

Harvest of Hope Food Pantry – May 31, 2016

Three years ago we were anticipating opening Harvest of Hope Food Pantry. We had spent slightly over six months working on setting up the food pantry. I had proposed its structure, but the actual nuts and bolts of its operation was worked through from the input of many people as we sought to define what we wanted to do.

Our mission statement was and still is: “Responding to the call of Jesus Christ, the Harvest of Hope Food Pantry feeds the hungry, promotes physical and spiritual health, and brings people together in a community of love.”

We had big hopes and dreams with Four Thousand Dollars (\$4,000). Someone gave us a donation with which we bought our building. Our building was literally, for the most part, owned by the bank. At that time, I believe that none of us had a real clue as to what it took to operate a food pantry. We just trusted the leadership of Jesus Christ.

In October 2012, we planned to open the food pantry in February of 2013, a date that kept being pushed back because we were not ready to open. We finally settled on June of 2013. Thus, three years ago, May 2013, we held pre-registration hoping to determine our client base. One hundred fifty-three families (153) registered. We wondered what the results would be when we actually opened our doors. We had divided the alphabet to spread the clients over the four Tuesdays of the month so that everyone would not show up at once. None of us had any idea what to expect and I might say that after three years we still do not know what to expect. As we have said, “The past three years have really been a ride, a true adventure.” At times it seems that we simply hang on. At times it is scary the way it has grown and the help that we have had along the way: volunteers, churches, clubs, and individuals who have enabled us to perform this ministry. The first few months, I don’t remember how many, Ginger and I went to the grocery store each week and purchased almost everything we gave out. When we opened our doors, our inventory consisted of 500 bags of rice, a few hundred cans, primarily fruit, and 6500 jars of peanut butter. It has been wonderful to see how God has blessed this ministry. All we can do is say, “Thank you.”

We have been blessed by local farmers that enable us to provide fresh vegetables in season. We have been blessed by Food Lion who has provided meat, breads and sweets, and some produce. These items are picked up from Food Lion on a daily basis, all year long.

Today we serve an average of about 750 families per month, but occasionally the total families served reaches a few more than 800 families.

We thank each of you who have enabled us to be blessed and to bless others through this ministry. Our hope is that you will continue to enable us to serve the people of Sumter County as we look into the next years and all the years ahead. We continue to search for new ways to better serve our clients. We had 153 families who pre-registered. Today, in our database we have 2249 families. That is everyone who has registered with us. The families that come each week are served by about 100 dedicated volunteers. We have about 225 volunteers in our volunteer database. Some work every week. Some work several times a month. Some work once a month. Some work every time there is an opportunity. I must personally thank each volunteer, especially Jan Olek who coordinates the volunteers. That is a tremendous undertaking and is very much appreciated.

We covet your continued support: your financial support, your donated items, your plastic bags, your time, and especially your prayers. Thank you for helping us fulfill our mission

statement. God bless you as you enable us to continue this ministry. In all that we do, may God receive the glory.

Sonny Pinckard

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Executive Director