Your Ministry at Work***!***

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A person and person holding a sign

Description automatically generated

**On an average day,**

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

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

\*We are now open Monday, \*Wednesday-Friday 9-1

*AND Tuesday 3-7:30 pm*

Distribution in pounds:

July: 46,000

August: 40,000

September: 38,000

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

***THE MOBILE PANTRY—***

**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](https://www.google.com/maps/place/2405-2407+Laketon+Rd,+Pittsburgh,+PA+15221/@40.454932,-79.8644827,17z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m6!3m5!1s0x8834ec46fc50114b:0x858974efb5ba35a9!8m2!3d40.454928!4d-79.859998!16s%2Fg%2F11kj0l535w) (Thursdays, 4-7)

[**Second Harvest**](https://www.secondharvestthrift.com/)**,** 624 Clay Street, Sharpsburg (Tuesday, 4-7)

[**Saint James AME Church**](https://www.stjamesamepgh.org/) 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](https://www.google.com/search?q=Sixth+Mt.+Zion+Baptist+church&sca_esv=d66eeba216212f8b&ei=-iNfZpzZCKiq5NoPnaKO8AY&ved=0ahUKEwicvt7Vk8KGAxUoFVkFHR2RA24Q4dUDCBA&uact=5&oq=Sixth+Mt.+Zion+Baptist+church&gs_lp=Egxnd3Mtd2l6LXNlcnAiHVNpeHRoIE10LiBaaW9uIEJhcHRpc3QgY2h1cmNoMgYQABgWGB4yBhAAGBYYHjIGEAAYFhgeMgYQABgWGB4yBhAAGBYYHjIGEAAYFhgeMgYQABgWGB4yBhAAGBYYHjIGEAAYFhgeMgYQABgWGB5Ihy9QAFj_&sclient=gws-wiz-serp) 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.

**ONE DAY Critical Needs Day of Giving, August 6, 2024**. The Pittsburgh Foundation hosted #ONEDAY Critical Needs, an online giving event that supports basic needs and essential human services. Our 67 supporters raised $ 8997.50 for WCM, plus the Pittsburgh Foundation’s Incentive Fund grant of $4646.55

***Donors to the 2024 Critical Needs Day of Giving***

|  |
| --- |
| Denise Angell |
| Karen Arrington |
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| George Bradley |
| Patricia Calta |
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| Trevor Young-Hyman |
| 9 Anonymous donors |

And The Pittsburgh Foundation

Many thanks to board members Leah Jacobs, George Bradley, Beth Simon, Cecelia Sims, and Don Block for expanding WCM’s reach for this event.

***From the Executive Director: Five Years in the Planning!***

I promised you big news, and the big news is a three-story brick building at 813 South Avenue. In the past several years, WCM’s services have outgrown our physical space. In 2023, we started seriously searching for a new location, and with a small search committee, we looked at 18 sites.

We thought we could move WCM to the ground floor of the South Avenue United Methodist Church. Plea, a long-term tenant of SAUMC, had decided it needed its own building, so SAUMC needed a tenant. Then, another neighborhood school, the Pittsburgh Urban Christian School (PUCS), approached the congregation about renting part or all of South Avenue United Methodist Church to create a unified space for its elementary and middle schools.

This would free their middle school building at 813 South Avenue. One conversation led to another, and the short story is that WCM has put in an offer on their middle school, and PUCS accepted it. Many of you will be familiar with the building. It used to house the Wilkinsburg Boys and Girls Club and, before that, the Wilkinsburg Telephone Exchange. It is solidly built, with thick brick walls. The footprint is about 4100 square feet *per floor,* and we will renovate and occupy the first floor for our distribution; we expect to move no later than June 2025, but probably sooner.

