

AROUND THE Circle Newsletter

Circle of Concern
Food Pantry



Our Faithful Friends

You may have already heard this from me or another Circle staffer, but the message bears repeating – *we are so fortunate to have the support of our faith-based community.* From our beginnings, the local church community has sought to be a support to struggling households in our area, and it was their “working together and pooling resources” that launched Circle of Concern in 1967. Fifty-five years later, they are still asking, “How can we help,” – and then doing just that.

The ways they lean in and step up are many. Please look inside at some of the ways local houses of worship are helping. We have celebrated these and other partners in previous issues and in our social media; and there will be more to come. Our partners mean so much to us!

Many congregations conduct large annual food drives or year-round collections; they box up, and then deliver holiday staples like cranberry sauce, stuffing mix and turkey gravy; they ensure dignity through their contributions of bathroom tissue and hygiene products. They grow, then deliver the most beautiful garden vegetables. They contribute new box fans and small air conditioners in the summer months, and new space heaters in the winter, supporting our elderly neighbors in need.

Some generously give cash and gift cards throughout the year – or award an annual grant to support the purchase of fresh foods, scholarships, or another valued program.

They help to staff the annual “Stamp out Hunger” Letter Carriers Food Drive event at the Ballwin Post Office. Others have hosted drive-thru food drives at Circle, drawing donations right to our doorstep.

Some have organized volunteer fairs and community meetings, and ensured that Circle had a seat at the table. One of our founding churches is hosting its annual charity golf tournament on May 22, generating unrestricted dollars to support Circle’s many services. That event has raised awareness, funds and good will for 17 years! Another hosts an annual, highly-anticipated Christmas tree lot, and we are a fortunate recipient of the lot’s proceeds.

“We are so fortunate to have the support of our faith-based community.”

Current Needs:

Several items are **URGENTLY NEEDED**. We have no back stock at all on:

- Potato Mixes, Rice Mixes
- Dried Beans
- Pasta Sauce
- Cereal (especially kid-friendly)
- Snacks (with portion packs)
- Dinner “Helpers”
- Diapers (Size 6)
- Feminine Incontinence Products



*Feeding Families is
Just the Beginning*

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State of the Circle

Dear Friends,

Preparing this letter as the president of Circle's Board of Directors is a head-turning exercise. I've looked back to recall challenges raised and met AND turned to squint into the future to envision how meeting those challenges will make our services more valuable to the families we serve. From my vantage point, the view is—and will continue to be—a clear, shining one.

2022 began just as 2021 ended, with our clients capably served curbside. Intrepid volunteers braved rain, cold and heat to safely deliver critical groceries to our clients' vehicles. Other teams worked the phones to keep clients engaged with our other programs, such as emergency financial assistance; a lifeline for families still trying to recover from economic turbulence and rising prices. As camperships gradually opened, a committee ensured families could send children to their chosen summer enrichment opportunities. Scholarships for young people and adults, gift cards to assist with school supplies and so much more remained active throughout the year.

All the while, our staff and board worked hard to prepare for our clients' return to the building. Recruitment and an intricate schedule of trainings prepared returning and new volunteers for reopening. Health protocols were established to ensure that everyone in our building remained safe. Vendors and other partners were lined up to assure a seamless transition back to normal.

Our board and staff also made plans for the long-term strength of Circle, itself. One of the most dynamic strategic planning sessions I've ever been a part of produced a new five year roadmap for this organization. I wake each day with confidence that Circle is in strong committed hands that will serve our community each day and as long as needed.

And that's what it's all about. By the close of the summer, we were ready to reopen our building. As clients came in and shopped for carts full of their favorite items – their own choices – we witnessed tears of happiness as they regained control over the foods they would take home. We saw relief ease faces that were lined with the worry of the hard road of the past few years.

YOU are the bearers of that relief. YOU, through your belief and investment in us, make our work possible and remind our clients that a clear way forward is possible. On behalf of every family that comes through our doors, thank you for helping to clear that path.



Dolores Rodenberg
Board President

Circle by the Numbers in 2022

3,170 people from 1,086 families (unduplicated) were fed throughout the year.

13,897 volunteer hours by the world's best volunteers made our work possible.

960 Summer Kid Food disbursements fed child-friendly foods to more than 1,100 students through summer break.

466 families received in total \$120,190 in Crisis Financial Assistance to keep the lights on and more.

22 young people received college scholarships to set them on a productive path, and 8 adult clients received funds for education to improve job skills and employment prospects.

167 children learned, played and grew from summer enrichment camperships.

629 kiddos from kindergarten to college were outfitted with paper, pens and much more through Back To School.

390 children felt extra special on their special day, thanks to Birthday Club.

405 family tables were topped with Thanksgiving feasts.

646 families—2,017 individuals!—were adopted by 306 sponsors via Holiday Adoption.

Faithful Friends, *cont. from page 1*

I won't forget that during the early weeks of the pandemic, one church partner phoned to ask, "How can we help you?" – They listened intently and followed up with technical coaching, volunteers to staff our pantry, and food to stock our shelves.

