Dear Friends,

Recently, Mary starting crying at our meat counter—tears of joy, that is. A single mom, Mary has three teen-aged boys who are all involved in school athletics. Being able to provide them with enough food is a massive challenge. Providing enough protein has been impossible. When she realized she was able to select three different frozen meats—in addition to the four cans of tuna, four cans of beans, the jar of peanut butter and dozen eggs she had already selected—she burst into tears of gratitude. We wanted to pass that gratitude on to you, because you made it possible for Mary to provide her growing sons the nutrition they need to continue on their successful paths as student athletes.

We also wanted to share Mary’s story because it illustrates the success of one of our central concerns this year: enhanced nutrition. We know that food insecurity—not knowing where your next meal is coming from—is linked to poor nutrition. Those who suffer from food insecurity are less likely to eat fruits and vegetables, less likely to get the calcium and protein they need, and more likely to have diets high in sugar and fat. If you’ve ever wondered why poverty and obesity are linked, it’s simple. Cheap, filling foods (think French fries) just aren’t very good for us. As one of our clients put it, “Not every family wants to eat junk, but fruit is expensive!” We hope you’ll delight in knowing you helped buy a lot of fruit this year. And a great deal more. Together we fed 44,272 individuals this year—and it wasn’t with junk.

In this report, you’ll see how your support has translated into a marked improvement in the nutritional quality of the food our clients received. You’ll discover how our collaboration with farmers and grocers has meant the amount of produce families receive doubled by the end of the year—to 10 pounds per family in the summer months! You’ll read how one family helps keep the memory of their loved one alive with a unique gift to our clients, and how one client helps her mother whose memory is slipping away. Finally, our financial statement will show you how carefully we have stewarded resources, providing outstanding service while keeping an eye on future needs. You made it all possible.

Your generous support inspires us to provide the best for our neighbors in need: the best food, the best service, the best of ourselves. We invite you to review this report and to take pride in how your gift—as a volunteer, a donor, or both—has made a difference to Mary and thousands of others.

On behalf of the board, staff, and the clients we serve: Thank you!

Sincerely,

Michele Zurakowski, Executive Director
J. Peter Clark, Board President
As any athlete knows, extraordinary talent in one area is a great asset, but tripling that ability is three times as effective. Oak Park River Forest Food Pantry at fiscal year-end 2013 achieved threefold success by serving more clients, providing more nutritionally-rich food choices, and educating clients in healthier habits. Taking into account multiple visits to the Pantry, 44,272 clients received 660,000 pounds of food this past year.

“Our Healthy Food Initiative helped us improve the nutritional value of food this year,” says Executive Director Michele Zurakowski. “We created an ordering matrix linked to nutritional goals. By tracking food we ordered or rescued, we ensured that over 90% fell into nutrient-dense (fruit, vegetables, whole grains) or protein-rich (meat, dairy, beans, etc.) categories.”

Ramping up food rescue programs increased nutritional value while also keeping costs low. Produce rescues have been so successful, the average family

Ola Wiak discusses uses for greens with a client.

The Pantry continues to expand its food rescue program by recruiting more local grocers and bakers to donate produce, meat, and bread items. Much appreciated vendor support comes from Oak Park vendors:

Caribou Coffee, Jimmy John’s, Jewel-Osco Fresh Market on Madison, Oak Park Bakery, Oak Park Farmers’ Market, Panera Bread, Penzey’s Spices, Red Hen Bread, The Sachem Company, and Trader Joe’s.

Vendors in other communities are also generous supporters:

Door-to-Door Organics, Greater Chicago Food Depository, Montalbano Farms, Whole Foods Market—River Forest, Ultra Foods—Forest Park, and Three Tarts Bakery.

Community vegetable bounties are gratefully received from:

Cheney Mansion, Dominican University, Fair Oaks Presbyterian Church, Hatch Patch, OPRF High School, Oak Park Temple, St. Giles Parish, and Wonder Works Children’s Museum.

A special thanks to Tom Miller’s Farm for a whole field of potatoes.

