



Food Pantry Update, 6-3-2022

In March 2019, Community Outreach Ministries converted our client-choice food pantry into a drive-thru food pantry to accommodate COVID-19 restrictions. For the past two years, we have worked hard to serve our community by meeting the food security needs of local families and individuals in a safe manner.

With the shift in Missouri from a pandemic to an endemic phase regarding COVID-19, we have been exploring what a post-COVID food pantry will look like at COM. In looking at the food pantry, we want to not only create a service that is efficient, but that also fosters a healthy sense of community, preserves the dignity of our clients, and enables meaningful ministry. At the end of the day, COM is not a grocery store or government subsidy program, but a ministry, and we want our programs to reflect that truth. When it comes to accomplishing all of these goals, our experience has been that in-person solutions are preferable to drive-thru or virtual models which are limited in their ability to create meaningful human connections.

Therefore, COM has decided to return to an in-person food pantry starting September 1, 2022. That being said, the exact setup of the in-person food pantry is still being decided, and it's still possible that a drive-thru model may be used in conjunction with the in-person pantry, albeit in a scaled back or limited version. We will be working over the summer and receiving feedback from clients to determine the exact setup for the food pantry. As we do this work, our goals are to reduce wait times as much as possible, allow for as much client choice in food as possible, increase a sense of community and ownership, and focus on development that reduces unhealthy dependency on charity.

If you have received food from the food pantry in the past, this is where we need your help. We want to hear from you to help us design the new food pantry model. We want our clients to have as much ownership of this process as possible. We also know there are lots of needs and unique situations, and we want to consider all of those factors. Options to share your thoughts and experiences with us include the following:

1. Visit us from 4:30-5:30 pm on Tuesday afternoons or 11 am-12 pm on Thursdays in June for come-and-go town hall sessions in COM's office lobby (ice cream included!)
2. Shoot us an email at info@bolivarcom.org with your ideas
3. Call us at 417-326-2769 to schedule a one-on-one chat with one of our staff

As a staff, we are excited for the opportunities that this change can offer for everyone involved (staff, clients, volunteers, community partners). Please pray for us as we explore the next step in addressing food insecurity in Polk County.