

Ask us anything

We love hearing from all our neighbors, those who donate, take food, pantry hosts, volunteers, sponsors, and yes, even those who criticize what we do. This month's column is an "Ask Us Anything" article, featuring answers to a few recent questions the team has received.

Sara from Cicero asks: where does your food come from?

Thank you for your question.

Our fundraisers, donations from corporate sponsors, donations from Elks Lodge 576, and donations from individuals allow us to purchase food from food brokers around the country. We buy pallets of food and pay for the delivery to our offices. We are savvy buyers and purchase food locating the best deals from around the country. Food has been delivered from Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and Indiana.

Next, as a no-questions-asked food charity, we qualify to buy food at a discount from Gleaners Food Bank. Another partnership we are grateful for, is that we receive food from Hamilton County Harvest. Finally, we benefit from dozens of area neighbors as they drop off non-perishable food at our offices, or they, along with several pantry hosts, stock food directly in pantries located throughout Hamilton County.

Tom from Noblesville writes that canned and boxed food can go bad if it freezes and thaws or is in extreme heat. He wonders how we address this.

Great question.

Before deployment, food is securely staged at our facility. Before being stocked in a pantry, food packaging, seals and expiration dates are checked. Anything potentially compromised is discarded and never makes it into a pantry.

Volunteers regularly stock and check their pantries for any issues with food, maintenance, and trash. Volunteers rotate out food that has remained in a pantry too long. Pantries are vented and enclosed as added protection to food product.

Admittedly, our team can't be at every pantry every day, so as an additional protection, written warnings are posted inside of the pantries in English and Spanish (and Creole where needed) reminding neighbors to check expiration dates, seals, and packaging before consuming food taken from a pantry.

It's also important to realize that hundreds of families stop by one of our pantries regularly. Canned and boxed food seldom stays in a pantry more than a few days. Over several years of providing food to our neighbors we have had one canned food item go bad because it popped its seal. Attentiveness and high product turnover address the concerns in your question.

Over extended periods of time, high heat or freezing and thawing can compromise food in a pantry. The Feeding Team pantry



FeedingTeam.org
Facts
49 pantries
10,000 meals in Nov. 2022
Over 30 volunteer families

model is designed to provide a few meals for many families – in particular, gap families, meaning those who don't qualify for public assistance or those who are embarrassed about being in need and who don't want any required registration.

What may just be a wooden box to some people is a survival lifeline that feeds children to others.

Jim from Fishers asks: how do your boxes get built and can you use help?

Thanks for the question and the offer to help!

Over the years, pantries have been built by high school students, Eagle Scouts, corporations, college students, individual neighbors, and churches. We have materials lists and building plans that are shared with anyone who wants to build a pantry for Feeding Team. Depending on the situation, we will purchase the materials for a build. Some companies have taken on this part of the mission themselves.

Regarding volunteering, please reach out directly to find out about volunteer opportunities, call (317) 832-1123 or send an email to lisa@feedingteam.org. There are many ways to get involved and we are always grateful to have another pair of hands.

With over 44,000 food-challenged neighbors in Hamilton County, **FeedingTeam.org** is a registered 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization that provides outdoor 24/7/365 no-questions-asked free food pantries throughout the county.

The pantries exist to meet the food insecurity needs of gap families, neighbors who may not qualify for public assistance and could use a few meals before payday. The pantries serve as many food-challenged neighbors as possible, and our hearts are with those who, like my family, could not always make ends meet.

Thank you for supporting the pantries. We love serving with so many neighbors across Hamilton County. In future columns, we will share more stories about how your generosity served neighbors in times of need. The face of hunger in Hamilton County is not what you may think.

In practical terms, this straightforward way to help neighbors is having real impact on lives, families, and our communities. Thank you. A few meals can change the course of a person's life. A can of green beans means so much more when you have nothing to feed your kids.

Would you like to get involved? Volunteer opportunities are available. We are evaluating new pantry locations. If you think you have a potential location, please contact us.

Mark and Lisa Hall are the Founders of Feeding Team. They may be reached at lisa@feedingteam.org and mark@feedingteam.org or by calling (317) 832-1123.