

The Well

We Share Food!

May 2021

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YOUR MINISTRY AT WORK!

You know the statistics: 9-1 Monday through Friday approximately 50-70 families a week—40 % of what we offer is fresh food. What you don't know is that we are collaborating with other local pantries on a Cold Chain Food Storage Hub.

Last year, WCM distributed almost 200,000 lbs. of food. When we distribute food in this volume, storage and timely distribution become an ongoing challenge. WCM has three reach in refrigerators and two freezers in which we store our produce, dairy, eggs and frozen product. Some of the donations come in volume, though: a half ton of bananas, 800 pounds of green beans, 500 boxes of ginger root, 800 dozen eggs. When this happens, we frequently share with other food programs, some of which prepare hot meals for distribution and some of which share food and produce directly with neighbors.

Other pantries have variations of this problem: some churches don't have enough storage space for anything. Many have shut their pantries because of the pandemic. Although other congregations staff a monthly distribution, people want to eat every day.

There is also a difference in what and how food is distributed. Some pantries offer pre-filled boxes that neighbors can take away. While helps, it is not a long-term solution. The boxes are heavy, and they are prefilled. They typically include items that some families cannot use: dairy items, pork (religious prohibitions), or fruits and veggies to which someone in the family may be allergic. In addition, many of the boxes are too heavy to carry any great distance, and *most* of our neighbors do not drive. Walkers will often take the food they can use or carry but leave the box on the sidewalk!

WCM regularly gets calls from organizations to pick up the excess: entire boxes that cannot be distributed, with contents for "just in time" delivery (food that is thawing, already cooked and needs refrigeration), or commercial products that have no labels or ingredients need immediate cooling. These kinds of items otherwise go to waste. WCM will also be also partnering with two farmers' markets this summer to take the food they cannot distribute during operating hours! 412 Food Rescue comes several times a week! WCM can collect this food in a cold chain storage hub and share with organization that can use it, either immediately or soon enough.

WCM explored several ways to develop the Cold Chain Food Storage Hub behind the office. The Capacity and Clarity Committee, the subcommittee of the Board of Directors that evaluates and develops projects to keep WCM on its mission and within its financial capacity, recommended a commercial grade



Did you see our logo on our pantry aprons?

external refrigeration unit that will be built on the parking pad behind 704 Wood Street. The parking pad has already been modified to accept a 9 X 13 refrigeration unit. In addition to funding from the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank, WCM has secured funding from Neighborhood Allies and have one additional proposal outstanding to the United Methodist Foundation of Southwestern PA.

SAVE THE DATE!

25 July 2021.

1 PM

WCM Medicine Way Garden Dedication

In April, it's chilly, but by the end of July, it will be **HOT HOT HOT**, and our garden will be growing at its peak.

Come help us celebrate the hard work of a small army of volunteers and staff.

Medicine Way is parallel to Wood Street. The garden is at the corner of Medicine Way and Franklin Avenue.

***Coffee from Biddles' Escape
Cookies by Chaz Cooks & Eats!***

This event coincides with the Wilkinsburg Pollinator Garden tour, a self-guiding tour of 20 gardens throughout Wilkinsburg.

MESSAGE FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The pandemic did not only increase the number of people in our neighborhood who are food insecure: it exposed food insecurity as an long-term wide spread problem that is part of the problem. Poverty does not mean the same thing to all people: it can be broken into situational, generational, urban and rural. Many of our neighbors have been plunged into situational poverty, which is generally caused by a crisis, such as this pandemic, but it's important to remember that even under the pre-pandemic circumstances, many of our neighbors already faced the intense experience of poverty in unemployment, under employment, temporary employment, homelessness and under education.

Poverty derives from the structure of the economic system, it manifests itself in the housing and job market, and in the wage economy. We see it play out in large-scale social policies that blame poverty on mental illness, alcoholism, substance abuse and the lack of a work ethic.

Perhaps we should turn it around. Do social policies create and perpetuate poverty? Isn't poverty at least part of the causes of mental illness alcoholism, substance abuse and a poor work ethic? Where do we learn a work ethic? Watching our parents to work? When the mills closed in Duquesne, generations of kids grew up in households in which no adult held a regular job: the jobs were gone, and the mill workers had no other skills to market.

