Cereal Celebration!

It started with a barren shelf. Our stock of one of our most popular and satisfying pantry items—cereal—was down to a total of ZERO boxes. We needed to restock and fast! For the first time, on a recent Friday afternoon, we shared a Facebook post featuring a picture of the bare cereal shelf and a request… along with a link to our Amazon Smile Wish List.

Within minutes, responses started flooding in. “Amazon will deliver 20 boxes on Monday” and “My neighbors are bringing boxes of cereal to my front porch; I’ll drop it off tomorrow” and “I don’t do online, so I’ll be there in a few days after I get to [the big box store]” – these were just a few of the comments. In addition, our post was getting shared over and over again, spreading the word about Circle’s need. By Saturday morning, friends started dropping off boxes by the carload.

By Monday morning, we graduated to cereal by the truckload. At 8 a.m., Amazon driver, Jerome, arrived with 210 boxes. Not boxes of cereal; we received 210 large packing boxes – 1,727 pounds – filled with boxes of cereal! Through the week, more Amazon deliveries brought more packages, each filled with more breakfast cereal, along with other Wish List items like jelly. Since one of the measures of happiness in the food pantry is how full the shelves are, you can be sure that we were positively joyful at the mountain of cereal boxes in the warehouse!

The take-away of this story, though, goes far beyond Raisin Bran and Honey Nut Cheerios. While we appreciate our cereal, we truly celebrate our community. At the first word of a need in the food pantry, our friends responded with remarkable generosity to support their neighbors who rely on Circle.

Thank you for checking out our Wish List on Amazon, for meeting a critical need so quickly and for joining the circle of generous friends who care.
State of the Circle

It’s been a long winter, with no guarantees that the gray sky and cold are completely gone, despite what the groundhog said, but here at Circle of Concern, we’re in growth-mode!

I’ve begun this year as president of our Board of Directors after several years serving the Board—this organization—as secretary and then treasurer. In those roles, I’ve supported our programs that impact our clients’ lives every day. I’m honored to be in this position to continue to support the organization’s efforts and watch them grow.

This is our third year of our multi-year strategic plan, and it promises to advance our efforts to meet our clients where they are. Our priorities call for us to (1) ensure our programs are meeting the needs of those who come to us for help, (2) to fortify strategic partnerships with other organizations and connect our clients to them and (3) to keep an eye on best practices to deliver the best services to meet the complex needs of our clients. To accomplish these things this year, we are rethinking our case management model of service to fully enlist our clients in implementing their own solutions. We are also continuing our scholarship program to give more clients access to education that can change their lives. We are looking at our facility (and our newly acquired space behind us) to explore ways to better use the space we have. These efforts and more will grow our impact and are good news for our clients!

Along with the good news, we will also keep an eye on challenges ahead. Food prices can be volatile; our frugal shopping and strong relationships with vendors will be critical. Policy decisions made by people unconnected with Circle can impact the number of people who will rely on our services or the donations we receive that fund our work.

Remember – Circle feeds approximately 2,200 people per month, provides Thanksgiving baskets to hundreds of families every year, camperships to our clients’ children in the summer, facilitates the “adoption” of more than 500 families during the holiday season, just to name a few of our many programs. We rely on the hundreds of committed volunteers who are the “boots on the ground” that assist and enrich the lives of our neighbors who need help from Circle. We also depend on our small, experienced and excellent staff, our Board and our donors and friends to make it happen.

If you’re not currently a volunteer or donor, would you like to be?! Consider calling and making an appointment to check out what’s going on. I think you’ll be pleased with what you see!

Michael Bauer
President
March 2020

Circle by the Numbers

2019 Program Numbers

3,633 people (unduplicated) were fed throughout the year from
1,283 families (unduplicated)
822 Kid Bags fed more than 1,000 children through the summer
388 families received in total $66,589 in Financial Assistance to keep the lights on and more
29 young people received college scholarships to set them on a productive path and
23 adult clients received scholarships for job certifications and other programs to improve their income potential
119 campers learned, played and grew from summer enrichment camperships
757 kiddos were outfitted with paper, pens and more at Back To School
410 children felt extra special on their special day, thanks to Birthday Club
421 tables were topped with Thanksgiving feasts
597 families—1,807 individuals—experienced a warm holiday season via Holiday Adoption

Dine-To-Donate at

El Toluco Taqueria in Ballwin has gained a reputation for authentically delicious food from the El Toluca and Tlaxcala regions of Mexico. It is also getting a reputation for their civic generosity, thanks to their 2nd annual Dine-To-Donate event benefiting Circle of Concern.