We’ve contracted Springboard Designs for the design and planning. From the picture above, you can see that a pace to the side will be accessible as a loading dock, which will get our trucks off the street. We will have room for our exterior refrigeration unit and access to the food storage area. The current location has been challenging: some of the wheelchairs cannot fit through the door, and there’s little room inside our distribution space. The reconfigured space will allow neighbors to wait indoors instead of standing in the cold. The second and third floors can be renovated and used at another time. In total, it has about 12,500 square feet. The second bonus is that the building has a total of 4/5 an acre of open green space. This will allow us to develop community garden allotments or other community food assets.

The process of finding and developing our own space specifically suited to our needs has been a long-term priority. In 2007, when the Mulberry Church was sold, we moved to the Wood Street site in haste. We had about two weeks’ notice, which was a crazy move. The space, 702-704 Wood Street, has served our needs well, and WCM will always be grateful to Frank and Jimmy Sapienza and their mother, Alice Donnelly, for their support and generosity. In the last 4-5 years, though, WCM’s niche as a food pantry has exploded largely because of the pandemic's need and the increasing consolidation of food resources within the hands of a few international conglomerates. These factors have combined to raise the price of food, which has, in turn, increased the demand for our services. Between January and June of 2024, the number of families coming at least once a month increased by 20% at both the storefront pantry and the mobile pantry sites: 95% of our families come once a week or more.

Figure Architect's rendering of the building

Some of you will be asking, how will we pay for this? I’m asking that question, too, as is the Board of Directors. Our budgets have increased in the past four years; we now have 11 people working at WCM in part-time jobs and three in full-time positions. Our annual budget is $430,000; we will add a capital hit of $1,000,000, some of which is already pledged and in the bank. We are looking at a combination of grants and gifts to fund this, which should carry us well through the next 50 years. Of course, we encourage our friends and supporters to make a gift to be used for the capital project *and* ongoing support. You will hear more about this in the future!

On a different note, many will remember Margery Peffer, half of the dynamic duo that was Jack and Marge Peffer. Marge passed away in August, in Glens Mills PA, where she enjoyed her last years enjoying the company of her daughters. I had met her while she and her husband lived at Longwood of Oakmont, where my mother was also a long-term resident; I was usually able to visit them on one of my twice-weekly trips to visit my own mother. Marge was a stalwart of the Christian Church of Wilkinsburg; she and her husband, Jack, were among the founders of WCM. Jack passed away in 2019. Marge, a science librarian at The Carnegie, and Jack, a polymer chemist, shared a passion for action and helping others that left an enduring mark in Wilkinsburg. We will miss them!

Ruth Kittner

***THE FARM BILL REVISITED: WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT!***

The first line of defense against food insecurity is always food pantries and food banks. The difference. The second line of defense includes several federal programs that provide school meals, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance programs (food stamps), and Emergency Food Assistance Programs (also called TEFAP). Food security experts have justified concerns about some of the proposed changes to these critical federal nutrition programs and how these will impact the 1.25 million residents of Allegheny County, more than half of whom experience some form of food insecurity. SNAP benefits can be used to buy [most groceries for household use](https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/eligible-food-items), including bread and pastries; meats, poultry, and fish (but not, in most cases, live animals and birds); fruits and vegetables; dairy products, including ice cream; and snack foods such as cookies, cakes, and soft drinks. Recipients can also use SNAP benefits to buy plants and seeds to grow food for the household, but not (for example) non-edible flowers. The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) is a federal program that helps supplement the diets of low-income people by providing them with emergency food assistance at no cost. USDA provides 100% American-grown USDA Foods and administrative funds to states to operate TEFAP, which provides approximately half of the food distributed at WCM.

According to *The Hill* (generally a "center" media outlet), Congress has foundered on three principal bones of contention. Presently, the legislation contains tens of billions of dollars in subsidies that would go to a few thousand of America’s wealthiest cotton, rice, and peanut farmers, and those funds would probably come from either climate funding or food aid. Second, the Bill reverses the 2022-23 SNAP benefit increases, directly impacting how families feed themselves. Finally, it eliminates provisions updating the Thrifty Food Plan's cost, determining SNAP benefits for nationwide households.

