

# Holly Springs Food Cupboard sees increase in demand

Pantry serves about 30 local families every week

By Paul A. Specht [aspecth@newsobserver.com](mailto:aspecth@newsobserver.com) :: April 23, 2014



*Jerry DeWitt checks on the garden at the Holly Springs Food Cupboard while volunteering on Thursday. The garden grows vegetables that are given to local families, along with other foods.*

HOLLY SPRINGS - Marty Erb filled paper grocery bags with pasta, beans and rice.



Erb's wife Jane partnered with Tonya Lord to store boxes of canned goods on 8-foot wire racks.

In the garage, Tony Perna and his wife Linda organized produce and bread on fold-out tables. The **Holly Springs Food Cupboard** is serving many more families than when it opened in 2012. The group now helps about 30 families a week in Holly Springs, compared to about 10 a couple of years ago.

What began as Carol Moran's calling to help the hungry has evolved into an essential food source for some residents, complete with an army of volunteers that makes it all work.

"The families range from senior citizens to families of 10 that come from generational poverty," said Pat Haggard, who helped Moran start the food pantry.

Moran knew there was a need for a local resource after volunteering at pantries in Apex and Fuquay-Varina, where Holly Springs residents were going for help. In 2010, the Western Wake Crisis Ministry in Apex served 300 families, she said. More than 90 were from Holly Springs, and about a dozen were from the nearby New Hill community. "When you have trouble buying food, you probably have trouble buying gas to get food from (food pantries) in Apex or Fuquay," she said.

Springs residents were going for help. In 2010, the Western Wake Crisis Ministry in Apex served 300 families, she said. More than 90 were from Holly Springs, and about a dozen were from the nearby New Hill community. "When you have trouble buying food, you probably have trouble buying gas to get food from (food pantries) in Apex or Fuquay," she said.

## Vegetable Garden

Now Holly Springs families don't have so far to travel for help, and the cupboard is providing a perk that many food pantries don't. The Holly Springs Food Cupboard has a garden that produced 1,800 pounds of fresh vegetables last year.

The garden was built and stocked by volunteers like Jerry DeWitt. DeWitt, a former agriculture professor, and other members of the **Holly Springs Garden Club** built an organic garden on one-tenth of an acre behind the food cupboard building. It has produced tomatoes, turnips, cabbage, squash, green beans, beats, Yukon Gold potatoes, zucchini, lettuce, chard and kale.

DeWitt is also using different gardening techniques to help customers grow vegetables at home. He's growing radishes, garlic and more in a small wooden pallet. It's called "square-foot gardening." "It can be good for one or two people ... because it maximizes space," he said.

Doing a lot with a little is the theme of the food cupboard. Canned goods are stacked to the ceiling in some rooms, even though a group of seniors built an additional room not long ago. Volunteers don't have a lot of supplies, so some local Boy Scouts built a compost bin and fixed the roof of the shed out back. Church groups have helped, too.

"To me, this is a great training ground for the youth," DeWitt said. "It's a great opportunity to provide education and service so maybe they'll realize, 'Hey, it's not all about me.'"

## A constant need for donations

*Tony Perna unloads bread on a display table while volunteering at the Holly Springs Food Cupboard. The organization depends on volunteers to keep going.*

The cupboard receives a lot of donations of canned goods, but it always needs more.

Gardeners could use a shovel or two, and Moran said the cupboard could use more snacks for kids.

Granola bars, crackers, peanut butter and fruit cups are ideal.

The cupboard takes some goodies to local elementary schools for snack time and sends some home with customers.

"A lot of kids come home hungry while their parents are at work," Moran said. "They need something to eat that's easy to open."

The food cupboard sits near the center of town on Holly Springs Road, off the beaten path for most Holly Springs residents. It's out of sight and can be out of mind for some people who live on the outskirts of town.

But the need is there, says volunteer Joe Hadala. And so is the opportunity to serve. "There's a lot of poverty and a lot of hunger here," he said. "But things can be done to circumvent that."

