

# Local food pantries offer more than meals

By Edie Moro  
Tribune News

While the economy may be improving for many, local food pantries in Harrisburg and Junction City report an upsurge in people needing their services. Besides food, they provide clothing and other items to help people get through the winter months.

God's Storehouse in Harrisburg serves about 130 families a month, averaging about 650 people total. Assistant Director Mary Helms reported in the last few months there has been an increase in numbers using their services, including about 15 homeless families who live nearby. "They come in to get blankets and food," Helms said. She explained Food for Lane County provides emergency blankets only last a little while. The blankets, made by Unicorn Federal

Prison Industries, Inc., are loosely felted and disintegrate if they get too wet.

Helms tries to stock "ready-to-eat" food for homeless families who may not have facilities to prepare food. She added, "A lot of people who get here are stuck in a rut if they don't drive or have a bicycle. I try to keep back a case of water for people who don't have access to running water." Right now God's Storehouse has eight-hour hand warmers and hooded ponchos to give out. "I grab anything like these when I see it, also warm socks and coats," Helms said.

God's Storehouse is a shopping pantry where families can get a three-to-five-day supply of food. There is a section in the front of the storefront for food supplies that are not limited to family size, such as beans, grains and sacks of

tea bags. Clothing and household items are also available in the thrift store part of the building.

God's Storehouse was started by Fred Morgan and Twyla Holt in what was then the Valley Christian Center. It outgrew the church, and moved to a second location. It moved to its present location at 180 Smith St. in the early 1980's. Helms added the board and volunteers held fundraisers and purchased the building in 1995.

Claire Buhler, the pastor of Harrisburg Christian Church, is the current board president; the director of God's Storehouse is Vesta Craiger, with Helms seeing to the day-to-day running of the storefront, aided by nine steady volunteers. The storefront is open Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., with a lunch closure from 11:50 a.m. until 1 p.m. For more information about their services, call 541-995-8403.

Serving Junction City, Local Aid has also noticed an increase in people needing their services, especially over the last two years. Last year went up more than expected, with more than double the number of people needing more than one trip to the pantry in a month, according to Executive Director Kori Rodley.

Rodley explained the Food for Lane County network, of which Local Aid is a part, decided people can have up to 18 food boxes per year, with enough food for the number of people in the family for three to five days. The pantry stocks shelves with available choices tagged with the amount allowed per person in the household so clients may take the kinds



OSU Extension volunteer Kathleen Huston brings the 'Food Hero' program to Junction City Local Aid once a month.

utilizing about 70 volunteers per month. Local Aid provides many other services to its clients, including free clothing, utility and propane assistance, transportation in the form of bus passes, and referrals to service partners.

Once a month, usually the last Wednesday of the month, an OSU Extension volunteer from the Food Hero program brings samples and recipes so clients may learn new ways to use food products. Wednesday, Jan. 24, volunteer Kathleen Huston provided samples and a recipe for 'veggie quiche muffins,' explaining this month Food for Lane County has a lot of baking mix, which the recipe uses. She also handed out information about buying, using, and storing cheese.

Local Aid also rents space to service providers such as Women's Resource Center. The center is located at 265 W. 6th Avenue, just one block east of Bi-Mart.

As of Feb. 8, their hours of operation will be changing. They will no longer be open Thursday mornings. The new hours are Tuesdays, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.; Wednesdays, 9 a.m. to noon; Thursday afternoons and evenings, 3 to 8 p.m.; and the last Saturday of every month 10