The average per-person per meal cost in Allegheny County is $4.63, and in Westmoreland County is $4.51. The maximum SNAP benefit is $3.23 for that meal. Many people need food assistance and do not receive it. Unlike assistance provided by food banks and similar organizations the availability of government support varies, based (in part) on household income as it relates to the poverty level. Income eligibility thresholds for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the nation’s largest food assistance program and an important line of defense against hunger, range from 130% to 200% of the federal poverty line ($40,560 to $62,400 for a family of four as of January 2024). National data from the USDA indicates that approximately 50% of people facing hunger have incomes above the federal gross income limit for SNAP (130% of the federal poverty line) and thus may be ineligible for the program. Local estimates from Map the Meal Gap suggest rates are even higher in some communities, especially, ironically, in rural communities. For example, the Chairman of the House Committee on Agriculture, Glenn T Thompson, who has responsibility for shepherding the new (or extended) Farm Bill through Congress, represents PA District 15, a largely rural district where an estimated 93,000 people (of 759,209) live with food insecurity. Ironically, some of the most food-insecure families are concentrated in rural areas.

There is no guarantee that the Farm Bill now depends on renewal (or extension) by the current Congress. Some "talking heads" insist that food programs like SNAP and TEFAP promote government dependency and discourage work. The absurdity of these arguments is astonishing. Think about who receives SNAP: 43 percent are school children who, by definition, are not workers; 14% are the elderly retired (and not expected to work), and 10% are non-elderly adults who cannot work due to disability or diseases. Surveys of voter attitudes across the country believe that the federal government should be doing more, not less, to address hunger in our communities. Older restrictions on program participation, increasing Farm to Food Bank funding, and reauthorizing the Commodity Supplemental Food Program will all influence WCM's ability to feed our neighbors, whether they receive SNAP benefits or not.

***Food Choices and Food Prices: Five companies control the processing of food in the grocery stores***

Critics of food assistance programs might maintain that people struggling with food insecurity should shop locally and cook their food. What does it mean to shop locally? The neighborhood grocery store? Aldi’s? Where does that food come from? Grocery chains and superstores are the main beneficiaries of government aid for Americans struggling to feed their families. In 2020, [82% of all food stamps](https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/resource-files/2020-SNAP-Retailer-Management-Year-End-Summary.pdf) were spent in supermarkets and superstores like Kroger's, Walmart, Costco, and Sam’s Club, which means the taxpayer contributes [$64bn to their revenue](https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/resource-files/2020-SNAP-Retailer-Management-Year-End-Summary.pdf). Subsidiaries of Kraft-Heinz, the result of a [$63bn mega-merger](https://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/26/business/dealbook/kraft-and-heinz-to-merge.html) in 2015, appear 12 times in the top funding recipients for groceries, with products ranging from bacon, sour cream, and coffee to frozen meat substitutes and fruit juice.

What about the “off” labels? Private labels appear in the top four of 77% of groceries. For frozen fruits like the mixed berries used for smoothies and desserts, private labels account for 66% of the market share, as well as 56% of refrigerated whole milk and 54% of egg sales. Who packages these private (or “off” labels)? Food choices may look diverse, but [Kraft Heinz](https://careers.kraftheinz.com/about-us/), [General Mills](https://www.generalmills.com/about-us), [Conagra](https://www.conagrabrands.com/our-company/overview), [Unilever](https://www.unilever.com/brands/), and [Delmonte Foods, Inc.](https://www.delmontefoods.com/) control the production of grocery chain labels. [ADM](https://www.adm.com/en-us/about-adm/), [Bunge](https://www.bunge.com/), [Cargill](https://www.cargill.com/about), and [Louis Dreyfus Corporation](https://www.ldc.com/) control 75% of the world’s grain supply. [Bayer,](https://www.bayer.com/en/products/products-from-A-to-Z) [Corteva Agriscience](https://www.corteva.com/who-we-are/our-history.html), [ChemChina,](https://www.agribusinessglobal.com/agrochemicals/chemchina-sinochem-merger-imminent-caixin/) and Limagrain control over half of the world’s seed supply. This matters because the size and influence of these mega-companies enable them to dictate what America’s two million farmers grow, how much they are paid, what the 333.33 million American consumers eat, and how much their groceries cost. Their influence extends throughout the world. These THIRTEEN mega companies' size, power, and profits have expanded, thanks to political lobbying and weak regulation, which enabled a wave of unchecked mergers and acquisitions.

