



The Well

December 2024

Your Ministry at Work!

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SERVICE STATISTICS

*The storefront pantry serves 85-95 families in four hours!

*The mobile pantry serves 60-65 families a stop!

Distribution in pounds:

October: 50,000 lbs, including 11,500 in donations

November: 41,300 lbs, including 17,000+ in donations

STORE FRONT PANTRY HOURS

*Monday, Wednesday-Friday 9-1
AND Tuesday 3-7:30 pm



Figure 1 Adam Morgan, Senior Pantry Coordinator, and Sabreen Megherhi, Food Security Specialist, show off the new hours!

MOBILE PANTRY SITES—

The mobile pantry visits six different sites 5 days a week and offers a variety of choices for our neighbors.

Covenant Fellowship Reformed Presbyterian Church, 1300 Swissvale Ave, Wilkinsburg (Saturday am)

Douglas Plaza, 2405 Laketon Road, Wilkinsburg (Thursdays, 4-7)

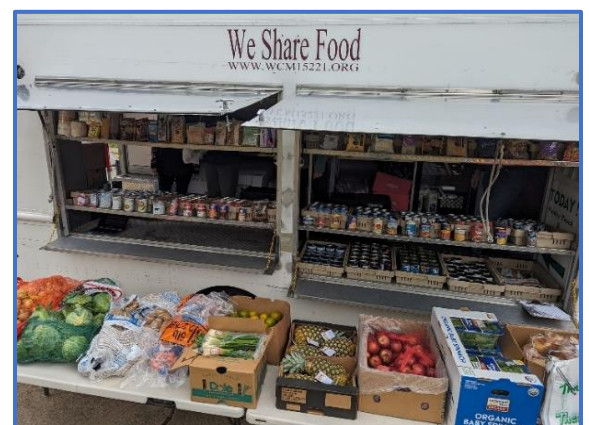
Second Harvest, 624 Clay Street, Sharpsburg (Tuesday, 4-7)

Saint James AME Church 444 Lincoln Ave, East Liberty, PA 15206 (2nd and 4th Wednesdays) 3pm – 6pm call 412-441-9706 for more information

Sixth Mt Zion Baptist Church, 6556 Shetland St, Pittsburgh, PA 15206 (1st and 3rd Wednesdays). 3-6 pm. call (412) 441-7839 for more information

First Presbyterian Church of Edgewood, 120 E Swissvale Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15218 Fridays 4-7 Call 412-241-4613

Community Forge, 1256 Franklin Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15221, the former Johnston School.



NEW HEADQUARTERS UPDATE: A TWO-PHASE PROJECT

Over the past several years, WCM's services have outgrown our physical space. WCM will purchase a 12,000-square-foot facility at 813 South Avenue in Wilkinsburg. For those of you who know Wilkinsburg, this building formerly housed the Wilkinsburg Telephone Exchange, then the Boys and Girls Club of Wilkinsburg, and the Pittsburgh Urban Christian School Middle School.

The ground floor of this building will be dedicated to the food pantry. The 4200 square foot space will allow us to have all our food facilities in one space, and our neighbors can wait inside, and out of the weather. We are negotiating with another non-profit to rent the second floor. The third floor will be used for community space, as meeting rooms, temporary offices, and other spaces. The property includes the building *and* nine adjacent lots, totaling about 65% of a city block.



Phase One (2024-2026): This phase includes purchasing the building and the renovations and “adjustments” to the first floor, to make the space immediately useable. Including the purchase, this will cost approximately \$1.1 million. Phase One will include parking areas for the pantry vehicles, a safe loading/unloading dock, ADA entrances for the public, and a small number of parking spaces for the public.

Phase Two (2026-2028): Add an elevator on the rear of the building (left) to make the third floor accessible for community areas. The estimated cost of this phase is \$850,000.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: SYSTEMIC INEQUITY: HOW EXPENSIVE ARE THINGS

As of writing, the Farm Bill is still ensnarled in legislative chaos. Time is running out to extend funding on items like SNAP (aka Food Stamps) and linking the SNAP benefit amount to the increases in cost of living. The roughly \$30 billion SNAP *cuts* in its current iteration **eliminate** the SNAP benefit for 40 million people, including 17 million children, six million older adults, and four million people with disabilities. It also restricts the Agriculture Department's (USDA) ability to tie the cost of the Thrifty Food Plan (TFP) to the inflation of the cost of a realistic, healthy diet. This would be the largest SNAP cut in nearly 30 years and would grow over time as the already inadequate SNAP benefits became more and more inadequate.