Please stop by El Toluco for lunch or dinner on Friday, March 13. A percentage of every sale of traditional, delicious tacos or tortas will be given to Circle, and no flyer is required for the donation.

Plan to stop by for a meal, or two, on March 13 to give deliciously!
A Note from Cyndi

Circle’s Reach is Far-Reaching

I have shared previously that Circle of Concern has joined the St. Louis County Continuum of Care – a coalition of agencies that serves those experiencing homelessness and those at risk of becoming homeless. The coalition meets monthly at The Crossings at Northwest in St. Ann, MO (the former Northwest Plaza shopping mall.)

At the February meeting, I was asked to give a presentation about Circle of Concern. After my ten-minute talk, there were a few polite questions from guests seated around the room. We were just about to move to the next agenda item when one woman began waving her hand to speak.

She then told a story about how, when floodwaters damaged her home a few years ago, Circle had been there to help (during a flood crisis, we provide one-time food assistance and cleaning supplies to anyone impacted by flooding in the region). It was a heartfelt thank you followed by a round of applause from everyone in the room.

I told her that I was glad we were able to help, and I thanked her for sharing her story. I remember feeling so proud of “our Circle” and marveling that even here at a meeting in North County, a good distance from our own service area, Circle’s impact was evident.

I hope you feel the same sense of pride, as you are very much a part of the work we do to help families in crisis. Whether you are a donor, a community partner or a volunteer – we thank you, and we applaud you!

When You Care Enough...

Jan’s Hallmark Store in Ballwin, along with the members of its Ornament Dreamers Keepsake Ornament Club, are friends to Circle throughout the year as they collect food for the pantry. In recent months, however, they sent us so much more than their very best!

First, the store and the Club promoted and contributed to a large food drive that netted a pile of the food items we really needed by Thanksgiving. The store also launched a four-month “Round Up At the Register” event. Shoppers were invited to round their purchases up to the nearest dollar to support Circle of Concern.

By the end of the Round Up, the store and its customers contributed a whopping $3,101! Thank you so much!

In addition to their wonderful support of our organization, this colorful philanthropic effort also garnered a very special prize for the Club. For being such good neighbors to Circle, the store has won coveted visits from two world-class artists at an upcoming ornament event. Visit the store today to thank them for their support and to learn more about this one-of-a-kind event!

In Search of Sponsorships!

We are seeking five Go Orange sponsors for the 16th Annual Circle of Concern Charity Golf Tournament on Monday, May 18 at the popular Aberdeen Golf Club. The Go Orange sponsorship at the $3,000 level includes a player foursome – perfect for impressing potential clients, family or friends who enjoy a day on the links. A premium swag bag, signage and special recognition for your generous support round out the package.

Hydration, Game and Hole sponsorships are also available.

See all sponsorship levels or register to play at circleofconcern.org/Events/Our Events.

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...our scholarship recipients see for their futures

1. “I’ve been in foster care for almost eight years...I want to be an educator for the people who have narrow thoughts and show them we’re all people.” - William

2. “I hope to be one of the first women in my family to graduate high school and go to college. Dentistry is what I have the passion for. I want people to feel confident in their smile.” - Halima

3. “The struggles of my life don’t define me; it’s what I make of them that does...I want to make a difference. I want to major in social work so I can be a role model for kids, too, and show them it doesn’t matter how bad your situation is. If you want to make something of yourself, then anything is possible.” - Tiana
State of the Circle
2020 Edition

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:

March 13  El Toluco Mexican Restaurant Benefit (all day)

April 10-11  Circle closed for Easter holiday

May 9  ‘Stamp Out Hunger’ Letter Carrier’s Food Drive Collection Event

May 18  16th Annual Charity Golf Tournament at Aberdeen Golf Club

September 18  Harvest Moon Trivia Night at Andre’s West in Fenton

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

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