The numbers seven of ten should stick in your mind. No, this is not a Star Trek character (that was Seven of Nine). Seven of ten is the number of our school children in Wilkinsburg and environs who live in rented homes; the overall population of Wilkinsburg renters is about 60%. The average rent is \$800-1000 a month. Think how many hours at \$8.25 per hour that is to make a month's rent (110). Then remember that \$8.25 an hour is NOT minimum wage, and that \$8.25 an hour is what someone is paid before taxes. So, if a mother or father must work 110 hours (almost 3 weeks at a 40 hour a week job) just to pay the rent, he or she is already in a no-win situation. Then the parent must pay health insurance, bus pass (\$100), cell phone (a cell phone is less expensive than a landline,

especially if a family moves twice a year). Forget the idea of a car: making a car payment on this income is impossible and the insurance prohibitive. Add to this a gallon of milk (about \$4), a loaf of bread (\$2.50-3), some apples (\$1), and a dozen eggs (\$1.40), and a few pounds of chicken legs or thighs (–\$1.25-\$2.00/lb.) An 18 oz box of Cheerios is about \$4. A pound of bananas is about \$2.00. This much food would cost about 5 hours of work at \$8.25/hour.

Despite the popular rhetoric about vast amounts of tax dollars being spent on public assistance, the US social safety net can be more accurately described in minimalist terms as a web of frayed rope and gaping holes. Some of the safety net programs perpetuate poverty by focusing on individual deservedness: people should *deserve help* and assistance must be short term. Compared to other Western industrialized countries, the United States devotes far fewer resources to programs aimed at assisting the economically vulnerable. In fact, the U.S. allocates a smaller proportion of its GDP to social welfare programs than any of the other industrialized countries with which we like to compare ourselves favorably.

Do we assume one's status a predestination? Do the poor merit their poverty? "Safety Net" programs like SNAP and the related TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) ignore the system barriers rooted in structural racism that disproportionately affect people of color: historical and contemporary policies, practices and norms that create and maintain barriers to economic, social, progress and perpetuate segregation and inequity in education, jobs, housing healthcare and equal treatment in the criminal justice system."

Is the preoccupation of focus the individual's responsibility for his or her own poverty rooted in the assumptions of the American dream, which promotes the idea that if someone works hard, follows social and moral rules, and takes personal responsibility, they will be financially successful. So, under this assumption, if they are struggling financially, they must have done something wrong or aren't working hard enough. And too often, these expectations are seen through a racist lens, which perpetuates harmful stereotypes. Are the poor innately less valuable as human beings than those who are not poor? As a history student at CMU, I read about the "invisible hand of the marketplace"; as executive director of Wilksburg Community Ministry, I see how that invisible hand becomes a polite term for theft and degradation. Poverty—and its handmaidens, food insecurity, chronic illness, hopelessness—are results of structural barriers not personal choices. SNAP itself, a program that offers many of our neighbors the difference between eating and not eating, generally provides a family of three with no more than \$462 a month. Something to think about.

Ruth A. Kittner

19th Amendment Centennial: Daisy Lampkin



Daisy Lampkin, an Extraordinary Woman

Daisy Lampkin, orator, suffragist, civil rights activist, organization executive, and community builder, guided the work of the National Association of Colored Women, National Association of Colored People, and the National Council of Negro Women. She was a leading light in civil rights organizations of the Progressive era.

Although born in Reading Pennsylvania, she relocated to Pittsburgh in 1909. Her husband William Lampkin was a restaurateur in the Pittsburgh suburbs. She hosted local suffragist meetings in her home in the Hill District of Pittsburgh, and as a young mother, she became increasingly involved in the local leadership of the suffragist movement. she delivered street corner speeches and organized black housewives to engage as active consumer groups. first field secretary for the organization in 1930. Lampkin spearheaded the organization's drive to pass a federal anti-lynching bill in the United States Congress. Lampkin's direct involvement within the lobbying efforts on behalf of the bill far surpassed her collection of the \$9,378 that she grossed through the button campaign during the Great Depression. Lampkin continued to decry the lack of support amongst her supposed white peers. Such insistence garnered Lampkin the image of the no-nonsense community activist that she was most known for during the era.

After the Pittsburgh Courier profiled her in 1912 for her activities, she became an active advocate for the *Courier*, in 1913 selling the most subscriptions and winning, as a prize, a Cadillac.

