

Food Pantry Options

Document Objective: This document addresses the options to fill the administrative void left by the retirement of Bob McDonald and Lloyd Hejmancik from the Fair Haven food pantry and the wish of Denise Blok to serve in a different capacity. It is not a document that defines the scope of the post-pandemic food pantry.

History: The Fair Haven Food Pantry informally began as people started asking the church administrative assistants for help in 1967. The food pantry has gone through several evolutions since 1967 to arrive at the present configuration in existence in February 2020 (pre-pandemic).

Pre-pandemic Rules and restrictions:

The food pantry restricts the frequency and area served by zip codes because the pantry could not keep up with the food demand. Four zip codes on the south and north of I-10 were chosen to try to cover the Spring Branch/Memorial area.

The frequency rules are the following:

- Regular
 - Three times with at least a week between each of the visits
 - After the third visit a wait of 3 months is required
- Seniors (65 or older) may receive food every two weeks
- Disabled may receive food every two weeks

Pre-pandemic Operation:

The pantry uses an interview process conducted with a volunteer in the trailers that checks for client address eligibility and date frequency rules. The pantry is open Monday to Friday 10 AM to 2 PM. Food sourcing is done through various vendors but there is little interaction with the Houston Food Bank.

The food pantry fulfills many functions and services which are listed below:

- Food for clients (Regular Sack)
- Senior Citizens (Regular Sack)
- Disabled clients (Regular Sack)
- Adult Protective Services (APS Sack)
- Homeless "To Go" Sacks (Homeless Sack)
- Emergency food (Short Sack)
- Provides cookies/desserts for functions such as Easter Egg hunt, church receptions and funeral receptions
- Hygiene packs on request
- Pet food on request and if available

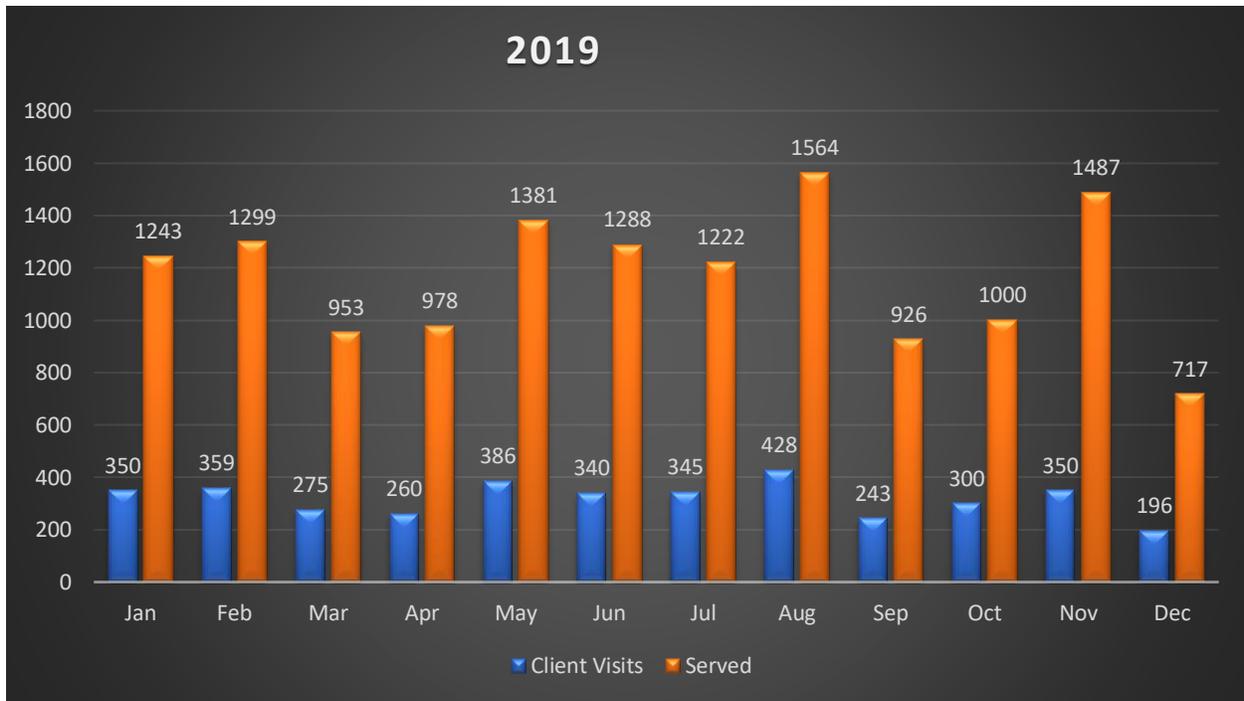


- Diapers on request and if available

The pantry is currently 100% volunteer run and it is estimated that 70% of the volunteers fall in the “at risk” category. The predominate number of volunteers are from Fair Haven and have reoccurring volunteer time slots. St. Andrew’s Lutheran volunteers run Thursday’s pantry by supplying and scheduling their own volunteers. In earlier years, there was an oversight committee but has not existed since the early 2000’s. The administration of the FHFP is primarily done by three volunteers.

