

The Centennial Community Food Shelf grew out of an awareness of food insecurity recognized by Ed and Mary Bloomstrand in the mid-1950's. They gathered food and left grocery bags on the doorsteps of families considered in need during the holidays. In the 1970's the local churches began storing food in their closets to be handed out when a need arose. By the early 1980's, Joyce Lawrence had formed a small group of volunteers to operate a food pantry. This pantry was located in a 6' x 10' room at Our Saviors Lutheran Church. Joyce held volunteer meetings standing around a kitchen table.

1987 brought the realization from the local clergy that this pantry needed more organization and volunteers to accommodate the needs of our growing community. Galilee Baptist, Gethsemane United Methodist, Good Shepard Lutheran, Our Saviors Lutheran, St. Joseph of the Lakes Catholic, and St. Mark Lutheran Churches collaborated to send representatives to form a governing board of directors and volunteers to operate the food shelf. Still housed in Our Saviors Lutheran Church, they agreed to be the umbrella 501c3 for our non-profit status.

In the early 1990's, the number of families served rose from less than 100 to 160 families per month. We reached out and our community responded. We were blessed to receive additional financial and food drive support from our local churches, civic organizations, local fire departments, and local businesses. In 2012, while still housed at Our Saviors Lutheran Church, we incorporated to become our own 501c3 organization.

2013 brought us to a new location by partnering with the city of Circle Pines to rent their vacated police department property. We made some renovations to accommodate the storage, pantry, and refrigerated segments of the food shelf. Bridget McPhillips became our first Executive Director forming relationships with Second Harvest, applying for grants, creating relationships with our community, and actively seeking volunteers for the additional duties.

COVID-19 brought its challenges, we reduced our base distribution team to one. We packed food dependent on family sizes and brought them out to the families waiting for service. It also brought unprecedented donations from across the entire state. In 2021, our church groups came back to pack the food distributed based on family sizes. At this time, we also chose to use the abundance of financial donations to enhance our space to incorporate the ability for our clients to shop for their needs versus our interpretation of their needs.

In 2022, Bridget McPhillips retired her position as Executive Director and Jennifer Parent agreed to become our Executive Director, continuing our vision for Centennial Community Food Shelf. To further our efficiency, we upgraded our technology by implementing the Pantry Saver program in 2022. By doing this, we have become more efficient in the processing as well as the distribution of food.

The Centennial Community food shelf has proudly grown from the vision of Ed and Mary Bloomstrand delivering food to needy families at the holidays to an organization that served 2082 families in 2022, serving with compassion and dignity.

Currently, Centennial Community Food Shelf partners with multiple agencies (The Food Group, Bix, Second Harvest Heartland, Aldi, Kwik Trip, and Festival Foods). On average, we feed 500-1000 individuals per month which impacts over 300 households and constitutes over 19,000 pounds of food per month. These numbers continue to grow every month.