Reflecting back on the last year, resilience is a word that comes to mind. We saw resilience in the community learning to deal with the continuing pandemic as well as resilience in the operations and management of the Pantry. In the fall we returned to a choice pantry in an updated and expanded grocery store style space. We participated in the Restaurant Resiliency program sponsored by Feeding Westchester, offering our guests meals prepared by four local restaurants. This delighted guests while providing restaurants with much needed revenue. Our grants team was very successful keeping up with a number of new grant opportunities emerging from the focus on food security during the pandemic. Seven of our guests have volunteered to serve on the Neighbor Advisory Council and provided valuable feedback at our first meeting in May. The Pantry has recovered strongly from the challenges of the past two years.

In addition, we head into the new fiscal year with a new strategic initiative, Food 4 Wellness. We will be integrating programs across 4 pillars to provide our guests with an engaging and educational experience centered on nutritious food and wellness. We will continue to enhance our food choices with even more fresh produce and nutritious proteins while ensuring selections are culturally appealing. Our guests will have opportunities to participate in wellness activities such as health screenings and can receive information about stress reduction and improving sleep. Nutrition information, and recipe and menu ideas, will be shared through several communication channels. The Pantry is fortunate to have relationships with a number of local farms and community gardens and we will continue to expand these to ensure our guests benefit from the value of locally grown foods.

As we wrap up our year as Co-Presidents, we are grateful to everyone who has made this challenging year a success. We especially thank our wonderful volunteers for their continued service and our dedicated Volunteer Coordinator, JoAnn Scherer, who has literally kept things running. With gratitude we recognize the amazing generosity of our donors and grantors, as well as the smiles and positive feedback from our guests. Moving forward, JoAnne will concentrate full time as Vice President of Operations and Sharon will stay on as President. We are excited about the direction of the Pantry and the opportunity to serve the community.
We were chosen by our local food bank, Feeding Westchester, to source healthy and nutritious meals for our community from three local restaurants, Exit 4 Food Hall, Monarca, and Tipsy Taco and two additional restaurants from Astoria, Queens, Addy’s Barbeque and Grand Central. Each participating restaurant had to pre-qualify to register for this impactful New York State-funded program.

More than 7,600 healthy and nutritious meals were prepared by the restaurants and delivered to the Pantry, from January through March through the Restaurant Resiliency Program. The Pantry was able to provide these pre-cooked meals to our community during our weekly distributions. The restaurants benefited since they were still rebounding from the devastating effects that Covid crisis had brought to their businesses. Most importantly, they were thankful to support our work in the community. One of the restaurant owners from Addy’s Barbeque told us how he wanted to give back to the community.

Next time you are having a meal at one of these restaurants, make sure to say thank you for supporting the Pantry!

Tell me a little bit about yourself.
I am 17 years old and live in Goldens Bridge, NY. I am a junior at the Masters School in Dobbs Ferry, NY.

How did you learn about The Mount Kisco Interfaith Food Pantry?
Richard Leroy, the Director of Social Action at my temple, sent out an email to members in the summer of 2020, in search of volunteers to help with weekly Feeding Westchester food distributions. I volunteered throughout the summer and wanted to continue helping out with distributions during the school year. Richard suggested that I reach out to the Pantry.

Tell me about the Masters School Volunteer Club? When was it started?
I started the club in Sept. 2021 because I wanted my school community to be involved in this important cause. Our club has taken monthly volunteer trips to the Pantry on Tuesdays to help with distribution.

Why does the hunger issue and food insecurity resonate with you?
Those facing financial challenges are confronted with increasingly tough decisions, such as whether to pay for rent or buy food. Food insecurity resonates with me because I believe that nobody should have to make that choice. There is no vaccine to alleviate hunger.

What would you tell someone who is thinking about volunteering at the Pantry?
Volunteering at the Pantry is a wonderful opportunity to help your neighbors in need. The Pantry creates a welcoming environment and makes it feel like they are shopping at a grocery store. While fundraising is important, the most rewarding part is coming to the Pantry for distributions.

How has volunteering changed you?
I volunteer because I love seeing the smiles on the faces of the people who come to the distributions every week. It brings me so much joy that I am able to make a difference in someone’s life. Volunteering has given me perspective on life.
As an individual born with 26 life threatening food allergies, Jared Saiontz knows that having access to safe foods is the only way to manage food allergies. He also knows that allergy friendly foods cost 200-400% more than their allergan containing counterparts. This fact often leaves food insecure families with a choice between hunger and health. In honor of Food Allergy Awareness Month during the month of May, and in an effort to help meet this need in our community, Jared arranged for an allergy-friendly food drive in the Chappaqua schools for us. He was also recognized by County Executive, George Latimer! If you are interested in purchasing items on Jared’s wish list and have them sent directly to the Pantry, please visit the Our Special Partner's Page under the Who We Are tab on our website.

Roberta Horowitz, Director of Operations and Programs for the Pantry, explained the importance of this initiative for the Pantry. "We have lots of guests with food allergies. We are so grateful to Jared and his family. The Amazon boxes arrive daily. With inflation rising, we know the families with food allergies are truly grateful that we can provide gluten-free and milk alternatives.”

FOOD 4 WELLNESS - FOOD FOR HEALTH!
Food 4 Wellness is an initiative that the Pantry will be rolling out in the next several months. The program will focus on integrating actions across 4 pillars to provide an engaging and educational experience for our guests centered around the benefits of a healthy diet and lifestyle. It is a coordinated set of programs and activities which addresses the need for nutrition security. Critical nutrition is important for productivity, learning and being able to flourish. Food 4 Wellness takes on this important challenge to not only source and distribute high-quality, nutritious food but to provide education and support for everyone who comes to the Pantry for help. We want our guests to thrive and lead a healthy life. Sharon Seidell, Co-President of the Pantry said, “Good food, prepared well, not only alleviates hunger but impacts overall wellness. With access to fresh food and knowledge of how to use it, the community is empowered to face other challenges.”

Our 4 Pillars include:

NUTRITIOUS FOOD – provide nutritious, fresh produce and staple foods that are culturally appealing.

WELLNESS – Offer opportunities for guests to learn about incorporating positive lifestyle choices that will improve their quality of life

INSPIRATION – Provide engaging video content at distributions, offer recipe cards, meal plans, cooking demonstrations, with a focus on children

LOCAL SOURCING – Expand existing relationships with local farms and community gardens for produce and eggs. Encourage “grow your own” practices

FOOD ALLERGIES ARE REAL FOR MANY
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Bedford Community Church
Bedford Presbyterian Church
Bet Torah Synagogue
Iglesia Apostolica Monte de Sion
Lutheran Church of the Resurrection
Presbyterian Church of Mount Kisco
St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church
St. Mark’s Episcopal Church
St. Matthew’s Episcopal Church
St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church
Temple Shaaray Tefila
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Northern Westchester
United Methodist Church of Mount Kisco
Westchester Family Church

Please send your gift to:
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Summer 2022