



The Good Food Exchange



Fall–Winter 2014–15



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New Pantry at Calvary Baptist Church Offers Free Fresh Food in Downtown Ithaca

It's Saturday morning, and the basement of **Calvary Baptist Church** in downtown Ithaca's Northside neighborhood is buzzing with the sounds of people talking about food.

Not just any food, but a lush cornucopia of fresh, seasonal fruits and vegetables, breads, and baked goods that they can choose from and take home for free, thanks to area food donors and Friendship Donations Network (FDN), which collects and distributes the bounty.

Displayed on six long tables in two rows are apples, potatoes, squash, avocados, asparagus, eggplant, and broccoli from the Wegmans supermarket in Ithaca; tatsoi and mixed greens donated by West Haven Farm, a local CSA; spinach from Full Plate Farm Collective; and oven-baked specialties from Wegmans, Tops, and Ithaca Bakery.

There was a time when Gretchen Cooper relied on food pantries to put meals on her table. The experience motivated her to help start new food pantries



Volunteers at Calvary Baptist's new food pantry, which is open to all. Pamela Moore is third from left, pantry founder Gretchen Cooper is fourth, and Wendy Henderson is sixth.

to help others in need in the Ithaca community. The Calvary Baptist Church food pantry, which is held every third Saturday of the month, is the latest one she's been involved in—as well as the newest pantry supported by FDN.

"I've been there and I know how it is," says Cooper, who approached FDN coordinator Meaghan Sheehan Rosen

about providing food for a new pantry and talked to Reverend Nathaniel Wright about hosting it at Calvary Baptist, the church at 507 North Albany Street that he leads.

"Our only requirement is to come while we're open," says Wright. The pantry, which began in August, is open to everyone in need in the community—not just church members.

"Gretchen is amazing," Wright says. "She gives with her heart to serve the community. She brought [the need for a food pantry in downtown Ithaca] to my attention and helped spearhead the entire program," he adds. "She gives of her time to make sure people in need have access to fresh, healthy food."

Wright, who grew up attending Cal-

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Visit FDN at the **Ithaca Alternative Gift Fair** on Saturday, December 6 from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the First Presbyterian Church and the First Baptist Church at Dewitt Park. Bypass the stress of holiday shopping while honoring friends and relatives with donations to causes that fit their values.

Gifts start at \$5. Each comes with a greeting card and an insert about the organization you are supporting. **Can't make it?** All gifts can be purchased online from December 7 to December 31 at ithacaaltgiftfair.org.





Setting up at Calvary Baptist, FDN's newest pantry.

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Calvary Baptist, a church with roots going back to 1857, says, "Just from pastoring in the community, I've seen that if you're connected with any food pantry you'll find a lot of people in need in the area. By providing [food] with no strings attached we are fulfilling our mission at Calvary Baptist, meeting not just the spiritual needs of people in the community but the physical needs as well," he says.

No strings attached for food recipients has also been part of the FDN philosophy since its founding by Sara Pines 26 years ago. So has the notion of preventing waste by rescuing food that would otherwise be thrown away, says Rosen.

On October 18, when the pantry doors opened at 10 a.m., the first per-

son in the door was Barb, who works seasonally in a university dining hall. She said she welcomed the new pantry, which would help put food on her table—a challenge on those weeks when she doesn't get a paycheck. A vegetarian, she appreciated the healthy fresh produce, she said. She planned to stir-fry the greens and asparagus and was happy to find an avocado among the vegetables.

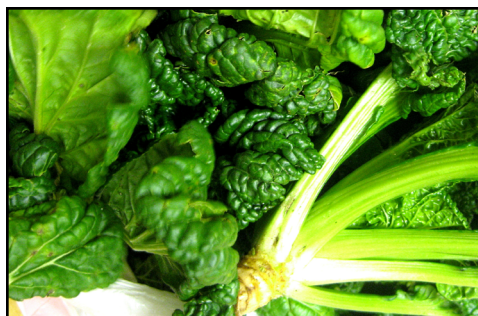
Volunteers, including Cooper, Wendy Henderson, and others, picked up the food, organized and distributed it, and cleaned up afterward. They talked with each other about ways to improve the pantry, such as making signs about how much food to take, and collecting information about the households served without in-

fringing on people's privacy.

One volunteer, Pamela Moore, who cooks for large groups at Calvary Baptist several times a month, served as the unofficial greeter at the front door. She gave everyone who entered a warm welcome, sometimes with a hug, and wished all who exited "a blessed day."

She knows it isn't easy to walk into a food pantry for some, but seeing a welcoming face can make a difference, she says. "It's important to let people know there are those who care and are there to lend a helping hand. You never know how a hug or kind words can inspire someone else."

—Article by Linda Brandt Myers and Meaghan Sheehan Rosen



Farm-fresh greens are just one of the many foods that FDN helps local pantries obtain.

Generous Gardeners

Area gardeners donated more than **2,800 pounds** of produce to FDN during the 2014 season of Neighborhood Food Hubs, which ran from July 1 to October 1. FDN is grateful to the volunteers who made this project happen and the community members who donated their homegrown produce.

For more information, visit friendshipdonations.org/hubs.

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Introducing . . .

Volunteer Spotlight!

Visit our web site or Facebook page to see the first installment, featuring FDN board member Art Pearce.



Alternatives Federal Credit Union

has selected FDN to be the Round-Off recipient for December 2014. This month, Alternatives members can round down their check deposits to a whole dollar amount and donate the change to FDN. We are grateful to Alternatives for this opportunity!

Save the Date: FDN Video Launch



February 5, 2015

Just Be Cause Center

1013 W. State St, Ithaca

You are invited to the first screening of our new film by Mark Hartsuyker! Details at friendshipdonations.org.