***Did you know? Food and Addiction***

In the 1980s, tobacco giants Philip Morris and R.J. Reynolds acquired the major food companies Kraft, General Foods, and Nabisco, allowing tobacco firms to dominate America’s food supply and reap billions in sales from popular brands such as Oreo cookies, Kraft Macaroni & Cheese and Lunchables. Even though the tobacco companies no longer own these food brands, researchers say the findings matter because many of the ultra-processed foods that we eat today were engineered by an industry that wrote the playbook on products that are highly palatable, addictive, and appealing to children.

How about a nice Hawaiian punch? Remember that commercial? Hawaiian punch *used* to be a cocktail mixer. Within a year of acquisition, RJ Reynolds product developers realized that many of the company's flavors for cigarettes “would be useful in food, beverage, and other products” and lead to “large financial returns.” Hyper-palatable foods have a lot in common with addictive substances. They contain ingredients from naturally occurring plants and foods that have been purified, concentrated and transformed into products quickly absorbed into our bloodstreams, amplifying their ability to stimulate the reward centers in our brains.

***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*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Leviticus+19%3A10&version=ESV)

*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*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+25%3A35&version=ESV)

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

**The instruction is clear: we are all encouraged 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 bank will send us a monthly check in the amount you request. This saves *you* postage and the post office will still receive the business.

**RMD Charitable Giving:** If your retirement finances include an individual retirement account (IRA), starting at age 72 you may be required to take minimum distributions. You may want to consider making an IRA Qualified Charitable Deduction (QCD) to benefit WCM. *As always, please consult your financial advisors!*

**click!**

***Why I am part of the solution!***

I donate to Wilkinsburg Community Ministry because they help people with food, health needs, and after-school programs. They have a garden and mobile pantries. They cared to help people during COVID and natural disasters. They are utilizing resources around them to help the very large community. I love them for all the ways they care

*Ann, Portland Oregon*

**Network for Good:** The link is also 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% “convenience” fee. Gifts are sent to us on the 15th of the month *after* you make your gift.

**Donate at our Give Lively page.** <https://secure.givelively.org/donate/wilkinsburg-community-ministry> This gift comes to us within 10 days and has a low convenience fee. You can also find this on our webpage: [www.wcm15221.org/donate](https://d.docs.live.net/08b1959904153090/documents/The%20Well/The%20Well/www.wcm15221.org/donate)

**PayPal Giving Fund.** If you check out online purchases using PayPal, you will often get the option to make a gift through the giving fund.

**United Way Contributor Choice**. Most major employers offer a United Way campaign. Our Agency Number is 242. Again, United Way takes a percentage of the gift; WCM is paid quarterly.

**Plan!**

**Bequests.** Please let us know If you want to add Wilkinsburg Community Ministry to your estate.

**Insurance.** You can designate Wilkinsburg Community Ministry as the beneficiary of a life insurance policy

***Wilkinsburg Community Ministry 2023 Annual Report***

***What do you think of when you hear “food desert?***”

*Annual Report*

What is a food desert? P. 7

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Report from Auditor, p. 15

By Alex Firestine, University of Pittsburgh, University of Galway (Ireland), and Food 21

You may envision a barren wasteland deprived of any signs of life or resources. Add in the food component and now you can picture a community with simply no food. There’s more to food insecurity than that, especially in the United States. This brief article will explore the complexities of defining food insecurity and further expand on how the term “food desert” can damage the communities the concept seeks to empower.

