More Than Food

As the tagline under the Circle of Concern logo says, “Feeding Families is Just the Beginning.” Normally in conversation, that means that, in addition to our food pantry, Circle offers our clients a wide range of services ranging from crisis financial assistance to job mentoring to scholarship to Thanksgivingfeasts and more. Sometimes, it means something as simple as deodorant.

In addition to food, our clients can choose personal care items when they visit the pantry. This is critical because, if a client is enrolled in the food stamp, or SNAP, program, those dollars can’t be used for such everyday items as toilet paper, soap and, yes, deodorant. Being able to pick up these hygiene items at Circle meets an important need.

Most of the personal care items we share come from local Girl Scout troops and the April Showers program. Scouts will put a plastic bag on your door on or about April 6 this year, and they’ll pick them up on April 13, hopefully full of new hygiene items you can share. This HUGE collection provides most of the personal care items we share in a whole year.

Other groups donate these items, too. Just two of the many are Delta Tau, a social sorority that’s known around Circle as the Toilet Paper Ladies, and the Des Peres Rotary Club. The Rotary has held a Daily Essentials drive for several years, backing up to our warehouse with a mountain of paper and personal care goods.

And then there is you, our cherished friend. Over the past few months, we have run short on deodorant and included it on our list of Current Needs. From two nearly-empty boxes, our supply of this critical care items has grown to 14 full milk crates, thanks to our readers who respond with such generosity. Many thanks to you.
State of the Circle

Dear Friends,

On a regular basis, the board of directors gathers to review the business of Circle of Concern and set the direction we, as an organization, want to go. The first meeting of the year is, historically, a lively one that welcomes new board members and sets our gaze on the year ahead. This year was no exception.

As I prepared a 2018 recap to get us started, how much Circle accomplished last year with your help struck me. First, we launched the Client Choice pantry service model. From the first client who “shopped” and walked a little taller with the dignity of choosing her own flavors and favorites, we knew we had done the right thing. We initiated a three-to-five year strategic plan to guide our efforts. Working with the Scholarship Central website to streamline our process of helping young people advance their dreams was a perfect collaboration. Improvements to our facility make our entire operation flow more smoothly. Hundreds more families experienced the joy of the season through Holiday Adoption. By year’s end, we added more than 50 new volunteers to our ranks. And so much more....

I feel great pride in what we accomplished last year (including all that is demonstrated in our Circle By The Numbers here!), but it’s a new year, and Circle will move forward with efforts to continually look to best practices to serve the families who rely on us. We will steadfastly steward your investment in us and watch food prices for the fresh, wholesome foods we are committed to sharing. We will partner with others when possible to best use all of our resources – human and financial.

As anyone who knows me can attest, I can—and do—talk for hours about my affection for, and commitment to, this wonderful organization. My first volunteer job here (and my favorite, truth be told!) is that of Intake Volunteer. Sitting down with clients who humble themselves to walk through our door for help is the most meaningful thing I do, and it’s at the core of why Circle even exists. I recently visited with a young single mom whose life took such a dizzying downward turn after a divorce. To see her courage to ask for help, and to be able to share food and job mentorship and programs for her daughter and more...our interaction changed elements of her life for the better, and I can tell you – the experience changed me, too. YOU make that change possible. YOU, through your belief and investment in us, remind our clients that there is help and compassion available here. On behalf of every family that comes through our doors, as well as the volunteers and staff who work every day to serve, thank you.

Lana Biondo
Board President

Circle by the Numbers

2018 Program Numbers

3,475 people (unduplicated) were fed throughout the year from 1,217 families (unduplicated)
758 Kid Bags fed child-friendly foods to more than 1,100 students through the summer break
313 families received in total $74,833 in Crisis Financial Assistance to keep the lights on and more
25 young people received college scholarships to set them on a productive path and
15 adult clients received in total $13,817 to improve their job skills and prospects
112 campers learned, played and grew from summer enrichment camperships
630 kiddos from kindergarten to college were outfitted with paper, pens and more at Back To School
368 children felt extra special on their special day, thanks to Birthday Club
405 family tables were topped with Thanksgiving feasts
528 families—more than 1,600 individuals!—were adopted by 285 sponsors via Holiday Adoption

Books to Share?

