

### **Types of Volunteer Positions:**

- Stocking Pantry – requires lifting
- Distribution Day:
  - Running a single pantry – handing out food
  - Running the Registration Table
  - Running the Reception Desk – handing information and numbers
  - Helping Bag Groceries
  - Freezer – work the Freezer Pantry by handing out food
  - Caring out food to the Client's Cars
  - Stocking the rolling Pantries from the Stock Room as shelves diminish
  - Setup and Tear Down the Distribution Area

### **How often are volunteers needed?**

Volunteers are needed year round to support the TVFP. Most of the help is required toward the end of the month and on Distribution Day (4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of the Month starting around 3-4:00pm until 8:00pm)