

# LakeForester

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They stood in the rain to distribute much-coveted meat, poultry and fresh fruits and vegetables to 300 needy people who likewise weathered the storm to have food home to bring home to their families.

The mobile food pantry donated by Lake County Community Foundation is designed specifically to supply the hungry with food beyond the usual packaged and canned items.

Donning rain scarves, ponchos and trying to balance umbrellas on Oct. 22, some volunteers just gave up and stood in the rain to help distribute some 10,000 pounds of frozen meat, taco kits, boxed cereal, bananas and 10 pounds of potatoes to individuals lucky enough to have a number to receive food that day. Some 30 donors, board members and potential donors stood side-by-side in shifts with students from New Tech High School in Zion to help out those in need, carrying boxes for clients as they selected items from the distribution line and even helping individuals out to their car.

## 'Real eye-opener'

"This was a real eye-opener," said Miah Armour, a new Lake County Community Foundation board member who took her first bus tour -- which started and ended at First Presbyterian Church in Lake Forest -- last week. The five-hour outing was the fourth bus tour led by the Lake County Community Foundation.

"There was a lot of information to take in, but it was great," Armour said. Armour, like many others, was outside in the rain replenishing food boxes and helping distribute perishables.

An affiliate of The Chicago Community Trust, the Lake County Community Foundation builds strategic alliances and educates donors about the challenges in the county and helps to develop simple, powerful and personal approaches to giving throughout Lake County, according to executive director Sylvia Zaldivar-Sykes.

The mobile food pantry was parked at the Zion-Benton Community Resource Center that houses several non-profit agencies in one location to better serve the community.

"The focus of our bus tour centered around food security and demands for food in this county and how to create a more effective and efficient human delivery system," Zaldivar-Sykes told the group.

"We saw the Northern Illinois Food Bank distribution facility in Park City. We saw how NIFB distributes its food in Lake County," she said. "The demand for food in Lake County has increased by 28 percent in just the last year. This demonstrates two issues our grant to NIFB is addressing: Supply and demand remains an issue with working poor. Part of the grant was for mobile food pantries and to help build capacity of individual food pantries with refrigeration."

The other grant demonstrated during the tour helped transform the old Zion Benton High School, which sat empty for 10 years, into a "funded partnership for eight non-profit organizations to come together under one roof and serve the community in very different capacities," she said. "The idea of sharing services in a variety of ways is really an efficient way of meeting the needs of the community. Being co-located in one place helps them to double or triple the amount of people they're serving while they're saving resources. From community foundation standpoint, this is type of innovation and creativity that we want to see in the future."

The LCCF is in its sixth year and has gone from start-up to a growth-based organization.

At the end of the half-day tour, Kitty Lansing of Lake Forest, the chairman of the LCCF board, said the guided, hands-on tour is a good way to show people who are not "traditionally aware of what's going on in some other parts of this county some of the needs and different groups addressing it," Lansing said. "The Lake County Community Foundation puts together donors and needs and gets people interested to solve some of the issues."