

# Centennial Community Food Shelf

Our mission statement “In the Spirit of Love, Provide Nourishment to People” reflects not only our desire to provide food, but also the attitude with which we engage our clients. We provide struggling families food once per month, both as an emergency food shelf, and as a sustaining food shelf for families on fixed incomes. With the support of our community, and the volunteers from our faith community, we continue to have no paid staff. This allows us to spend ninety cents out of each dollar donated directly for food.

The Centennial Community food shelf grew out of the need recognized by Ed Bloomstrand in the 50’s. Ed collected food, and left baskets on the doorsteps of needy families at Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. As the needs grew in the 1970’s, local churches began keeping food in their closets, and handing out food when needs arose. By the early 1980’s, Joyce Lawrence led a small group of volunteers operating a food pantry. The pantry was located in a six by ten foot room, and Joyce held meetings in the kitchen at Our Saviors Lutheran church, with the volunteers standing around a kitchen table.

Nineteen Eighty Seven brought the realization from the local clergy that the food pantry needed more organization and volunteers to keep up with the needs of a growing community. Collaborating together, Our Saviors Lutheran church, St Joseph Catholic church, St Mark Lutheran church, Good Shepard Lutheran church, Galilee Baptist church and Gethsemane United Methodist church sent representatives to create a board, and volunteers to operate the food program. The operation moved to a larger room, and the food pantry became a food shelf. Because of where our support base came from, and the area that we serve, we took the name Centennial Community Food Shelf. Since we became a food shelf, we added volunteers from Bridgewood Community church, St Genevieve Catholic church, and Living Waters Lutheran church. Our leadership team and volunteers come from a diverse group of churches representing four denominations. In 2012 while still housed at Our Saviors Lutheran church, we incorporated to become our own 501 (C) (3) organization.

In the early 1990’s, the number of families we served rose from less than 100 families served each month to 160 families per month in 1991. This caused a serious strain on our resources. We reached out to our community, raising the concern about hunger in our community, and the number of families we were serving. The whole community responded, and we were blessed to receive support from our local churches, civic organizations like the Lions Club and American Legion, and local businesses. Along with the financial help, we had food drives sponsored by the Boy and Girl Scouts, and the local Centennial District 12 schools. The support of the community has enabled us to continue to assist the more than 200 families we serve each month.

Currently our clients are a mixture of elderly and disabled people on fixed incomes, and people who are financially insecure. We served 2468 unique individuals last year consisting of 60% adults, 33% children, and 7% seniors.

The Centennial Community food shelf has proudly grown from the vision of one single person delivering food to needy families at the holidays to an organization that served 576 families in 2012, while still maintaining Ed Bloomstrand’s original vision of serving the needy with compassion and dignity.