The “food desert” concept in research is relatively new, emerging in the 1990s. However, research and advocacy in the food insecurity discipline have been cited as early as the 1960s during the Civil Rights Movement. The term has evolved from “there is no grocery store” to include more nuanced elements like “lack of access to a healthy, affordable diet.” The USDA defines a food desert as “part of a country vapid of fresh fruit, vegetables, and other healthful whole foods, usually found in impoverished areas.” Early research in the U.S. aligned with the former definition, where areas around the US were examined for a grocery store's existence or lack thereof. The recommendation that emerged? Put in a grocery store.

In hindsight, it’s easy to see where many of these recommendations are wrong: a lack of holistic understanding of food insecurity and its root causes. Simply put, it’s best to envision a food desert as an area with a high food insecurity rate. Food insecurity was first defined in 1996 at the World Food Summit as having four pillars: availability, access, utilization, and stability. These guide global organizations like the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in developing strategies to achieve Sustainable Development Goal #2: Zero Hunger. The practical implications of these general definitions are challenging.

A person standing in a garden

Description automatically generatedThe Food Abundance Index (FAI) is a first-of-its-kind tool to define and measure regional food insecurity across five measures: diversity, density, affordability, quality, and accessibility. For example, one dimension of measuring access in the FAI is assessing whether food outlets within a defined region have public transportation stops within a quarter-mile walk. If not, these food outlets are deemed “inaccessible,” contributing to regional food insecurity.

A study conducted by the University of Pittsburgh and Food21 applied three of the five dimensions of the food abundance index to a historically marginalized community in Pittsburgh. The study found that while there may be grocery stores in a community, many of these grocery stores were inaccessible by public transportation and/or in a region densely populated with cheap, unhealthy fast-food alternatives. Many of the early community development projects that built grocery stores in communities failed because of these underlying drivers of food insecurity beyond the mere presence of food.

So, suppose we define food insecurity in the term food desert. In that case, it is a region lacking physical, social, and/or economic access to affordable, healthy, sustainable, and culturally relevant food. There is still one more challenge: the term “desert.” Desert insinuates that these desolate, barren regions are naturally occurring, which is far from the case. In these communities, there is vibrancy, life, and immense potential, and the term food desert fails to acknowledge the decades of systemic marginalization that led to food insecurity. A study by Shaker et al. from 2022 connected redlining, housing discrimination, racism, ableism, and displacement to food inaccessibility and insecurity. In Allegheny County, I recently completed a study with Dr. Audrey Murrell where we found that not only were female-headed households more likely to experience food insecurity than their male counterparts, but this disparity is accentuated when there is a systemic inadequacy of public transportation infrastructure.

Figure Master Gardener Colleen Carr works with volunteers to keep the garden growing

The term “food apartheid,” originally coined by food justice activist Karen Washington, emphasizes the systemic inequity at the root of food insecurity. “Apartheid” refers to the nearly 5 decades of continued racial segregation in South Africa, and in this case, is being used to emphasize that similar systemic injustice is at play. Food apartheid goes beyond simple semantics. It helps to reframe how we think about and address areas with high levels of food insecurity. To address systemic food insecurity issues, it is necessary to adopt a grassroots, community-centered approach to understand how policy, development, and other external factors influence the dietary habits of a community. The work of community organizations and food banks is essential to combat food apartheids. There is more to food apartheids than just the lack of a grocery store.

