R.O.I is G.O.O.D.

On Wall Street, a 346 percent rate of return is the stuff of myth. For the Woodlawn Chapel Coupon Club, it’s just another day at the grocery store.

Since the launch of the club in 2011, members of the Woodlawn Chapel Presbyterian Church—led by Karin Bentele and Circle volunteers Sue and Phil Hoffman—have parlayed $26,075.70 of donated cash into a whopping $90,176.88 worth of groceries and personal care goods to help feed and care for clients of Circle of Concern.

“When we find a great deal, when all the pieces come together,” says Karin. “We call it a ‘God moment.’ We’re doing what we’re supposed to be doing. And hey, nobody else would get this excited about finding Hamburger Helper on special!”

Grocery cart caravans full of cereal boxes, canned soup and bars of soap get varied reactions. A man passing by asked what was going on and then handed over $10 to buy more food for Circle. A woman asked and, with tearful thanks, said she is a Circle client who appreciates the Club’s work. Says Karin, “The comments we get, and the donations, they motivate us to do more and better.”

If you want to help the Coupon Club stock Circle’s shelves, send coupons for food and personal care items to: Coupon Club, Woodlawn Chapel, 16520 Clayton Road, Wildwood, MO 63011.

If you want to help the Coupon Club stock Circle’s shelves, send coupons for food and personal care items to: Coupon Club, Woodlawn Chapel, 16520 Clayton Road, Wildwood, MO 63011.

The Club also accepts donations, 100 percent of which go towards putting the coupons to work for Circle. Thank you for supporting this work or exploring the value of couponing for good!
Sugar & Spice...

Ask anybody what they love the most about fall and the holidays, and you can be pretty sure that one item mentioned will be the scents. Autumn leaves, fire pits, the baking that signals the season – these and more stimulate that most evocative sense of smell.

The spicy, warm scent of baking is a special favorite here at Circle, and we want to be sure the families we serve can enjoy it just as we do. For that reason, we launched a special project for our Thanksgiving Basket program and invite you to help us provide baking bags to our client families this November.

In 2016, members of Bethel United Methodist Church came to our door with 202 bags full of basics for holiday baking, and Salem United Methodist provided 100. Last year, Bethel was back with bags, and Woodlawn Chapel and the Women’s Relief Society of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints joined in. Each year, we shared the bags at the Thanksgiving Baskets event until they were gone. This year, we hope to have 500 bags ready to provide one for each and every family.

Are you part of a group that could compile baking bags before November 16? Costing an estimated $15 to $17 each, the bags should contain, at a minimum, the following items:
- Flour
- Sugar
- Vegetable Oil
- Baking Soda
- Baking Powder
- Vanilla Extract
- One Spice, such as cinnamon

If you or a group you’re part of would like to give a gift of holiday baking, please email Michelle, our Pantry Director, at michelle@circleofconcern.org. It will spice up the holidays for so many families!

You Deserve the Credit!

Gifts of money and food to Circle of Concern made by December 31 this year can earn Missouri Food Pantry Tax Credits that directly reduce your MO income tax bill. This is a 50 percent credit program up to $2,500 in credits for up to $5,000 in donations. File jointly? The cap climbs to up to $5,000 in credits for up to $10,000 in gifts.

Not only is it an easy-to-access credit program; when you make a cash gift of $250 or more, we will proactively mail a signed, verified state form directly to you, ready to attach to your 2017 MO tax return by April 15!

Contact Juliet at 636.861.2623 x106 for info.

Dreams Come True Through Holiday Adoption!

One of Circle’s most popular programs is up and running, and the time is right for you to take part in it!

Holiday Adoption pairs our client families with sponsors – individuals, businesses, churches, families and others in our community. The sponsors then shop for each member of the client family via a Wish List. In 2017, nearly 500 families were adopted; in 2018, we expect to serve nearly 600 families.

Would you like to adopt one or more families? Visit our website, circleofconcern.org, to learn more about important dates and gift limits. Click the link provided to give us your information; clients and sponsors then will be matched up starting the end of October.

