

OUR COMMUNITY

It is 9:30 a.m. and our guests have been lining up outside the pantry for a couple of hours, sitting under the pavilion or on their own lawn chairs, having some morning coffee or doughnuts while they wait. It's hard to ask for help, but our volunteers (many who are or have been guests themselves) have tried to make it as easy as possible. Some guests say they enjoy their time at the pantry. It is part of our Hospitality Values.

Inside the volunteers are gathering - a mix of cultures and colors just like our guests. Folks from rural areas and city folks mingle with people from Guatemala, Mexico, Colombia, Cuba, Eastern Europe, Romania, Germany, Switzerland, Iraq, Iran, Palestine, the Philippines and beyond. What brings them all here? A need. A need for sustenance of one kind or another. And they find it. Here in this place.

And something else we know. Our guests do not come to the pantry empty handed. They bring something to the volunteers - - - - good cheer, a heartfelt God bless you, an assurance of their prayers, a sharing of good news, or even the sharing of struggles that provides insight into what it means to be different and alike at the same time; or maybe the understanding that we are not just white or black or brown, but that we are sisters and brothers. Whatever it is, we blossom together.

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to ensure that all Knoxville families have the food and nutrition that they need to thrive - to provide food to hungry families in a way that respects their human dignity while creating community across the lines which separate us. FISH Hospitality Pantries is the largest provider of food relief in East Tennessee, distributing food to nearly 8,000 families each month.

As important as sharing food is to our mission, an even more important value to us is the opportunity to get into relationship with the people on the margins of our society. Our community programs are designed to bring people on the margins more to the center of the community where their perspectives and contributions can benefit our Knoxville life together.

FISH Hospitality Pantries

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**FISH
HOSPITALITY
PANTRIES**

Creating Community

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OUR SPIRIT

FISH Hospitality Pantries has a history of treating everyone who comes through our doors with respect and dignity. Our Hospitality values (welcome, inclusiveness, diversity, non-judgemental acceptance) underpin everything we do at our four neighborhood pantries.

We have gone beyond feeding people to develop community programs from the organic needs we see of our guests and volunteers. In our society and our own community, there is division and often suspicion about anyone who seems different from what people see as the norm. We have dealt with this daily as many of our guests and volunteers have been excluded or marginalized. These realities inspired our community development work.

We created community programs for our guests and volunteers because we saw a need to break down stereotypes and misconceptions, and because we saw the talents and abilities that could be shared by being in community. Our programs aimed to create community. When we build relationship with people across race, ethnicity, and culture, we begin to see our common humanity.

OUR PROGRAMS

The **Women's Community School** - now in its tenth year--is a nine-month leadership development program that discovers and calls forth talents and abilities from diverse women; trains them to become strong leaders in our pantries and in their congregations and neighborhoods; and creates community across denomination, class, ethnic, and racial lines by building relationships around their common values and through participation in a mutual mentoring process.

September 2019 - May 2020

Mosaic, our multi-cultural leaders' institute, is a vehicle for dismantling racism, developing leadership, and building community by sharing stories to help break down barriers. Originally developed for volunteers and pantry guests, many of its components have inspired or been incorporated into our other programs.

Six month program - TBA

You Teach Me/ I Teach You, our language and cultural exchange program, helps immigrant women and children to have a better command of English and to integrate into the community by directing them to necessary resources for their children's education and sometimes medical attention. English-speaking volunteers and Spanish-speaking guests teach one another in this real-life language lab, while the children learn through art and stories.

August 16 - October 4, 2019

February 7 - March 27, 2020

Clarification of Values, our newest program, launches this fall. Community School graduates will lead this four-month program in which clergy, lay leaders, and Hospitality Pantries supporters will help to connect the volunteer experience with our underpinning foundational values and discuss how this develops our deeper understanding of poverty and hunger. Four evening sessions,

September - December 2019

The **Begin the Dream** project assists women in developing their particular skills and interests to help them move out of poverty. Often while women have not been able to hold traditional jobs, they have acquired marketable skills. Our program helps develop those skills, and identify ways of contributing to the family income. We know people living in poverty have dreams of meaningful work, but often they don't have the resources to begin. Our program will help women fulfill their dreams.

TBA

The **Renaissance Training Institute** provides training for those who want to learn more about working across lines in the public arena. Our institute trains people in the art of change and will develop stronger voices and courage to advocate for themselves. Since people from different cultures will participate, they will learn about the power of together: that we can get so much done together to impact their lives in a positive way.

August 2019, ongoing