



Food Pantry ‘Eat Fresh’ initiatives

According to the Center for Disease Control eating a diet rich in fruits and vegetables helps reduce the risk for diseases such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease, obesity and some cancers. Unfortunately, fruits and vegetables can be among the most expensive items in the supermarket making them far less accessible to people living on limited incomes and one of the greatest barriers to healthy eating.

The Peterborough Food Pantry is tackling this challenge head on through a series of “Eat Fresh” initiatives and is partnering with the Monadnock community to bring that barrier down.

Over 30 businesses in Peterborough participated in the Peterborough Food Pantry “Green Bag Program” this year. Conceived by pantry volunteer, Linda Claff, the Green Bag Program gives local businesses the opportunity to provide fresh fruits and vegetables to their neighbors during the winter months.

Maybe you’ve noticed them in businesses around

town – green shopping bags with the Peterborough Food Pantry Logo printed in white. Depending on the number of employees, businesses receive from one to eight green bags for each of their two assigned weeks to fill with healthy fresh produce which they bring to the pantry for distribution. “People have been so generous,” Claff said, “This year we received more than 150 bags of fresh produce through the Green Bag Program. Our customers love it!”

A generous award from 100+ Women Who Care Monadnock has also enabled the pantry to fund CSA shares at Foggy Hill Farm in Jaffrey.

This partnership with Foggy Hill Farm is especially meaningful for the pantry as Foggy Hill is one of several local farms that participates in the Monadnock Farm Share program, a program developed for low-income residents of the Monadnock area to make fresh local produce more available to individuals and families. The program includes significant discounts on farm shares to people who

receive SNAP benefits and also allows them to use food stamps at local farmers markets. “We’re excited to be able offer lots more produce and also to spread the word about this great program,” said Glo Morison, President of the Board at The Peterborough Human Services Fund which oversees the Food Pantry.

The Green Bag Program and the CSA are also supplemented in several ways by community generosity. The pantry receives walk-in gifts of bananas, carrots and other goodies throughout the year; Hillsborough Gleaners stops by through the summer and fall with boxes of produce “misfits”, and Hannaford in Rindge donates several hundred pounds of “rescue” produce each month. Local gardeners also routinely share their bounty and some have started to “Plant a Patch for the Pantry” to specifically set aside a portion of their harvest. This summer Cornucopia Project volunteers are lending their skills to cultivate several beds behind the Community Center and donate the bounty to the Food

Pantry.

The benefits of a fresh diet are clear, and the Peterborough Food Pantry and its customers are grateful for our community for making healthier eating possible for all. A food pantry customer recently left this comment in the suggestion basket: *“I am so grateful for the Peterborough Food Pantry participating in the CSA. It is invaluable! It is a key reason I am able to get food I am able to eat, and is highly recommended by my doctor for my health.”*

The Peterborough Food Pantry is located at 25 Elm St. in the Peterborough Community Center and is open Monday through Friday 9 a.m. to noon. Twenty-eight dedicated volunteers distribute enough food each month to residents of 13 surrounding towns to make between 6,000 and 7,000 meals. The pantry’s phone number is (603) 924-3008.

If you would like more information, call Kathy Boss at (603) 498-2834 or email kathybporfop@gmail.com.