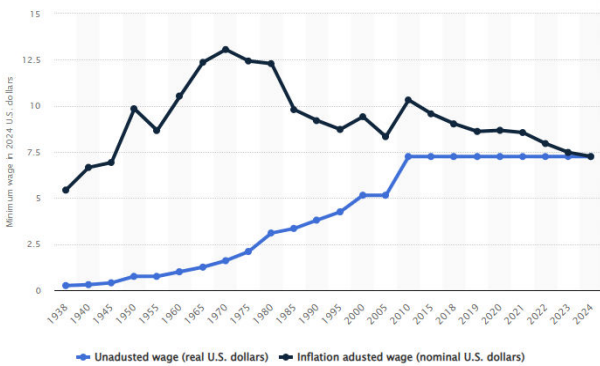
Why are they inadequate? Here are two reasons. First, SNAP benefits do not realistically reflect the cost to purchase and prepare food to eat at home. The Department of Agriculture established the Thrifty Meal Plan in 1975 as a set of foods representing a frugal but nutritionally adequate diet: the SNAP benefit level (Thrifty) reflects the cost and menu model of these foods. Ideally, the cost to purchase those foods would be accommodated in a dollar benefit tied to inflation.

What did it cost to purchase and prepare a wholesome and cost-efficient meal in 1975? The TFP assumed, for example, that to meet the Dietary Guidelines for Americans at a very low cost (thrifty), families would buy 25 pounds of milk (about 3-4 gallons) and 20 pounds of orange juice each week, but very little of other commonly purchased commodities like onions, potatoes, fresh vegetables or the somewhat more expensive, staple foods, like lettuce, and cheese. It assumed that homemakers would buy the cheapest iteration of any other staple food (dried pinto beans, pasta, for example). They would make and can their own tomato sauce, process their own beans, etc.

The time/cost ratio that the Department of Agriculture used to calculate SNAP benefits in 1975 reflected two predetermined expectations: wildly unrealistic assumptions about how and what families eat, and second, what these meals cost in raw ingredients. These assumptions were grossly inadequate even by the 1980s and did not account for women in the labor force. It assumed that, despite the increase of women in the labor force since the 1970s, in 2024 women would still spend 3-6 hours daily preparing meals, mostly from scratch, completing such tasks as cleaning and soaking dried beans overnight rather than buying canned beans, spending hours processing fresh food for storage over the winter, and processing the least expensive cuts of meat. A pound of dry beans can make multiple servings and cost less per serving than a can of beans. For example, a pound of dry pinto beans might cost \$1.79 and make 12 half-cup servings, while a 15-ounce can of national brand pinto beans might cost \$1.69 and make 3.5-½ cup servings. The current meal plan does not include the cost of a can of beans but relies on the cost of a pound of dried beans! The meal of chili that takes 1-2 hours to prepare from dried beans (which must be sorted, rinsed, soaked, and then cooked) *over two days* and another hour to clean up does not take *her* labor into account. So today's parents need ready-to-cook meals that a working mother or father could put on the table, feed the children, and clean up *before* she or he heads out to work a *second* job.

Although the TFP tries to adjust for cost-of-living increases, it does not fully accommodate the cost of food. Here's the breakdown:

- Butter: 68c (Nov 1971) is equivalent to \$5.19 (2024); this is steady.
- Eggs: 44c (Jun 1974) should be equivalent to \$2.80 (2024) but eggs cost \$4.25 to \$5.50. B
- Bread: 39c (Jan 1977) is equivalent to \$2.08 (2024); it's actually \$3.60-5.50 (and over \$10 in California). Put this down to the flux of grain prices due to the war in Ukraine.
- Cereal: 59c (Oct 1977) is equivalent to \$2.99 (2024); an 8 oz box of Cheerios is \$3.70
- Milk: \$1.66 (Jan 1978) is equivalent to \$8.30 (2024). Today, \$4.50-\$8.00.