The Pantry is grateful for the following DONORS of food during Fiscal Year 2013

1244th Transportation Army National Guard Unit
19th Century Charitable Association
410 Ashland Condo Association
500-600 Block Highland
700 N. Cayler Block Party
700 S. Scoville Block Party
Ruth Abraham
Aswar Achraa
Tom Adyemi
Alpine Foods
Dawn Altman
AmeriCorps Vista
Marilin Ames
Nancy Anderson
Mr. & Mrs. Andrews
Anti-Gravity Improv Troupe
Shannon Asaria
Sophia Asaria
Mary Lou Backes
Band & Warner
Caroline Baker
Mary Bausboller
A. Banks
Carole Bellavita
Paul Bedsworth
Heather Berman
Holli Bernstein
Robert Bervlacava
Gail Black
Girl Scout Troop 42715
Girl Scout Troop 44821
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
Diane Gordon
Joe Graba
Grace Episcopal Church
Grace Lutheran Church and School
Derrick Griffin
Victoria Groomkowski
Rachel Grossman
GBMS Student Council
Gwendolyn Brooks Middle School
S. Hadis Tahassem
Melanie Halvorson
Amy Hanemann
Harvard Family United Church of Christ
Hatch Patch Garden
Hatch School
Hatch School Girl Scouts
Sus Hoffrich
Hemingsway Foundation
Heppelab Children’s Association
Rose Hermanns
Bab Hickery
Cynthia Hicks
Aida Hill
Melissa Hjalmarson
Amy Hodges
Hockey Club
Oak Park River Forest Newcomers Club
Oak Park Temple
Oak Park Township St. Lunch Program
The Olmen Family
Al & George Parcher
Ed Parter
Rusty Parrish & Keith Turner
R. Payne
Robyn Pearson
Dan Pietrez
Marcia Peter
Pilgrim Congregational Church
Connie Pinn
Debbie & Christine Pletcher
Deborah Pogue
Lynette Powier
James Pornak
Nat Ponskoski & Laura Knitt
Prarie State Animal Hospital
Dr. John Brancel
Hana Prince
Cassie Pruszkowski
Quinn
Susan Quinn
Erica Ramos
Andrea Ramin
Richard Reiter

184th Transportation Army
National Guard Unit

TRIPLE THREAT AGAINST HUNGER SCORES WINNING POINTS FOR THE PANTRY

‘Wow, this tastes really good, we can make this at home.’

The nutrition program continues successful collaborations with local universities and hospitals such as UIC, Dominican University, and Hines VA Hospital to recruit dietetic students earning community nutrition volunteer hours. Volunteers staffing the program include practicing registered dieticians, students studying for their BA or Master’s degrees, and graduating dietetic interns seeking to fulfill a portion of the 1,200 hours required before taking their certification exam. Enter Aleksa Wiak, the Pantry’s first official dietetic intern, a recent Dominican University graduate, known to everyone as “It’s gratifying when clients say, ‘Wow, this tastes really good, we can make this at home.’”

As any athlete knows, extraordinary talent in one area is a great asset, but tripling that ability is three times as effective.
also want to thank the many anonymous donators who gave without signing in.)

But produce is useless unless people eat it. Cue one of the Pantry’s most effective threats against hunger — its Nutrition Education Program, led by Maria Delis, RD, LDN, the Pantry’s resident dietician. Delis has been with the Pantry for the past three years, supervising four presentations for clients each month during two Wednesday and Saturday distributions. They include volunteer-led small group discussions, food demos with tastings, and recipe handouts with cost and nutrition value. Volunteers are essential. “Without all of our volunteers, we couldn’t have this program,” Delis affirms.

Volunteers pre-cook recipes using Pantry items and hand out samples while clients wait for their numbers to be called. “A lot of people like to watch cooking shows on TV, so it’s a highly interactive event when clients get so excited to see and taste something new to recreate at home. It becomes a calming environment, where they can forget for a minute why they’re here,” Delis explains. Tuna pasta, veggie fried rice, and peachy-orange salsa are especially popular. “It’s gratifying when clients say, ‘Thank you, I didn’t know how much sodium or sugar these foods have,’ or “Ola,” her native Polish nickname.

Wiak began her journey at the Pantry in 2011 as a student volunteer where her own experiences as a student on a tight budget translated well. Wiak ended up leading sessions on Thrifty Meals. When the Pantry became a formal Community Nutrition internship site last spring, Wiak began an integral role as a paid intern leading the education program during Delis’ summer break. “I got to see it all, from management to distributions. I work with clients and manage nutrition volunteers, and with my sanitation license I place food orders, oversee deliveries and produce rescues, and also calculate and analyze data for nutrition reports. It’s been a great experience.”

Along with securing Ola’s intern replacement, the Pantry plans to work towards a 2015 grant to fund a staffed nutrition clinic. Can you say quadruple threat?
The Food Pantry gratefully acknowledges the generosity of its donors.

