

Local food pantry fills niche for those in need

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
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American Lutheran Church stores items in classroom.

A room stocked with canned fruit, meat, pasta and other food made a difference in a family's life on a frigid Christmas Eve a year ago.

Before the 11 p.m. service at the American Lutheran Church, a person wearing pajamas showed up at the door for food.

"I was grateful we had something to give," said parish ministry associate Lonna Grabenstein. "I could just walk down the hall and fill up a box to hand the person."

Grabenstein was referring to a food pantry in the church that was informally started by the Lutheran Youth Organization following a food can drive in 2005.

Although the ministerial association, made up of pastors of local churches, provides vouchers for people in need for food, some fuel and other needs, Grabenstein said the food pantry provides people with a little more.

Since canned and boxed goods began filling an empty church classroom, other organizations and congregations have drives to help fill the shelves while individuals contribute as well.

Grabenstein said they plan to offer frozen goods when a freezer is installed.

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When someone in need contacts the church, she said church officials and members can box up to three meals for a family.



On average, she estimated that three to four families a week—from Gothenburg and the area—seek food from the pantry.

Because the church office is the only one in town staffed everyday, Grabenstein said it makes sense to have the pantry there.

“When people have lost their jobs or when families have been broken in relationship, people can’t make ends meet and are needing help,” she said. “Where do they turn to? We’re here to provide service with no strings attached.”

Last Christmas Eve, Grabenstein said she felt sad that the person didn’t have someone to turn to for help.

“It touched my heart because of the Christmas story,” she explained. “Why did God send Jesus in the first place?

“To love and teach us to care for others.”

Anyone needing assistance or more information about the pantry, can contact the church office at 537-3433.

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