

Bridge of Hope Volunteer Guide

Matthew 25:35, 40

For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me. . . 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'

These words of Jesus inform the way we treat those who come to Bridge of Hope for assistance. We welcome them as if they are members of our family. We believe in maintaining their dignity, so we offer them choices about the items they receive. We want them to have enough food for their family, so we do not limit how much food they take, rather we trust God to provide for the needs of the pantry.

Open Pantry Time

In terms of what this looks like in action: when patrons arrive we greet them, by name if they have come before. We ask them to please sign in, and if we do not recognize them ask if it is their first time visiting the pantry. Then if we do not already have their information, we fill out a form in the second section of the red binder. For first time guests we explain that there is not a limit for food, they can take what they need. We show them the bags to put their items in. We tell them that personal care items and cleaning products on the rolling shelf are labeled with household limits. If there are items available in the deep freezer or stand up fridge the volunteer will inform the patrons, and ask them if they want any of those items (example: a loaf of bread). The volunteer will need to get those items out for them. Patrons can then shop for the other items they need.

Most of the time we do not restock the shelves during the open pantry times, so whatever items are set out at the beginning is what they can choose from. We mostly do this to limit how much we give out each week, since we generally do not limit how much food people can take. However, exceptions can be made, for instance, if someone requests something in particular that we have more of in the cabinet. Volunteers can use their discretion in these situations.

Diapers

If patrons need diapers we explain that they can request those once per calendar month. Based on what is available, they can choose which brand they prefer, either one big package or two small packages (ideally 40+ diapers), as well as a package of baby wipes. The volunteer will get the diapers off of the shelf. They can receive diapers for up to two children in their household per calendar month.

Diapers need to be picked up by someone who lives in the household with the child, any other arrangement needs to be approved by the pantry coordinator.

Set-up

Volunteers will ideally arrive to the pantry about 30 minutes before opening time. They should bring a rolling cart down to the pantry from the church kitchen, for those who need it to transport items to their car. After unlocking the door, they will first need to visually inspect around the items on the shelves for signs of mice, and use disinfectant wipes to clean up any messes. Disinfectant wipes are located under the sink. Then, preferably, the volunteer will take food items out of the plastic tubs, and arrange them on the shelves, adding in more items from the cabinets as needed to fill in the space. If the volunteer has limited mobility then the tubs can simply be placed on the long table and lower shelves, using the rolling cart to help move them, and removing the lids from the tubs. They may need to add items to the tubs to ensure there is a good supply of food available. As well, the lids from the small tubs on the rolling shelf should be removed, and placed underneath each tub. This will allow patrons to easily look through the items to choose what they want. If there are drinks or produce items in the refrigerator, those can be set out on the long table for patrons to take also.

On the first open pantry day of the week a new sign-in sheet will need to be taken from the back of the first section in the red binder, and placed on the clipboard. The dates for that pantry week will need to be written on the top. Lastly, the door will be opened, and the sign placed outside of the door.

Clean-up

At the end of the open pantry time please notate next to each name on the sign-in sheet what items they received assistance with: F=food, T=toiletries, D=diapers, R=referral to Share and Care for clothes, P=referral to Sandusky County Food Pantry.

Place the food items back in the tubs, and put the tubs on the shelves. Put the lids back on all of the tubs. Place any remaining items from the refrigerator back in there. Clean up the kids coloring table, if needed. Bring the sign back in the room, turn off the lights, and lock the door. Take the rolling cart back to the church kitchen.

Donations

Hayes Memorial UMC has two shelves for donations, one between the double doors of the sanctuary entrance, and the other inside the narthex, beside the fellowship hall. Most items already have an easily identifiable spot in the cabinets where they need to be stored. As well, most shelves are labeled where to pull items from, so that items are rotated by date. Donations need to be inspected for expiration. If already past the best by date set them aside to ask the pantry coordinator if they should be kept before putting them away. Items that are not expired should be arranged on the shelf with similar items, by date. Contact the pantry coordinator with any questions.

Restocking Shelves

Before restocking the canned goods on the shelves, all remaining cans should be moved to the front, so that additional cans are placed in the back. This helps to get rid of items that will be expiring earliest first. Periodically the cans on the shelves need to be checked to see if items have expired. We prefer to not keep items past 6 months expired. A list of expiration guidelines is posted on the board in the pantry near the sink. The shelves in the cabinets are labeled with directions for where to pull items from, based on expiration. Food items in the tubs do not need to be restocked until they are pulled out for the open pantry times.

Personal care items are restocked at the discretion of the pantry coordinator. They should be rationed so that there are some, but not all, put out every week.

Referrals to Share and Care

We have an arrangement with Share and Care for patrons in needs of clothing or household items, such as sheets or blankets. The volunteer will fill out the referral form located in the red binder, with information gathered from the patron. Share and Care will give up to 5 outfits per person (example: 5 t-shirts and 5 jeans). The volunteer will write in their own name as the person to contact with questions about the referral, and the phone number to write in for questions can be the food pantry line (419-463-2683). The volunteer needs to instruct the patron to take the form to the office inside of Share and Care in order to receive the items. The director or a volunteer at Share and Care will need to assist them in collecting the items they need. Contact the pantry coordinator with any questions about filling out the form.

Referrals to the Sandusky County Food Pantry

There are forms in the red binder to provide referrals to the Sandusky County Food Pantry. The volunteer will fill out the referral form with information gathered from the patron. Contact the pantry coordinator with any questions about filling out the form.

Other Questions or Concerns

Any other questions or concerns should be directed to the pantry coordinator. You can generally reach the coordinator by calling or texting the food pantry line: 419-463-2683.