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## **Pantries Supply Needed Food, All Year Round**

Our Thanksgiving tradition teaches us to be mindful of less-fortunate neighbors at this time of year. Fortunately, there are organizations and individuals who work to feed people all year round, but they need help 12 months out of the year.

"Since (the terrorism attacks of) 9-11, monetary and food donations have gone down and the number of our clients has gone up," said Ann Underhill, director of the Open Cupboard Food Pantry in High Bridge.

Barbara Petty, executive director of the Fisherman's Mark Food Pantry in Lambertville, agrees.

"In August, we served 119 families, 47 of those more than once. We need donations all year long but especially from June through the summer when supplies take a real nosedive. That's because children are home from school and are no longer getting school lunches. Now families have to provide that meal."

But seniors on fixed incomes are having real problems getting enough food, reported Ms. Petty.

"The need is much greater and is not likely to go away. Add to that the fact that we're experiencing the greatest dip in receiving, and you will understand our challenge."

Fisherman's Mark works with the help of four volunteers, one of which is there for a 40-hour week.

Fisherman's Mark has focused on good nutrition and serving folks with dietary restrictions. Ms. Petty said that seven years ago, physicians reported that many of their clients were having trouble getting food to match their medically restricted diets.

Fisherman's Mark began to reconfigure its offerings to meet the

needs, for instance, of people with diabetes, or who need low-salt, low-sugar, high-protein or vegetarian meals. Kosher foods and baby food and formulas are also available.

The pantry also decided to have fewer health and beauty products to meet more specialized nutritional needs.

The Junior League of Princeton has come in to teach pantry clients how to jazz up the humdrum appeal of items like beans, and less common foods. Classes teach people how to enhance these foods and send clients home with the supplies, know-how and recipes from the class.

"It's a creative approach that makes our pantry work. It helps people without cooking skills, especially older widowed men who no longer have a mate to prepare meals. The menus are developed around food that the pantry supplies. One of our volunteers is a man who cooks," said Ms. Petty. "It's an icebreaker for those men to have another man who can cook to teach them."

The pantry has five freezers to keep frozen vegetables and fruit, and so can take frozen items from donors. It also accepts donations of new, convenient cook equipment like mini-microwave ovens, toaster ovens, crockpots and electric fry pans to help less prosperous clients have a means to cook at home. Some live in motels or places without kitchens.