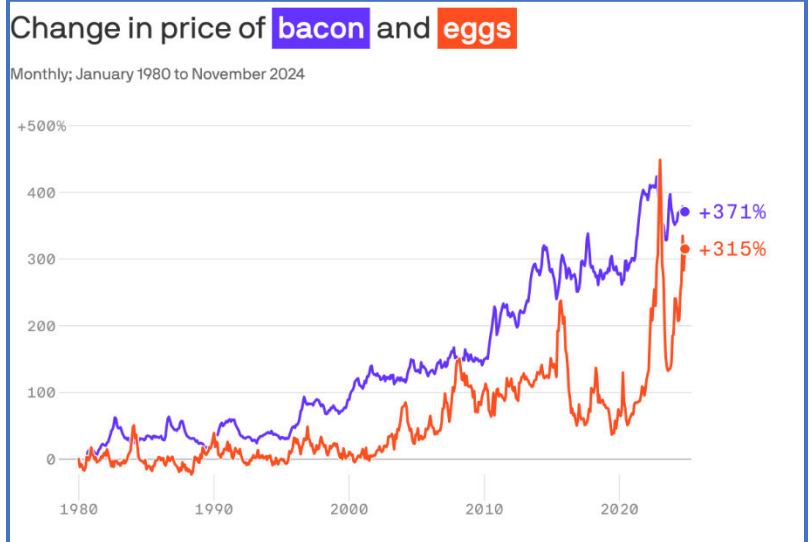
2 The real and nominal value of the federal minimum wage

at restaurants goes up, some families don't tip the servers. For restaurants like McDonalds, where there is no tipping, crew members receive something between \$8.50-\$13.50.

What is the least expensive meal? It used to be breakfast. But with Egg-flation, the cost of breakfast continues to increase. Experts say the cost of breakfast rivals the cost of gas as a measure of the economy. Add the cost of orange juice, which has skyrocketed from its previous 2018 high of \$2.62 / 12-ounce bottle to **\$4.30 last month**, and breakfast is

People who purchase food –which is all of us!-- experienced an average inflation rate of 4.02% per year from 1975 to 2024. In other words, food costing \$20 in 1970 would cost \$168.20 in 2024 for an equivalent purchase. Everyone purchases food, right? So everyone should be equally challenged?

No The federally required minimum wage was established in 1938 as one of the New Deal programs, in this case, the Fair Labor Standards Act. The original “minimum” wage was 38 cents. Over time, it has been modified. For example, tipped workers must be paid \$2.13/hour **plus** tips. As the cost of food



becoming an expensive meal indeed! The challenges for orange production are three-fold: hurricanes and/or droughts in the premium growing areas (Florida, Texas), citrus Huanglongbing disease, aka greening disease, which leads to a premature fruit drop, and, finally, the shortage of migrant labor.

The second part of the fight is over commodity farming subsidies. Commodity crops are grown for a large processing market (as opposed to direct consumption, e.g., farm-to-market programs). The current argument on commodity subsidies ranges from \$60 billion in 2025 and 2026. The USDA subsidies provide a safety net for farmers during challenging economic conditions and natural disasters; however, there are ongoing debates about the effectiveness and distribution of these subsidies, especially with concerns that large corporations benefit disproportionately. particularly important for small family farms that may struggle to compete with large agribusinesses. Some argue that subsidies can incentivize unsustainable farming practices by encouraging overproduction.

Yes, the price of food affects us all, but when the purchase of basic necessities—groceries—takes a larger portion of income, the people with the lowest income suffer the most. This is why I ask: *ARE YOU PART OF THE SOLUTION TO HUNGER IN OUR CORNER OF THE WORLD??*

Ruth Kittner

WHY I AM PART OF THE SOLUTION: POLLY McQUEEN, POINT BREEZE



Figure 3 Santiago de Compostela in June, finishing the 100k (62 miles) walk with a group on the Camino!

As a near-neighbor living in Point Breeze, Wilksburg has always been a place to drive through. I would head up Penn Avenue to get onto the Parkway and eventually the PA Turnpike or I would cut through via side streets to drive to other points east of where I live. It wasn't until I started helping a refugee from Guatemala by making food deliveries from 412 Food Rescue that I learned about the Wilksburg Community Ministry's food mission.