Donations July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2013

$1 - $99

The food Pantry gratefully acknowledges the generosity of its donors.
HONOR ROLL OF VOLUNTEERS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2013

500+ Hours
Barb Weakly

300-400 Hours
Charles Lake
Aleksandra Wiak
Gale Zemel

200-299 Hours
Matthew Brown
John Conny
Bobbie Hald
Cody St John

100-199 Hours
Kate Boulou
Jayne Boyle
Belinda Bremner
Louise Bruynseels
Bruce Bunschoten
Veronica Burmeister
Jake Dickens
Vera Dowell
Jayne Doyle
Ray Faghih
Connor Ficca
Willie Mae Harris
Barb Hickey

25-49 Hours
Claudia Zinanni
Thaddeus Woods
Dana Way
Thaddeus Woods
Claudia Zinanni

Gift of Folk Singer Transforms the Pantry

You feel the spirit of the music almost before you hear it, the minute you join the crowd filing into First United Church's basement. The room would have the listless air of places where too many people facing hard times must wait to be served, but today is different.

Standing in the far corner is a guy with a banjo, picking up a storm. By the time he switches to his guitar and begins singing “You Are My Sunshine,” he has transformed the moment. It’s hard to stay mad or sad or frustrated or bored when first-rate music fills the room.

The musician is Mark Dvorak, artist-in-residence at the Old Town School of Folk Music and an award-winning performer, songwriter, teacher, and community builder who crisscrosses the country giving more than 200 concerts a year.

His monthly performances at Oak Park River Forest Food Pantry began in January 2013 when an anonymous donor funded them in honor of a relative—an amateur musician who died too young. When the donor approached Dvorak about performing at the Pantry, he asked to visit first to see whether music would be appropriate.

“You’re not here necessarily to entertain people, you’re not here to engage them if they’re not willing to be engaged,” he says. Then he decided, “I’m just going to go in there and try to let the music do its work, to stay out of the way. Almost immediately I felt, this is going to work.”

His concerts are a mix of new and traditional folk, American standards, gospel, country blues guitar and old-time banjo. Sometimes clients sing along or call out requests. Once he led a singing game that captivated 10 children who mimed, “She’ll Be Coming Round the Mountain.”

“We had one client who is normally a very agitated and angry woman,” recalls Pantry Manager Paula Berg. “The day Mark performed, she was calm. When I mentioned to the group that I hoped they were enjoying the music as much as I was, she said it made her happy! I believe Mark’s music was a tonic to her soul.”

Another day, a man at the very end of a long line spontaneously sat down at an upright piano in the corner and belted out a jazz riff. The room burst into applause; he stood up, beamed and bowed.

“It was the spirit of the moment,” Dvorak says. “It’s turned out to be a lovely thing.”

“I believe Mark’s music was a tonic to her soul.”
Financial Report 2013

In fiscal year 2013, we celebrated 35 years of service to the community. Our gala concert featuring Los Lobos and the additional support it generated helped enable us to fully fund a three-month operating cash reserve and a strategic initiative fund. We are grateful to all our supporters throughout the year for helping us reach these important financial milestones. Our volunteers contributed 17,509 hours of labor valued at over $138,000. While volunteer hours do not appear in the financial statements, we recognize we could not have such a healthy report without them.

Oak Park & River Forest Food Pantry Financials as of June 30, 2013.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement of Financial Position</th>
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<td>Contributions - individuals (26%)</td>
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Meet Verdell

Verdell Chandler always brings two things to the Pantry: a warm smile, and her 91-year-old mother, who has lived with her since being diagnosed ten years ago with Alzheimer’s disease and dementia.

Verdell has health challenges of her own, having suffered since she was 22 with rheumatoid arthritis, which led to two knee replacement surgeries and chronic pain. She worked despite the pain until 2006, when the Chicago Tribune outsourced its Customer Service Department to the Philippines, costing Verdell and 70 others their jobs. She applied for disability so she could care for her mother full time with help from a caregiver.

Caring for her mom is challenging but Verdell knows how to face each day with grace because, in better days, her mom taught her how. “She used to be so vibrant, and she always took care of everybody when they needed her, bringing children and grandchildren to live with her until she lost her house in the mortgage crisis,” Verdell says. “I just can’t put her in a home. She’s hard to deal with sometimes, but I’m glad she’s with me because I know that if she’s here, nobody will hurt her.”

Verdell smiles. “Sometimes she forgets her own name, but she never forgets mine. I’d be lonely without her. Sometimes we just dance.”

Verdell has a special place in her heart for Pantry Manager Paula Berg, who presented her with a cake on her birthday last August. “We eat better when we come here,” she says. “It’s harder and harder to get out with her, but the people here always make us welcome.”