Our take-a-book lobby shelves for clients are low on new and gently-used books for pre-K children; do you have some to share? Books are accepted during the Donation hours on the back page of this newsletter.
Snow Day

Snow days for students are practically mandates for sleeping in, building snow forts, watching TV and drinking cocoa. For Thomas, a young friend of Circle, a recent snow day inspired something else. Without being prompted, Thomas went to work shoveling snow for several neighbors and used his earnings to buy food for Circle clients. His dad expressed such pride in his son’s care for the needs of others and then laughed, “The only driveway Thomas didn’t get to was ours!”

Thank you for your generous spirit, Thomas. You’ve earned some cocoa!

Once a Circle Person...

Circle’s former Pantry Director, Sada Lindsey, stopped by with daughter Poppy delivering a generous donation of food and personal care items. They and some of their friends collected the items out of concern for government workers furloughed during the recent government shut-down. Thank you Sada, Poppy and pals! Once a Circle person, always a Circle person!

Recurring Gifts

Do you donate to Circle now and then throughout the year? Why not consider setting up a simple recurring monthly or quarterly gift and know that your donation will help families throughout the year? Visit circleofconcern.org, click Donate Now and choose Recurring Gift. No matter how busy you get, you’ll know that you’re investing in services for your neighbors who need a little help. Thank you!

Golf Registration Now Open!

The 15th Annual Circle of Concern Golf Tournament—presented by Orthopedic Specialists and hosted by St. Mark Presbyterian Church—is fast approaching. For the first time ever, all players can register online and reserve foursomes early before the slate is full!

Aberdeen Golf Club is a Scottish-style links course, suited to every level of player. Fold in great food, games, prizes, and silent auction, and you have a day on the course to relish.

Visit circleofconcern.org/events to register your foursome, as an individual or to become an event sponsor. For more information, contact Cyndi Miller at 636.861.2623 x117.

**RETRACTION**

We made a mistake! In our January newsletter, we wrote about making Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCD) as part or all of Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs) from Individual Retirement Accounts once you turn 70 ½ years of age. We erroneously said that those QCDs must be made before you use any of your RMD for yourself. We have learned that you can make a QCD at any point in the year, even if you’ve already taken some of a RMD for your own use. That’s good news; you can make a QCD throughout the year!
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.

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**Board of Directors:**

- **Lana Biondo**  
  PRESIDENT
- **Amy Vollmer**  
  VICE PRESIDENT
- **Michael Bauer**  
  TREASURER
- **Dolores Rodenberg**  
  SECRETARY
- **Charlotte Bukowski**
- **Steuen Ernst**
- **Frank Haase**
- **Allison Loue**
- **Joshua Owings**
- **Jason Sinclair**
- **Carol Vandable**
- **Cindy Wolk**

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**Important Dates:**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<td>March 7</td>
<td>Circle Day at El Toluco, Manchester</td>
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<td>April 2</td>
<td>Circle Night at Dewey’s Pizza, Ellisville</td>
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<td>April 13</td>
<td>Girl Scouts “April Showers” Personal Care Drive</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 19-20</td>
<td>Circle closed for Easter Weekend</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 11</td>
<td>Letter Carrier’s “Stamp Out Hunger” Food Drive</td>
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<td>May 20</td>
<td>15th Annual Circle Golf Tournament</td>
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<td>September 13</td>
<td>Circle Trivia Night</td>
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**“LIKE US” on Facebook and visit us online at [www.circleofconcern.org](http://www.circleofconcern.org).**

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- **Stephanie Moreland**, Volunteer/Special Events Director  
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