- The director, Bob McDonald who oversees the day to day operation, schedules volunteers and coordinates food sourcing.
- The financial books are done by Lloyd Hejmancik
- The computer correspondence and monthly report compilation is predominately done by Denise Blok
- There is no oversight committee in existence today.

Below is a chart of the number of clients and people served for 2019. The client monthly average for 2019 is 320 per month. The number served average is 1172.



October used estimated numbers due to a data issue for that month

Pandemic Operation



On March 13th, the Fair Haven Food Pantry as described previously closed. Some of the reasons are listed below:

- Trailer office was small and would be high Covid risk to clients and volunteers
- Large percentage of Fair Haven volunteers were in the vulnerability group
- Configuration change from indoor to drive thru

Fair Haven has several attributes that make it a favorable food distribution site.

- Location
- CLC and food pantry available for food storage
- Demographics of surrounding area
- Fair Haven is a worship community of Chapelwood

Chapelwood's Serving Ministries stepped in to coordinate and run the drive thru pantry during the pandemic.

Staging 3/23: The drive through operation led by Suzanne Harter began with pallets of food being dropped and staging in progress on Monday, March 23.

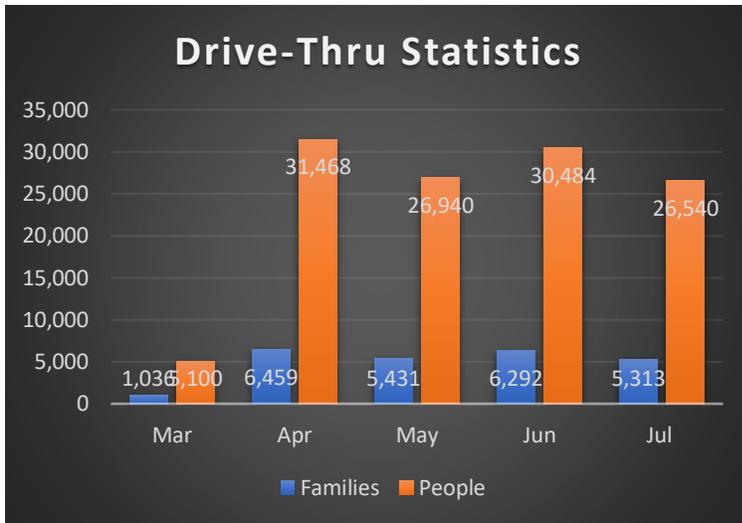
Distribution began 3/24: The actual distribution to the public began on Tuesday, March 24.

The pantry is open Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Food trucks arrive Monday through Thursday from the Houston Food Bank with fresh produce and frozen meat. The pallets are unloaded and stored in the Christian Life Center (CLC) where volunteers pack food into individual boxes for clients.

The client drives through where a volunteer takes their name, address, number of people in household and income. There are no zip code or frequency restrictions. The client opens the car trunk, circles around to the food distribution points, the volunteers load the food, close the trunk and the car drives off. The transaction is complete.

The drive thru had been staffed with Chapelwood serving ministry staff and volunteers. This includes four full time employees. As of July 27th, 23,519 families have been through the drive thru pantry and 115,382 people served. The Drive Thru serves an average 261 families per day. The pre-pandemic was serving about 320 clients per month. Two days during the Pandemic is equal to a month at the pre-pandemic food pantry. See the chart below for the statistics thru July 27th.

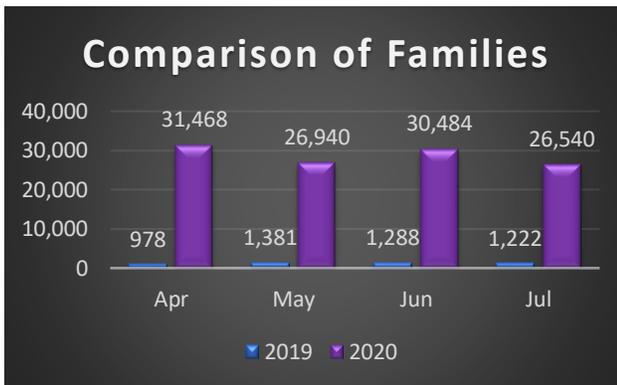




March is partial month.