This young mom and her two kids were food insecure, so when I learned about WCM's food pantry, it became a frequent and reliable destination for us. I will never forget the look on Rosa's face when she emerged from the pantry for the first time, her arms loaded with bags of food and with one of the WCM helpers next to her with even more food supplies. For Rosa, WCM's gift of food was a miracle, akin to answered prayers. Her gratitude and her sense of relief that she would have enough to get by for the week spoke volumes for what WCM does for folks like Rosa, week in and week out.

I began giving to WCM a few years ago, and since then I have learned that WCM is much more than their food pantry. I am grateful that my neighbors to the east of me have this resource right in their town, and I feel fortunate that my personal resources are such that I can continue supporting this most worthy cause annually. Thank you, WCM, for all you do in so many ways!

GIVING TUESDAY: GIVE BIG PITTSBURGH

Harry & Ronna Back
George Bradley
Bambi Brewer
Linda Davoli
Lisa Dennis
Pat Downey

R D Duncan
Ginnie Farnsworth
Eleanor Fisher
Peter Gilmore
Gail Gratton
Marcia Haley

Donna Hansen
Peggy Heidish
Leonie Heystek
Cindy Karma
Ruth Kittner
Curtis Kovach

Judith Kroll
Ann Lasher
Tawna Loutsenhiser
Mabel Matteson
Greg McDonald
Thomas Ochs
Priscilla Older
Avery Pollack

Carleen Petronio
Margaret Reed
Linda Robertson
Sue Schaefer
Roger Schneider
Ronald Schneider
Cecelia Simms
Beth Simon

Bob Simon
Julie Simon
Julie Simon
Joseph Smith
Barbara Thaw
Gwen Vargas
David Walton

IN MEMORIA: DAVID SIMON, 1940-2024

Ed and Wendy Ashton
Melanie and Bill Contz
John and Carol Edgar
Chuck and Becky Cardinale
Diane Demeter
Robert and Amy Dove
Mathew Dugan

Kate and Tom Golightly
Marian and Glenn Jonnet
Yolanda and Roy Lang
Joseph Mancinelli
Margie Minkler
Lyn and Walt Robertson
Susan Spinuzza and Ed Claypoole

Steve and Karen Stanish
Helen Sofranko
Christy and Dave Surma
Reggie and Sharon Taylor
Marcia and Jim Ungerman
Gwen and Luis Vargas
Bill and Mary Vandivier
Terri and John West



WHO ELSE IS PART OF THE SOLUTION? NOVEMBER'S BIG FOOD DONATIONS!

In a typical month, we will buy somewhere between 40-50,000 pounds of food, and our partners will donate another 4,000-5,000 pounds of food. November: we only had to purchase 41,000 pounds (partly because we had been well stocked the month before, but we also had another 17,000 pounds of food donated.



The donations started off with about 1500 pounds of canned and dry goods from the **Environmental Charter School** (Intermediate).



Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank donated 650 \$25 Giant Eagle Gift cards. This is part of the KDKA TV Turkey Fund. We have participated in the program since the mid 1980s.



Pedal for the Pantry, a local bike group, pedaled their fourth annual trip for the Thanksgiving pantry this year! Over 25 pedalers rode to different stores to purchase their favorite items to share with neighbors in Wilkinsburg. They started this in 2020, during the Pandemic, and learned the hard way to purchase a turkey LAST!



Neighborhood Realty, a Regent Square business, held its second annual food drive, this year to benefit Wilkinsburg Community Ministry. They donated over 5,000 pounds of food! The picture (right) shows our van HALF EMPTY!!



Girl Scout Troop 1634 (right) volunteered a Saturday a.m to help deep clean the pantry! Refrigerators, shelves, floors, every possible level surface — they cleaned it!



ARE YOU 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 urged to feed the hungry. We invite you to join our ministry by making a gift for the cause. You can give by Mail, Clicking, and Planning!

MAIL:

Mail a check to Wilkinsburg Community Ministry, 702 Wood Street, Pittsburgh PA 15221

Become a Sustaining Donor: 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 monthly. Your

Wilkinsburg Community Ministry

702/704 Wood Street

Pittsburgh, PA 15221

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

DATED MATERIAL -PLEASE EXPEDITE

We Share Food

FOLLOW US ON

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/62163072> (or go to LinkedIn and search for us)

Facebook: <https://wcm15221.org/>

Instagram: @wilkinsburgcommunityministry

Platinum
Transparency
2024

Candid.