

➤ **When did the Pantry start?**

The Pantry began from a discussion group at a Sunday morning learning session in May 2006. On Sunday, the idea was proposed; by Thursday, the shelves were up; the next Thursday, the Pantry accepted its first two households.

➤ **Why does the Pantry exist?**

We believe in the promise of God's kingdom as a reality for *today*, and that in God's kingdom there is enough for everyone to live a full and abundant life. As people who have been blessed by God, we in turn seek to bless others.

➤ **How many households is the Pantry serving?**

We're currently serving almost 1,200 households, and increasing by 10-15 households each week. At our current rate of increase, anticipate serving approximately 1,500 households by the end of 2008.

➤ **How many households does the Pantry see every week?**

We see between 60 and 90 households every week – usually 10-20 households on Sunday, and 50-70 households on Thursday. We receive 5-20 *new* households each week.

➤ **Who can come to the Pantry?**

Anyone in need in the greater Madison area, extending to all of Dane County and beyond. As long as we're the only Pantry

of this type, we don't restrict service based on geographic region or ZIP code.

➤ **How often can people come to the Pantry?**

People can come as often as they *need* to, as many times as they *need* to. We maintain control of the inventory with a computer program that knows how often a household can have what, based on the household make-up (adult men, adult women, children, children 3 or under) and on the household size.

➤ **Is there a "typical" household?**

No – we have everything from single individuals to households of 13; single-parent families to families with both parents, and aunts and uncles and grandparents. The only thing typical about the families we serve is that they need us.

➤ **Where does the Pantry get its supplies?**

We get some of our products from Second Harvest Foodbank, which funnels contributions from companies and individuals for distribution through individual pantries such as ours. Some we buy directly. Some are donated to us. We try to balance cost, environmental responsibility, and fiscal responsibility (while we don't want to spend more than necessary, we don't want to support suppliers who do not pay a living wage).

➤ **How do I sign up to volunteer?**

The best thing to do is to talk with Christine Thompson, the Pantry Coordinator. You can call her at 244-1847, e-mail her at [essentialspantry@tds.net](mailto:essentialspantry@tds.net), or stop by most weekdays.

➤ **When and where can we drop off donations?**

Donations can generally be dropped off Monday through Friday, 9:00-3:00. We suggest that you avoid Thursdays between 11:00 and 3:00 (we're in the midst of the busiest time), and that you call first to be sure that someone will be available.

➤ **Are donations tax-deductible?**

Yes – the Personal Essentials Pantry is a not-for-profit entity under the rules of the IRS. All donations are tax deductible.

➤ **How much of my donation goes to stock?**

Almost all of it. We do have some overhead costs – office supplies and the Coordinator's salary – but 80-90% of the monies we receive goes to buying products for distribution.

➤ **Who supports the Pantry – where does the funding come from?**

Much of the support comes from the members of the Zion congregation and the community at large. In addition, we seek funding from variety of foundations.

Thrivent Financial for Lutherans was a major donor in 2007.

➤ **Are there other pantries doing this type of thing?**

To the best of our knowledge, there's only one other pantry like this in Wisconsin, down in Rock County.

➤ **Why the focus on personal and household hygiene essentials?**

These are products that people need, but that aren't covered by food stamps. Most people think of food stamps as covering "groceries" – but the way the rules are written, they only cover food – no alcohol, no tobacco, no medicines, no non-food products of any sort.

➤ **What other agencies does the Pantry work with?**

We are a member of the Dane County Food Pantry Network, so we work cooperatively with all the food pantries in Dane County. Because we help with personal and household essentials, they can concentrate on providing food. It's a good pairing.

We also work with Second Harvest Foodbank of Southern Wisconsin. Our being here means that they have a place to send donations of laundry soap, toilet paper, Kleenex – so they spread the word about the need for those supplies, which means manufacturers and companies with a surplus of those supplies know that

there's a place other than the landfill to send them, which means that there's less waste in the landfills and more supplies in the hands of the people who need them.

We also know that we're in the role of a model or demonstration agency, so we pay attention to try to ensure that our procedures and paperwork can be used by other agencies. Our inventory control software, for example, is written in public domain, open source software, so we can give it away to anyone who wants it.

➤ **Do you make provision for people who don't speak English?**

Many of our materials are already available in Spanish, and we'll be adding Hmong soon. As we have groups using other languages, we invite them work with us to make our materials available in their language, too. That includes not only making the general information available, but having our shopping lists available in dual language (since few of us speak languages other than English, and would have a hard time filling the shopping list if it were only in Hmong or Spanish or...).

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If you want more information, or have other questions, contact  
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**608-244-1847**

## Personal Essentials Pantry



# Frequently Asked Questions