Appointed vice president of the *Pittsburgh Courier* in 1927, she continued to promote and organize women as a political and social force, of which the Courier was a principal mechanism. In those days, the Courier was one of the nation's most widely distributed Black newspapers, and Lampkin saw it as way to promote Black voices. As first field secretary for the organization in 1930, Lampkin's efforts to organize and bolster the image of the NAACP nationally became legendary. In 1931, she single-handedly organized the NAACP's National Convention in Pittsburgh. Her fundraising and organizing skills so impressed NAACP leadership that, in 1935, she was moved from regional to national field secretary of the organization. That same year, while continuing to establish local NAACP chapters and participating in fundraising efforts, Lampkin spearheaded the organization's drive to pass a federal anti-lynching bill in the United States Congress. Lampkin's direct involvement within the lobbying efforts on behalf of the bill far surpassed her collection of the \$9,378 that she grossed through the button campaign during the Great Depression.

Between 1930 and 1964, she served as an officer for three consecutive terms. Lampkin began as a regional secretary (1930-1935), then served as the national secretary (1935-1947), and lastly, as a member of the board of the directors (1947-1964). In 1964 she received the first Eleanor Roosevelt-Mary McLeod-Bethune World Citizenship Award from the National Council of Negro Women. While she resigned as national field secretary in 1947, Lampkin continued to serve on the organization's executive board. She suffered a stroke while at a NAACP membership drive in Camden, New Jersey, and died on March 10, 1965. A Pennsylvania State Historical Marker is Placed at 2519 Webster Ave., Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania commemorating her accomplishments. Her grave is at Homewood Cemetery, Pittsburgh.



HOW DOES OUR GARDEN GROW?



Carlos manages the raised beds

Our Do-it-Yourself Urban Farm is an example of how to grow a lot of food in a small space year-round. The DIY approach keeps the costs of construction low and make it possible to grow food with few resources. Using a variety of recycled materials typically found in urban areas, we have constructed a garden for the pantry. this case, we utilized pallets, milk crates, some old tires, and as few construction materials as possible.

Our garden is growing

Instant Raised Beds

A building once occupied this lot. It was demolished, and the materials were used to fill the basement. Then a layer of fill that included soil, stones and clay was spread on top. To quickly re-utilize the lot to grow food we used pallets, chicken wire and straw bales to make a "instant" raised bed. The straw bales need to be "fertilized" to start the decomposition process. This takes about two weeks.

Aeroponic Growing Towers

In an urban space, horizontal space is often at a premium, so our aeroponic growing towers use vertical space to grow plants. Each tower can grow 80 plants in a two square foot space. Using four growing towers, we can grow 320 plants every 45 days. Our growing towers are made using waste-stream materials, in this case milk crates.

The holes in the milk crates are plugged with rock wool. The rockwool contains seeds of the plants we want to grow, in this case, spinach. The milk crates are covered with landscape fabric to capture the water. A pump sends water to the 360-degree water nozzles, which spray the rock wool. The water has nutrients generated by the micro-ecosystem in our greenhouse. The nutrient-enriched water helps the seeds mature.



Growing Towers for spinach



Beehives and habitat for pollinators

Pollinators like birds, butterflies, bees and other insects are essential the food system. We haven't installed the beehive yet. The birds are already nesting in the brick decorative work on the Mercy building. On the right, Sarah and her daughter learn about crickets. On the left, Lady Athena Kittner supervises the activities of the birds.



Learning About Crickets



Greenhouse interior

Pallet Greenhouse

Our greenhouse will allow us to produce greens year-round. We use hydroponics methods to grow lettuce, collards and green peppers. We are utilizing a micro-ecosystem that includes gold fish, turtles and insects to produce nutrient-rich water. Old poly barrels cut in half provide the basins for the hydroponic growing basins.

The greenhouse is powered by the sun. We have solar panels to generate electricity and thermal solar panels to heat water to maintain greenhouse temperature above 60 degrees. In the winter we will insulate the greenhouse with carboard and shredded paper panels. Rain barrels collect roof run off.



Use what we find!

A variety of discarded urban items provide containers for our garden. Left: Old tires lined with landscaping fabric and filled with soil can provide the growing space for collards and green peppers. The green canvas bag beside the tire is a potato/onion grower, with a clear plastic window so gardeners can see what's happening "underground."



