Welcome!

This is the fourth edition of our quarterly newsletter for those interested in supporting Comer Food Pantry.

About Comer Food Pantry

The Comer Food Pantry was founded in 2010 by a group of Pritzker medical students, Comer Children's Hospital staff, and University of Chicago faculty. We partner with the Greater Chicago Food Depository to supply food to families of patients in Comer Children's Hospital.

The Comer Food Pantry operates in the 2nd (NICU), 4th (PICU), 5th and 6th floor family lounges in Comer Children's Hospital. Food is free and available to all families of Comer patients, any time during the day or night. There are no requirements to receive food nor limits on how much families may take, making the Food Pantry welcoming and accessible to anyone in need.

Support for the Comer Food Pantry

The Comer Food Pantry is led by researchers from the South Side Health & Vitality Studies at the Lindau Lab. This work is supported by the University of Chicago Medicine Urban Health Initiative and generous donations from individuals.

If you’d like to receive more information about Comer Food Pantry or make a donation, please contact Isabella Joslin at (773) 834-5890 or ijoslin@bsd.uchicago.edu

Research news

Feed First, Ask Questions Later: Alleviating and Understanding Caregiver Food Insecurity in an Urban Children’s Hospital

The American Journal of Public Health (AJPH) recently published a paper by Comer Food Pantry researcher Jennifer Makelarski, PhD. The paper presents findings from a study on food insecurity in patient families at Comer Children’s Hospital.

In 2012, a team of University of Chicago researchers developed a questionnaire to assess food insecurity specific to the hospital setting. “Food insecurity”—and its converse, “food security”—are concepts with definitions that differ slightly among different organizations. Generally speaking, people are food insecure if they face significant barriers to accessing enough nutritious food for themselves or their families.

Results from the questionnaire showed that one third of all patient families at Comer Children’s Hospital experienced food insecurity during their child’s stay, and more than 40% of all patient families experienced food insecurity at home at some point in the past 12 months.

The study also suggests a possible link between caregiver hunger and negative attitudes toward hospital care, such as distrust or worry. The Comer Food Pantry was created to reduce hospital-based food insecurity and its pernicious effects.

The abstract and full-text PDF of the paper, currently published on the AJPH website, are available from PubMed: http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/26066937

Spotlight on the Greater Chicago Food Depository’s 30th Annual Hunger Walk!

Last month, the Greater Chicago Food Depository (GCFD) held its 30th Annual Hunger Walk, attracting more than 14,000 people eager to end food insecurity throughout Chicago and beyond. Team members from Comer Food Pantry team were among them, arriving at Soldier Field early on a Saturday morning to walk three miles along Lake Michigan.

We even recruited a few friends and family members to walk (or be carried) with us! The thousands of people walking with us were representing food pantries and soup kitchens from all over Chicagoland. With matching t-shirts, signs, and spirited chants, the crowd worked to raise awareness for GCFD and ensure that #no1goeshungry.

While the annual walk is over, it’s not too late to donate to Comer Food Pantry! Through July 31, you can make a donation for any amount and it will go directly to the account we use to purchase food for our four hospital pantry locations.

Every month, Comer Food Pantry spends about $300 on food orders from the GCFD, which can serve about 100 families. Every dollar counts.

To make a donation to Comer Food Pantry’s account at the GCFD, go to www.chicagosfoodbank.org/goto/comerfoodpantry and click “Donate Now.”

Spread the word to your friends & family by forwarding this email to them, passing along the link and donation information, or tweeting about Comer Food Pantry. Comer Food Pantry appreciates all your support! We can all work together so that #no1goeshungry.

(Left) Some of the members of the Comer Food Pantry team with friends and family of the Greater Chicago Food Depository’s 30th Annual Hunger Walk.

Why is there a food pantry inside of a hospital?

Although the hospital attracts patients from throughout the Midwest, its primary patient population is from the South Side of Chicago. Our communities experience some of the highest rates of food insecurity in the city—in some neighborhoods more than half of residents don’t know where their next meal will come from.

Food insecurity has been linked to negative health outcomes in both children and adults. We started the Comer Food Pantry in response to anecdotal evidence from hospital staff suggesting that parents were going hungry at their children’s bedside. The Food Pantry aims to address the issue of food insecurity experienced by family members during a child’s hospitalization.

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#no1goeshungry