***For Further Reading about Food Deserts*:**

https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/45014/30940\_err140.pdf

https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/agriculture/brief/food-security-update/what-is-food-

security

https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/hunger/

https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7177314/

https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36011677/

https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9303837/

https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/21/7/906

https://www.riseandrootfarm.com/karen-washington

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**Larry Viehland**, Mifflin Avenue United Methodist Church, Member at Large

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**Joe Bute**, Wilkinsburg Resident. President, [Food21](http://food21.org/)

**Patricia Hauser**, Member-at-Large

**Jeff Hoener**,[South Avenue United Methodist Church](https://southavenueumc.org/). Insurance Underwriter[, Underwriters Brokerage Services](https://www.ubsnet.com/)

**Leah Jacobs**, Associate Professor of Social Work, University of Pittsburgh

**Tom Mitchell,** Associate Pastor, [Covenant Church of Pittsburgh](https://ccop.org/)

**Cecilia Sims**, Co-Pastor, [Christian Church of Wilkinsburg](https://www.christianchurchofwilkinsburg.org/)

**SubcommitteesS\*:**

Nominations: Don Block and Pat Hauser

Facilities: Joe Bute, Jerry Gaudi, Jeff Hoener, Tom Ochs,

Finance Committee: George Bradley, Tom Ochs

Personnel Committee: Don Block, Joe Bute, Tom Mitchell

\*The Executive Director & President are ex-officio members of all subcommittees.

