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Hunger Foundation of Southern Ocean Donates \$10,500 to St. Francis Food Pantry

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By Juliet Kaszas-Hoch



SEASON OF GIVING: (From right) Hunger Foundation Vice President Gary Henderson presents a check for \$10,500 for the St. Francis Human Concerns Food Pantry to Family Support Services Director Breanne La Marco and Executive Director Kevin Walsh, alongside Hunger Foundation team members Mike Tomko, owner of Wally's, and Jamie Ryan, owner of The Cheese Shoppe. (Photos by Ryan Morrill)

The Human Concerns department at St. Francis of Assisi Parish and Community Center manages a range of vital programs for the community, including one of the largest food pantries in Ocean County. And as demand increases during the holiday season, the staff at St. Francis are expressing their gratitude for a \$10,500 donation from the Hunger Foundation of Southern Ocean.

“This extraordinary contribution will significantly enhance our ability to provide essential food and hygiene products to families in need across southern Ocean County,” said Moira Krier, public relations coordinator for the parish and community center. “With the Hunger Foundation’s support, we can continue our mission of addressing food insecurity and providing critical assistance to those who need it most, especially during the busy holiday season.

“On behalf of the families we serve, we extend our heartfelt thanks to the Hunger Foundation for their ongoing commitment to our community.”

The Human Concerns Food Pantry, located in the community center in Brant Beach, supports an average of 250 to 280 families each month. Operations are made possible, Krier explained, through a combination of resources: a monthly allocation of food from Fulfill, the Foodbank of Monmouth and Ocean County; grants from organizations like the Hunger Foundation of Southern Ocean; and contributions from private donors and food drives.



SERVING THE COMMUNITY: (From left) Jamie Ryan and Mike Tomko learn about the food pantry from Breanne La Marco.

Chris Schwab, president of the Hunger Foundation of Southern Ocean, said the nonprofit, volunteer-only organization hosts charitable events throughout the year to raise awareness of, and funds for, area food pantries like the one at St. Francis. Events include the Thanks4Giving Runraiser (see separate story in this issue). Each fall, a monetary donation is presented to the Human Concerns Food Pantry, with, typically, another smaller donation provided near the end of the year.

“Our main focus,” Schwab said of the nonprofit, “is monetary donations” – collected annually at the Thanks4Giving run, Chowderfest, a springtime bourbon tasting and dinner at the Old Causeway and smaller fundraisers held by local businesses and organizations. That money is then donated to approximately nine main food banks between Forked River and Tuckerton, as well as the Southern Regional School District and Stockton University.

The end of each year is associated with giving, and the Hunger Foundation of Southern

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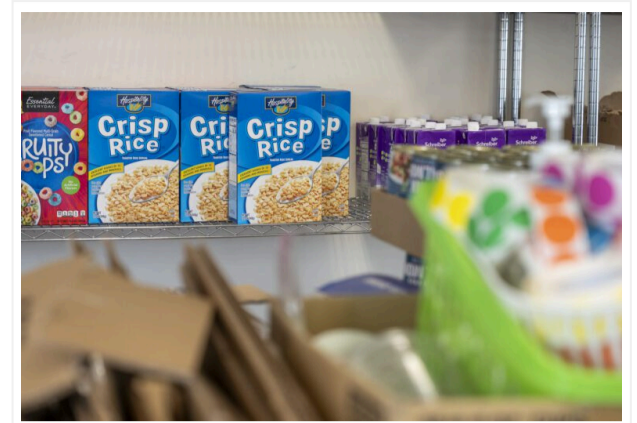
and, Krier noted, “we are actively working on our Gift of Warmth Project, ensuring children receive two wishes of warm clothing, shoes, snow boots, hats, gloves, scarves and winter jackets.

“We are humbled and inspired by the generosity of organizations like the Hunger Foundation of Southern Ocean, as well as the continued support of our community,” Krier remarked. “Together, we can make a meaningful difference in the lives of those we serve.”

And, as Schwab emphasized, food banks certainly need donations here at the end of the year, but they also need donations throughout the year, including during the summer when children are out of school.

The Human Concerns Food Pantry website, at stfranciscenterlbi.org/food-pantry, includes a list of requested items for the facility, as well as a link to an Amazon Wish List and a link for donations via PayPal.

Currently, the food bank is open Monday through Thursday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Anyone with questions can call 609-494-8861, extension 171 or 172. —J.K.-H.



STOCKING UP: Cereal and various other items fill the shelves of the food pantry.

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