The Problem:

The charts below show the comparison of April – June 2019 numbers to 2020.



It is expected that once the pandemic is over that the number of clients will drop but not to the pre-pandemic level. The three volunteers that had served in the administration positions for the pre-pandemic food pantry have stepped down or retired. Eventually, the Chapelwood Serving staff will be needed for other projects / services. Finances have been moved to a Food Pantry account at Chapelwood.

A new model will need to be developed for the future and many decisions as to the operation of the food pantry made starting with the administration staffing. This paper assumes that at least 2 positions are needed.



There are several options available that are listed below:

Option 1 - Volunteer

This model is 100 % volunteer for the administration positions. It follows the pre-pandemic model.

Advantages

- No Labor cost
- Continues Fair Haven Food Pantry volunteer culture
- Serving opportunity for Chapelwood/Fair Haven community
- Can use existing procedures for volunteers
- High volunteer ownership

Disadvantages

- Difficult to find full-time volunteers with appropriate skill sets
- Difficult to find full-time volunteer that have availability needed for administration positions (I.E. director position)
- Many of the volunteers are in the most vulnerable group (Large percentage of Fair Haven volunteers fall in this group.)
- Coordination of volunteers will need to be reworked since many pre-pandemic volunteers have indicated that they will not be returning
- Pre-pandemic processes may not work for post-pandemic world
- Little external oversight in this model.

Option 2 - Paid Staff

This model uses full time equivalent employees that are funded through the food pantry's budget for the administration of the food pantry (I.E. Director, Daily onsite manager).

Advantages

- Supports employment in the pandemic environment
- More time to pursue grants and food programs availability
- Less difficult to find appropriate skill set
- Serving opportunity for Chapelwood/Fair Haven community
- Employ staff with pre-existing knowledge / experience in Food Pantries
- Provides external oversight
- Allows food pantry scope to be analyzed/increased with dedicated employees (I.E. Food Bank nutrition lessons)



Disadvantages

- Labor Cost
- Departure from FHFP volunteer culture
- Easier for volunteers' sense of ownership to be reduced (IE. It is the staff's issue)
- Requires development of a new volunteer structure and volunteer procedures

Option 3 - Blended Model

This model uses a combination of staff and volunteers for the administration. Large food pantries in Houston have this structure.

Advantages

- Natural migration from the all-volunteer organization
- Lower labor costs than option 2
- Serving opportunity for Chapelwood/Fair Haven community
- More time to pursue grants and food program availability
- Less difficult to find appropriate skill set
- Supports employment in the pandemic environment
- Employ staff with pre-existing knowledge / experience in Food Pantries
- External oversight
- Allows food pantry scope to be analyzed or increased with dedicated employees (IE. Food Bank nutrition lessons)
- Supports volunteer culture
- Sense of volunteer ownership maintained

Disadvantages

- Some labor cost but not as high as option 2
- Requires development of a new volunteer structure and volunteer procedures
- Development of procedures to support a new management structure

Recommendation

The recommendation is a phased implementation of Option 3 – Blend Model

Phase 1

- Hire a full-time director funded from FHFP for first year.
- Director is Fair Haven / Chapelwood employee for first year.
- Determine if 501C3 feasible
- Determine scoping (Who, what, how, where, Food Bank free services) [See Functions](#)
- Re-establish oversight committee



- Move food pantry finances to Chapelwood account (like Day School and Fair Haven)

Phase 2

- Create project plan of changes
- Complete tasks defined in Phase 1 when possible (Ex: Set up 501c3 if going to change)
- Plan staffing
- Plan reopening transition

The reasons that Blend Option was chosen was because of the following:

- Volunteers will play a key role going forward and maintain “volunteer culture”
- All volunteer implies a full-time unpaid director. Full-time with the assumption that major changes will be needed to serve the post-pandemic world. It would be highly unlikely in today’s economic environment to find a volunteer that can devote full time and has the experience needed. (food pantries, 501C3, implementation of new procedures) for no pay. Unfortunately, Covid-19 also narrows the field. A high percentage of the current volunteers are in the vulnerable group. Many have indicated that they would like to help but do not want to chance the additional exposure.
- The second option (All Employee) would increase the cost significantly and is not as inducive to the “volunteer culture”.