Thank you for making holiday dreams come true for our Circle families!
A Note from Juliet

You should see Circle this time of year. The holiday program committees for Thanksgiving Baskets and Holiday Adoption are working at a fever pitch to make sure we have turkeys, sponsors, bicycles, canned pumpkin, dates and times and so much more.

This year is especially lively because, just days ago, we launched the new Client Choice model of food delivery in our pantry. Up until now, we’ve pre-bagged soups, vegetables and other items without knowing a family’s tastes and dietary needs. With Choice, our clients will walk through the reconfigured pantry to “shop” for their favorites among the foods we share.

Yes, you should see Circle. Many people can’t come to our home in Valley Park, though. That’s where I come in. While my colleagues here are often in the thick of Circle action, my native habitat here is in the back of the building in front of a computer screen. Most of the time, I sit at a computer doing one thing – I tell the story of Circle.

Through this newsletter, in funding proposals, in visits with current and prospective friends, it’s my job to show what we do and why we are worth your investment in our work. I’m fortunate that we have a great story to tell. And I want to tell you one about three visits.

While setting up the pantry for Client Choice, we planned ahead and closed our doors so the heavy lifting could be done. During that time, though, three different people came to us needing emergency food. A woman had lost her husband, her job and her health, leaving her with nothing except a jar of peanut butter, which she’d finished off three days before. A man and his daughter came to us, having just moved to the area two days before with a hope for a job but little else. A woman came to us with her responsibility of caring for her grandchildren after the murder of her son weighing on her like a blanket.

Each of these people is the story of Circle. The care our volunteers and staff offer these and all our clients is a story I’m proud to tell. Thank you for always listening.

---

We Hear in the Community!

We often visit with local churches, schools and other groups to talk about Circle and the families we serve (Would you like us to visit your group? Email us at circle@circleofconcern.org!). We tell a lot of stories and answer a lot of questions. These are the top three things we hear:

1. **There’s a food pantry in West County?!**
   The short answer is Yes! In this prosperous, stable part of the St. Louis area, Circle shares food with approximately 600 families each month—nearly 2,000 people—and they come from just about every ZIP code in the area.

2. **What do you need the most?**
   In addition to our common calls for foods like canned chicken, cereal and jelly, the big answer is that we need you to tell at least three other people you know that you’re a friend of Circle. Our name is apt; to continue to serve families in need right here in our neighborhoods, we always need to grow our circle of friends.

3. **I needed your help once...**
   Often said quietly, after the presentation, away from the crowd, this is commonly shared when we give a talk. We’ve been approached by former clients at churches, schools, civic groups, even a meeting of local financial professionals. What they confirm is that hard times can befall anyone, and we’re so glad that Circle is here to help when they do.

---

Holding a Thanksgiving food drive? Visit circleofconcern.org to schedule a food pickup!
We share many donations with our clients:
• Food, Canned and Packaged
• Fresh Garden Produce
• Dry Pet Food, Litter
• New School Supplies
• New Blankets, Hats, Gloves

Donations are accepted:
Mon, Tue, Fri ................. 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.
Wednesday .................. 9 a.m. - 7 p.m.
Thursday ..................... 9 a.m. - noon
Saturday ..................... 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Important Dates:
October 24 Notification Needed for Holiday (pre-Thanksgiving) Food Drives
October 26 Deadline for Commitments to be Holiday Adoption Sponsor
November 20 Genesis Jazz Benefit Concert with Layafette High School Jazz Band
November 22-24 Circle closed for Thanksgiving
December 17 Board Meeting at Circle

STAFF DIRECTORY

Cyndi Miller, Executive Director ............................................. cyndi@circleofconcern.org ....................... ext. 117
Juliet Holden, Senior Director ................................................... juliet@circleofconcern.org ................................ ext. 106
Michelle Lepak, Pantry Director .............................................. michelle@circleofconcern.org ....................... ext. 107
Stephanie Moreland, Volunteer/Special Events Director .......... stephanie@circleofconcern.org .................. ext. 113
Niki Vandable, Client Services Director .................................. niki@circleofconcern.org ......................... ext. 108

LIKE US on Facebook and visit us online at www.circleofconcern.org.