Teens give back to community through micro-pantry

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A cupboard-size micro-pantry located outside The Momentum Center in Grand Haven has provided food and personal care items to those in need since early summer.

Courtesy photo

Grand Haven’s micro-pantry has been in use for five months now, providing food and personal care items to those in need. It also provides a way for teens to volunteer their time and give back to the community.

Proving there is a need for people to easily access non-perishable food, the cupboard-size pantry is nearly emptied and refilled several times a week.
Interest in helping the pantry succeed has also come from people who aren’t close enough to drop off items. With the help of local residents who post about the pantry on social media, several monetary donations have been sent from people who live in other cities and states. Those donations, earmarked especially to purchase food for the pantry, are sent to The Momentum Center for Social Engagement and provide a unique opportunity for teens and young adults who attend programs at the center to give back, by shopping for food items and refilling the pantry.

For one of the young volunteers, who asked not to be named, the reality of food insecurity hits close to home.

“I know what it’s like to not afford food, so helping others is me returning the help I got,” he said.

Another volunteer, Keegan, took a more global view: “Time is short — use it to help out others.”

Despite the monetary donations, food and personal care items are always needed. With winter approaching, suggestions for the outdoor pantry will focus on food that can survive a freeze-thaw process — such as peanut butter in plastic jars, tuna in pouches, pasta, cereal, and grab-and-go snacks such as granola bars. Also welcome are dry pet food in small packages and personal care/toiletry items.

Post-dated food, homemade food and medications cannot be accepted and will be discarded. Overflow items are sent to The People Center in Spring Lake.

The micro-pantry is located in the alley beside The Momentum Center, 714 Columbus Ave.