Micro-pantry offers discreet way to access food

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A new micro-pantry in Grand Haven will provide for those who need a stigma-free way to access food and personal care items at any time of the night or day. The new micro-pantry has been placed along the alley side of Extended Grace’s Momentum Center building at 714 Columbus Ave. in the Centertown area of Grand Haven. Much like the cities’ mini-lending libraries, where people can easily leave or take books whenever they are needed, micro-pantries are an easily accessible way for people to get the food they need without having to make a trip to a food pantry. The idea started in
set about planning to make it a reality. "I was so excited when Natalie brought this idea to me and asked if we would have space," Van Horssen said. "As an organization committed to working with marginalized populations, we know the need for life's basics don't always fit normal hours of operation. The Momentum Center is all about creating a stigma-free community that connects people with each other. With this pantry, that work continues, as everyone is invited to give and take as they have resources and as they have needs. When we come together, there is always enough for all. What a great way to be a community." Carmolli, a marketing specialist for Spring Meadow Nursery in Robinson Township, applied for a grant to build out and initially stock the micro-pantry from Spring Meadow's donor advised fund, which was created to support community giving. The company's donor advised fund committee, comprised of Spring Meadow employees, chose to fund this project in its 2018 end-of-year granting period. The winter proved challenging for getting the structure completed and placed, but craftsman Bill Haug was able to complete it this spring and it is now ready for use. Haug, a retired superintendent of Schoolcraft Community Schools, also has volunteered his time and skills to build other storage structures that sit on the exterior patio area of Momentum Center; he designed the micro-pantry to coordinate with these other outbuildings. Members of the community are encouraged to drop off food or take items from the cabinet-sized pantry, which is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Any overflow items will be stored at the Momentum Center for restocking or will be donated to The People Center's food pantry in Spring Lake. Preferred pantry stock items are canned food, peanut butter, jelly, and small snack items such as granola bars, which can be picked up and taken on the go. Also welcome is canned pet food and personal care/toiletry items. Post-dated food and medications cannot be accepted and will be discarded. The pantry is designed to serve those in the area who may struggle to meet their needs and is discreet enough that anyone can stop by at any point throughout the day or night to take a food item. "What I love about this type of pantry is its accessibility, both for people who want to drop off supplies and for those who would like to pick some up," Carmolli said, "It just provides another way for us to supplement the already outstanding food pantry options in our area such as The People Center, The Salvation Army and Love, Inc. We hope this pantry is just the beginning of a string of micro-pantries across West Michigan. "We believe that as human beings we can all do a better job extending grace to each other and to ourselves. We provide opportunities to do so by forming collaborative relationships and offering programs and events to nurture, educate and inspire individuals so that together we can address issues of social justice and human rights."

For more information, contact Extended Grace at 616-414-9111.