As our community grows and we form new friendships, we see engagement and gifts from area mosques, temples and synagogues; and we welcome those partnerships too. Working together is the only way to effectively tackle the needs of our client families. We can all contribute in some way. To our faithful friends, know that we see your many gifts, and we are grateful – as are the families we serve.

Gratefully,



Cyndi Miller
Executive Director

Golf Foursomes are Sold Out!

144 golfers will be on the course at Aberdeen Golf Club on May 22....And each will see signage for our favorite sponsors!



It's not too late to support this tournament—proceeds of which benefit Circle's food pantry and other programs—with a tee sponsorship. The cost is only \$150 and features promotion of your business, club, team or family with signage at every tee box on the course.

Visit circleofconcern.org or scan with your phone to sponsor online!



MO Food Pantry Tax Credit and Donor-Advised Funds

The Food Pantry Tax Credit program is a wonderful win-win for our donors; gifts of food or cash help stock our food pantry shelves AND can earn our donors tax credits equal to up to 50 percent of their donation. A reminder - gifts given via a donor-advised (DA) fund do NOT qualify for these tax credits, as the gifts are not coming directly from the individual, but from the entity holding the DA fund. Please contact juliet@circleofconcern.org for more information.

Amazon Smile Notice

The Amazon Smile donation program that donated to Circle every time you ordered on that website ended, as of February 20. The good news is that Amazon is still a great way to support Circle simply by buying critical foods from our Wishlist. Visit circleofconcern.org homepage and click on our Wishlist link. Thank you!

It's Scholarship Season!

Circle offers scholarships to college, trade education and other educational opportunities to low-income students in our service area. The application process is simple and the deadline is June 23, 2023 at 3 p.m.!

1. Visit myscholarshipcentral.org.
2. Create a free account and sign-in.
3. Complete the Scholarship Central General Application, which will give you access to MULTIPLE scholarship opportunities specific to your interests, based off the application information you provide.
4. Scroll through suggested opportunities and complete the Circle of Concern Student Scholarship by the June 23 deadline.
5. Decisions will be announced by early August.

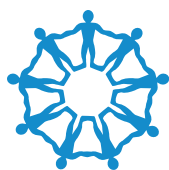
Good luck!

Friends From Church

We thank all the houses of worship who mobilize their resources, good will and compassion for their neighbors. We are proud to partner with you in this sacred work. Here's a very small snapshot of your efforts:

- Ministry groups of Manchester United Methodist are many, as are the ways they assist Circle, including holiday gifts from the bicycle ministry, gift cards from the chancel choir and proceeds from the Christmas tree lot, and much more.
- St. Mark Presbyterian Church is gearing up as hosts of the 17th Annual Circle Golf Tournament, which has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for Circle's programs, in addition to other support.
- Congregation Shaare Emeth has donated funds to support our programs, and the United Hebrew Congregation hosted local projects by Mazon: A Jewish Response to Hunger, a national organization fighting to end hunger among people of all faiths.
- The Coupon Club at Woodlawn Chapel deserves its own reality television show, using power-couponing to buy tens of thousands of pounds of pantry food and personal care items.
- Campuses of The Crossing have held food collections and on-site food drives, mustered teams of volunteers to work at our facility, and made monetary gifts to sponsor holiday programs.
- St. Vincent DePaul at Valley Park's Sacred Heart Catholic Church, St. Paul in Fenton and St. Joseph Parish in Ballwin are partners-in-care, helping our clients access assistance beyond what Circle provides.
- The youth group of the Hindu Temple of St. Louis collected a full cart of critically-needed food items as a service project.
- Trinity Lutheran, St. John UCC-Manchester, Fellowship of Wildwood, Bethel UMC, Living Word UMC and Parkway UCC tag-teamed to fill boxes with Thanksgiving foods for hundreds of families.
- King of Kings Lutheran is hosting a drive-through food drive at Circle this month.
- Lord of Life's "Mountain of Food" food drive is summer legend.





Circle of Concern FOOD PANTRY

112 St. Louis Ave.
Valley Park, MO 63088
Address Service Requested

NONPROFIT
AUTO
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
ST LOUIS, MO
PERMIT NO. 3252

Our Faithful
Friends!

Board of Directors:

Dolores Rodenberg
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Mark Barbee
TREASURER

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Brandi Hamm
Edie Quick

We share many donations with our clients:

- Food, Canned and Packaged
- Fresh Garden Produce
- Dry Pet Food, Litter
- New Blankets, Hats, Gloves

Donations are accepted:

Mon, Tues, Fri 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.
Wed 9 a.m. - 6:30 p.m.
Thurs 9 a.m. - 12 p.m.
Sat 9 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Your monetary gift or food donation
can qualify for MO Food Pantry
Tax Credits. Contact [juliet@](mailto:juliet@circleofconcern.org)
circleofconcern.org to find out more.

Important Dates:

April 7	Circle Closed for Spring Holiday
April 29	April Showers Collection by the Girl Scouts of Eastern Missouri
May 13	Stamp Out Hunger Letter Carriers Food Drive Pick-Up
May 22	17th Annual Golf Tournament Aberdeen in Eureka
May 27, 29	Circle Closed for Memorial Day
October 20	Harvest Moon Trivia Andre's West in Fenton



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

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