You can learn more about backyard gardening at the Learn Plant Grow Garden festival on 22 May from noon – 4 PM. This event is sponsored jointly by the Wilksburg Chamber of Commerce, Greater Wilksburg Community Advancement Association, Grow Pittsburgh, Nine Mile Watershed Association, and Wilksburg Sustainable Gardens. The event is at the Harold Young Parklet on Penn Avenue.. Call Vicki at the Chamber of Commerce [412.999.2688](tel:412.999.2688) or email info@wilksburgchamber.com for more information



Photos by Sarah Schreck and Carlos Gasca Yanez

JOIN THE MINISTRY: BE PART OF THE SOLUTION!

And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner Leviticus 19:10

*For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me.
Matthew 25:35*

The best of you are those who feed others. Musnad Ahmad 23408

The instruction is clear: we are all enjoined to feed the hungry. We invite you to join our ministry by making a gift for the cause. The easiest way to give is to mail a check to us at 702 Wood Street, Pittsburgh PA 15221 but there are other ways of supporting WCM!

Network for Good: The link is available on the WCM website. Network for Good (N4G) is an easy way to send regular support to Wilkinsburg Community Ministry. Please note that N4G deducts a 5% fee for processing your gift. Gifts are sent to us on the 15th of the month *after* you make your gift. If your gift is anonymous, you will only get an acknowledgement from N4G.

Monthly Gifts: You can set up your bank account to send WCM a monthly gift. It's easy. Most checking accounts offer this service as part of their bill payment option. Add WCM to your automatic payment options, and enter the address: 702 Wood Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15221. Select an amount and timing. Your bank will send us a check every month in the amount you request to arrive at approximately the same time every month. This saves *you* postage and the post office still receives the business.

United Way. Most major employers offer a United Way campaign. Again, United Way takes a percentage of the gift; WCM is paid quarterly.

AmazonSmile is operated by Amazon with the same products, prices, and shopping features as Amazon.com. The difference is that when you shop on AmazonSmile, the AmazonSmile Foundation donates 0.5% of the purchase price of eligible products to the charitable organization of your choice. Every item available for purchase on www.amazon.com is also available on AmazonSmile at the same price. Eligible products are marked "Eligible for AmazonSmile donation" on their product detail pages. Your shopping cart, Wish List, wedding or baby registry, and other account settings are also the same. On your first visit to AmazonSmile (smile.amazon.com), you select a charitable organization to receive donations from eligible purchases before you begin shopping on the SMILE.AMAZON.COM portion of the site. Amazon remembers your selection, and then every eligible purchase you make at smile.amazon.com will result in a donation. Be sure to remember to go to smile.amazon.com when you're ready to shop. Items purchased through the regular amazon.com website do not qualify.

RMD Charitable Giving: If your retirement finances consist of an individual retirement account (IRA), then starting at age 72 you are required to take minimum distributions from your IRA. Because of the coronavirus, the government is allowing people of any age to tap their IRA funds this way; this provision will probably change later in this year, but the increase to 72 will probably remain. You may want to consider making an IRA Qualified Charitable Deduction (QCD) to benefit WCM. As always, please consult your financial advisors!

Bequests. If you'd like to add Wilkinsburg Community Ministry to your estate, please contact the office. We can send you a simple codicil that you can attach to your plans.

Special Gifts. Having a party? Celebrating a birthday or anniversary? Consider taking up a collection for Wilkinsburg Community Ministry. How many more ties, vases, etc. do you need? Ask your friends and family to donate to WCM instead. They could be sure to tell us what it's in honor of, and we will keep track! We can provide you with text and return envelopes.

Memorial Gifts in honor of Richard Depperman

(as of 4/26/2021)

Nancy Jane Welsh
Ike Adaeze & Otue Ezekoye
Barbara Patchan
Frederick W Okie Jr
Joseph & Catherine Hajdu
Richard & Betsy Monheim
Burl Moone III
J Gary Lewis
David Speakman
Wilkinsburg Rotary Club
Elaine Bellin
Deborah Martini
Vivienne & Jerome Selia
Gary and Sandy Slafka
Paula Addlespurger
Audrey Speiler
Roger & Victoria Schneider

Facebook fundraisers. These generate approximately \$2000-3000 for WCM annually! We don't know who gives, but the person who sets up the fundraiser does. Gifts come in through Network for Good as a Facebook gift; they are anonymous to us, but not to the organizer.



NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS

WE ARE THANKFUL FOR OUR COMMUNITY FRIENDS AND FOOD SUPPLIERS

Wednesday Evening Knitting Club usually meets at the C. C. Mellor Library—now Zooming on the second and fourth Wednesdays at 6 p.m. The group is making hats, mittens and scarves for our neighbors. The Zoom meeting is [here](#). (zoom room 204 142 753) You can contact the library at 412-731-0909 or email at ccmellor@einetwork.net for more information! CC Mellors Memorial Library has an array of online programs. See the event tab at the library website.

