Branches on the Vine

News from the Archdiocese of Hartford · December 14 - 20, 2024

HAMDEN FOOD PANTRY PROVIDES ASSISTANCE FOR INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES IN NEEED

A homeless woman with a shopping cart was sitting in the back of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church in Hamden at morning Mass. When Father Christopher Tiano, pastor, spotted her, he asked Lorraine DeNicola, coordinator of a food pantry, to help.

People who are suffering from food insecurity can pick up essentials on the campus of Blessed Sacrament Church in Hamden, part of St. Paul VI Parish, on the second and fourth Saturdays of the month from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m.

"Her name was Mary, and she had a black eye," DeNicola recalled. "She got hurt defending herself at a place where she stayed, and she needed food, so I drove her to the pantry. She had lost her job and could no longer work. She took enough for herself and a few others."

People in need, who are suffering from food insecurity, come to the pantry on the campus of Blessed Sacrament Church at 322 Circular Ave., on the second and fourth Saturdays of the month from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. The ministry is part of St. Paul VI Parish, which includes Blessed Sacrament, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, St. Rita and Ascension churches.

On a recent October morning, the demand, which has been steadily rising, topped 170 families. The volunteers were running out of food as the line of cars snaked through the parking lot and onto the street. One man had arrived at 3 a.m., fearful he might not get anything, and by 6 a.m., 25 cars were already lined up.

Families drove up and received food, which had been bagged and separated by perishable goods, snacks and refrigerated items.

"There are a lot of people out there in desperate need," says DeNicola, who has been part of the ministry for 20 years. Since she took over as chairperson in 2019, the demand has increased from 20 people to more than 170 families from surrounding towns.

She and her colleague Frank Ruiz are assisted by 20 volunteers, who shelve, bag and distribute food from parishes and charitable organizations, such as Connecticut Foodshare in Wallingford and Midwest Food Bank in Manchester.

DeNicola, who retired from a career in public health 10 years ago, was one of 11 children from an Irish family in Vermont. She says her family and faith taught her the importance of giving.

"Having gone to Catholic schools, you're brought up with that inner need to help people," she says. "Our father made us go to church every day during Advent and Lent at St. Peter's in Rutland, so this comes naturally to me. It's not an effort. I've got three beautiful children, four grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. God has been so good to me, and I've got to give back."

Ruiz, who has been involved over 20 years, says, "I do it because my mother and father taught me well. We believe that in these times, we have to feed the hungry and clothe the naked, as Jesus said. Everyone here has strong faith, and we couldn't do it without the volunteers, the parishioners and the two food banks that help us."

DeNicola is grateful to the many people who make the food pantry possible. Last year, a commercial refrigerator for was purchased. Then, a grant from the Hartford Bishops' Foundation was used to buy a freezer.

"The Lord has been providing," DeNicola says. "I'm so grateful for all the assistance we get, the food, the volunteers and everyone who make it happen."

Story by Joe Pisani

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sunday, December 8 - Sunday, February 2
Cultural Nativities at Cathedral
Six international crèches will be on display at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Hartford from Dec. 8 to Feb. 2. The crèches will be located in six small chapels behind the Cathedral sanctuary. Providers of the crèches include: St. Andrew Dũng-Lạc Vietnamese Quasi Parish, West Hartford; SS. Cyril & Methodius Parish, Hartford; Our Lady of Sorrows Parish, Hartford; St. Isaac Jogues Ghanaian Catholic Quasi Parish, East Hartford; and Sister Mariette Moan. Visitors may view the crèches after Mass or arrange for a group tour by calling 860.249.8431.

Sunday, December 15 at 1:30 PM
Midd-South Catholic Parish Presents "The Festival of Lessons and Carols" · Sacred Heart Church, Southbury
The service is open to the public and there is no charge for admission. The Free Will Offering proceeds will benefit the Southbury and Middlebury Needy Funds. For more information: www.middsouthcatholic.org or by calling 203.264.5071.

Tuesday, January 7 at 6:30 PM
SS. Isidore and Maria Parish Festival of Lessons and Carols · St. Paul Church, Glastonbury
The Festival of Lessons and Carols is a service of Scripture and song that dates to the late 19th century. In this service, we listen to nine Scripture lessons that recount the Fall, the promise of a Messiah, the Incarnation, and the Great Commission to preach the Good News. Each lesson is followed by a carol or other song that reflects on the lesson's message and a brief prayer. This event is free and open to the public.

The bustle that many of us experience this time of year can often leave us feeling like we do not have much time for anything other than shopping, baking, and running around. But surely, you can offer one minute each day this Advent to connect with Jesus in a profound way, right? Father Matt will be joining us each day throughout Advent for the sixth installment of **Advent with the Almighty**. This year's series will revolve around the Jesse Tree, a wonderful Advent tradition where we will journey together through the stories that make up Jesus' family tree in bite-sized, one-minute reflection videos. We sincerely hope you will take this journey each with us each day on Facebook and YouTube as we commit to preparing ourselves in a powerful way for the birth of Jesus.

For more events, please visit:
archdioceseofhartford.org/events

To submit an event for consideration, please email: communications@aohct.org

2024 Archbishop's Annual Appeal

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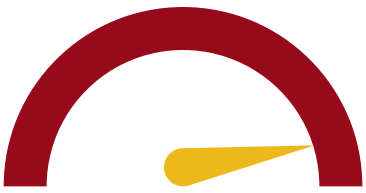

91.5% as of 12/2/24
$9,150,458.13 of $10M goal

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