

Local News

Emergency fund helps restock food pantries during pandemic



Joesahapa Montague selects items from Martha's Choice Marketplace, a food pantry located at the archdiocesan Catholic Social Services (CSS) Montgomery County family service center, in this December 2013 file photo. A new emergency fund will help restock CSS pantries rapidly depleted by the coronavirus pandemic. (Photo by Sarah Webb)

By Gina Christian • Posted March 23, 2020

A new initiative aims to restock archdiocesan food pantries depleted by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The nonprofit [Catholic Foundation of Greater Philadelphia](#) (CFGF) has created an [Emergency Relief Fund](#) (ERF) to collect monetary donations to help purchase badly needed food and personal items.

Staff at a number of archdiocesan Catholic Social Services (CSS) food pantries have seen as much as a 100% increase in client volume, and for many sites, it's becoming difficult to accommodate individuals and families seeking help.

(Related: [Ministries getting food, diapers to families during pandemic](#).)

The CFGF manages the annual [Catholic Charities Appeal](#), which supports social services, evangelization, education, parish and spiritual life, clergy and local mission activities in the five-county Philadelphia Archdiocese.

Sarah Hanley, the CFGF's president and CEO, said that "a common theme of food shortages" emerged during her team's conversations with pantry staff.

“Food and personal hygiene items are the most important things people need right now,” said Hanley. “With so many businesses closing and families unable to return to work, this need is becoming increasingly critical by the day.”

School and business closures due to the pandemic have compounded the city’s food insecurity levels, which had already increased 22% between 2012-2017, according to the nonprofit Hunger Free America.

Many families rely on the federally funded school meal programs administered by archdiocesan Nutritional Development Services (NDS). But as Philadelphia’s virus containment measures have tightened – the city now is enforcing a stay-at-home order effective March 23 at 8 a.m. – food distribution has changed in location and frequency, leaving families scrambling.

“We’re hoping this new fund can help supplement the additional food and supplies needed at these pantries given their increased volume,” said Hanley. “We’re asking our supporters and the general public to be as generous as possible during this time. It’s up to us to help feed those of us who may be relying on this pantry as their only food source right now.”

Hanley added that despite the great uncertainty surrounding the pandemic, “we will get through this if we lean on one another, work collaboratively and keep God at the forefront.”

Donations to the ERF can be made online at www.TheCFGP.org/ERF

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