The Wilkinsburg Library offers a *Story Time with Ms. Rachel*. This is a play list of recorded readings from Rachel Moore, the Children's librarian and some other guest readers that you can access on at the [Library's Facebook page](#).

ADOPTED BY WILKINSBURG ROTARY CLUB

Rotary Club of Wilkinsburg/Regent Square has adopted WCM as its charitable organization this year. WCM receives its "5th Tuesday" check" (instead of a meeting, the club donates to their adopted non-profit), and the club members support WCM with gifts and service. Rotary meets for lunch on Tuesdays at noon at James Florals, 712 Wood Street. Wear your mask.

For those unfamiliar with the organization, International Rotary Clubs are regional and district organizations that bring together business and professional leaders for humanitarian goals. Worldwide, there are about 1.2 million Rotarians. The Wilkinsburg club is small but active. Rotary and WCM will be collaborating on several community service projects throughout this year.

ALWAYS NEEDED

CASES OF NEW CANNING JARS AND RINGS/LIDS, OF COURSE. PINTS AND HALF PINTS ESPECIALLY. WHEN YOU PASS BY THE CANNING SUPPLIES IN THE STORE, PLEASE HAVE A SPECIAL LOOK TO SEE IF THERE ARE RINGS AND LIDS!

THE WILKINSBURG SUN

In collaboration with the Wilkinsburg Chamber of Commerce, WCM is including the current month's Wilkinsburg *Sun* with the *Well* for the next three months. The *Sun* is published monthly through the Chamber and provides current information about the Wilkinsburg Schools and other activities in the Borough.

Officers of the Board

Darlene Thornton, President
 Jane Fox, Vice President
 Kim Viehland, Secretary
 Larry Viehland, Treasurer
 Tom Ochs, Financial Secretary

WCM Staff

Ruth Kittner, Executive Director
 Carlos Gasca-Yanez, Pantry Coordinator
 Marie Chirieleison, Pantry Hostess
 Robert Johnson, Pantry Assistant/Driver
 Leila Jackson, Pantry Assistant
 Roger Schneider, Volunteer Webmaster

QUANTUM THEATRE GRANT FOR SUPPLEMENTING NATURAL FOOD.



Presentation of Gift Cards by Quantum Theatre; Photo by Sarah Schreck

Perhaps you've heard of Quantum Theatre's **NearBuy** program, in which the Theater partners with local businesses and provide matching funds that go alleviate food insecurity in our community. Quantum Theatre and the **NearBuy** initiative, generously funded by the Richard King Mellon Foundation, offers a unique opportunity for theater goers to continue exploring our city while supporting local businesses. Through the Food Coop's partnership with them, WCM will receive a \$1500 gift card to be used to purchase food (or anything else at the Coop) that we cannot get elsewhere. Ellie Helgen, the Community Coordinator for the Coop, says "I've seen firsthand the amazing and innovative work you're [WCM is] doing with the food pantry, and the Co-op is very excited to offer WCM with a \$1,500 Co-op gift card that you can use to stock the pantry with anything you haven't been able to get from other sources." On 22 April, Jalina McClarin, Quantum's Community Engagement Associate (far right) deliverer the cards. Pictured also (l-right), Carlos Gasca Yanez, Tom Ochs, and Ruth Kittner.

REMINISCES SOUGHT



Why was this church important to you, your family, and/or the community?

Calling all friends and families who remember the Mulberry Second Presbyterian Church. The new owner of the building, Center for Civic Arts, is seeking individuals to share human scale, every day memories and experiences, even photographs, of this once sacred space of convening. As we transform the sacred space into a civic space, we want to reflect your stories in how we honor this indelible community landmark. If you prefer to keep your stories private let us know and your story will be archived for private research. An essential inquiry question we ask you is: *Why was this church important to you, your family, and/or the community?* You do not need to confine your response to this question, but it offers a starting point. No story is too long or short. If you can share your name, address and email Civic Art would be honored to add you to our newsletter which provides updates on revitalization efforts at the Center for Civic Arts. Please submit any written story to civicarts211@gmail.com or request Civic Arts Founder Jody Guy to place a phone call that could be recorded.

We Share Food

The Well

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Wilksburg Community Ministry

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