

The High Street Congregational Church in Auburn is home to our food pantry outreach. It is open on Thursday Mornings from 9-11:30am. The food Pantry is a collaboration of 5 churches in the Lewiston/Auburn area all of whom help to staff the pantry. The Pantry serves approximately 240 families a month and distributed 142,000 pounds of food last year.

I like to think that the High Street Food Pantry does an exceptional job treating our clients with respect and compassion. We serve hot coffee, sweet treats and juice for the kids. Some clients come on Thursday Mornings to just have coffee and socialize. The idea of community and support from one another is as important as filling stomachs.

Because the service and outreach of the Pantry was growing and the need of our clients seemed to be expanding beyond just food, I decided last year to integrate our youth and their families in some outreach projects that would reach our pantry clients and ultimately the greater Lewiston/ Auburn community. In October, our youth and families offered a free dinner that was advertised on Thursday mornings for our pantry clients. The idea was to provide a warm meal, an environment for community conversation and a chance for our youth to provide "service" to those in need. The youth set tables, cooked the supper, served the meal and cleaned up after. We served over 100 people.

In November we collected items such as coloring books and small toys to fill Christmas stockings to Pantry children age 2-7. The youth filled over 100 stockings and they were distributed for the month of December to Pantry clients with young children.

In December, the youth filled gratuity trays with Christmas cookies to hand out to our service workers that surround the church to thank them for their ongoing service to our community and to our clients.

To involve the younger children with our outreach of the pantry, we collected a refrigerator box full of food that we then sorted and stocked the pantry with.

Some other expanded projects we have done with the pantry is the distribution of children's reading books every Thursday to anyone who wants them. We offered free flu shots for several Thursdays in the fall. We also have had a representative from Healthy Androscoggin demonstrating cooking and a representative from Anthem to help answer healthcare questions.