**Advisors and Director Emerita**

Doreen Boyce

Janet Hellner Burris, Director Emerita

***Staff***

Ruth Kittner, Executive Director

Adam Morgan, Senior Pantry Coordinator

Sabreen Megherhi, Pantry Specialist

Ruth Boykin, Assistant Pantry Coordinator

Howard Freeman, Mobile Pantry Coordinator

Marcus Smith, Associate Mobile Pantry Coordinator

Indyka Balock, Pantry Assistant

Rita Feustel, Pantry Assistant

Leila Jackson, Pantry Assistant

Robert Johnson, Pantry Assistant/Driver

***Volunteers for 2023***

Dawn Kinney and kids

Robin Barbara

Jill Bischoff

Joyce Chilton

Dan Cooper

Patricia (Pat) Crumrine

Carla Depperman

Pat Downey

Jeffrey Edge

Beverly (Bev) Fafata

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Ronnie Pratt

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Carlos Snyder

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Jack Today

Neha Verma

Ayvind Weigman

Ronni Weiss

Victoria Wellstad

***Our donors in the year 2023.***

***Sustaining Donors to the Annual Fund***

***These donors make monthly gifts to the WCM annual fund***

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Shaun Cloonan

Gordon & Barbara Conner

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Marshall & Nancy Davenpeck

Mary Joel Davis

Linda & Frank Davoli

Nancy & Peter V DelPresto

Alexander & Stephanie Denmarsh

Carla Depperman

Delores Derco

Cathy & Ernest Dettore

Jim Donnell

Edward Donnelly

Sally Donnelly

Ed Donovan

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David Duncan

Moira Dunn

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Peggy Galley

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Y.C. Ho

Pamela Hogan

Mr. & Mrs. Richard Hull, II

Levi Ike & Adaeze Otue Ezekoye

Janet Ingram

Cora Ingrim & Harry Andrews

John & Virginia Irwin

Donna Isaac & David Hosmer

Charles Jefferson & Cynthia Dagostino

Timothy Jessell

Clifford & Nora Johnson

Mr & Mrs Theodore Johnson

Kelli Kane

Peter & Leslie Kaplan

Rev & Mrs David Keller

Cynthia Kerr

Michele Kerr

Sheila Kier

Lori King

Susan & Peter Koehler

Curtis Kovach

Kenneth Kratovil & Linda Rubinstein

Judith Kroll

Willliam Lafe & Carol Hochman

Stewart & Jeannette Lawrence

J Gary Lewis

Dorothy Lowry

James Lynch

Matthew MacCarthy

Mr. & Mrs. Donald Mairose

Douglas Marshall

Deborah Martini

Rick Masten

Mabel & Glenn Matteson

Diane Kerr & John McCall

Gregory Mcdonald

Mr. & Mrs. Andrew McGhee

Andrew & Karen McNabb

J. Michael Milberger

Joel Minnigh

William Mistick & Mary Ann Ference

Richard & Betsy Monheim

Burl Moone III

James & Amy Moore

Elizabeth Mulvaney & Joyce Magill

Bud & Beth Murray

Nancy Neff

Tom & Connie Ochs

Frederick W Okie Jr

Wendy Pardee & Thomas Butterworth

Tracy & Jim Partridge

Barbara Patchan

Marcus & Nancy Patterson

Joan Paul

Margery Peffer

Ruth Pickering

Deborah Pike

Joni Rabinowitz & John Haer

Sarah Ramaley

Christopher Ramsey

Narda & Arthur Rathbun

Mr. & Mrs. William Rau

Debra Raubenstrauch

Margaret Reding

Margaret & Frank Reed

Dr. Leila Richards

Paula Rossi

Theresa Sable

Sue Schneider

Paul & Carolynn Schrading

Joan Schrysen

Minette Seate

Vivienne & Jerome Selia

Henry Shapiro

Paul & Diane Shepard

Lee Silverman

Gary & Andy Slafka

Joseph Smith

Jack & Carol Snyder

Rayden Sorock

David Speakman

Audrey Spieler ^

David & Melanie Sprenkel

John Stanton

Diane Startari

Frederick Steinberg

Craig Stevens

Deborah & Joe Stuligross

Terri Supowitz

Carol Swift

William Taymans

Barbara & Robert Thaw

Richard Thomas

Sara Alice Thomas

Adele Towers

Betty F & David W. Voigt

Eleanor Walker

Clark & Jean Walter

David Walton

Mary Chester Wasko

David Waters

Regitze Weingartner

Ronni Weis

Dodie & Rick Wellock

Nancy Jane Welsh

Michael & Shelby Wherry

Cathy Wilkie

Thomas Williams

Betty Wilson

Phil Wilson

Lois Winslow

***Congregations***

Covenant Church of Pittsburgh ^

Covenant Fellowship Reformed Presbyterian Church

Dormition of Theotokos Greek Church in Oakmont

First Presbyterian Church of Edgewood ^

Forest Hills Pres. Mission Committee

Hamilton Presbyterian Church

Metropolitan Community Church of Pgh

Mifflin Avenue United Methodist Church

New Life Church of God

Newlonsburg Presbyterian Church

New Testament Missionary Baptist Church ^

Sixth Presbyterian Church

South Avenue United Methodist Church ^

Ss Peter & Paul Parish

Third Presbyterian Church

Waverly United Presbyterian Church

***Foundations, Corporations, and Organization***

Church World Service

Dollar Bank Foundation

Eden Hall Foundation

Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank

Hayes Foundation (Pittsburgh Foundation)

Hillman Foundations

The Heinz Endowments

John R and Margaret S. McCarten Foundation of the Pittsburgh Foundations

Pennwood Paints

Pittsburgh Foundations

Saturday A.M. Group

John R. Stanton Corporation

United Methodist Foundation of Western Pennsylvania

United Methodist Women of South Avenue United Methodist Church

Wilkinsburg Rotary Club

***In honor of***

Jane Fox, by the Breck Household

Tawna Loutzenhizer, by George Fischer

Grayson Strauss, by Stephanie Strauss

***2023 Critical Needs Day of Giving***

Donald Block

Greg Broujos

Gerald Dalton

Marshall Devenpeck

Jennifer Flanagan

Cyril & Jane Fox

Carolyn Fronapel

Peter E. Gilmore

Frances Hardic

Patricia Hauser

Peggy Heidish

Yee Ho

Jeffrey Hoener

Donna Isaac

Karen Johnese

Ruth Kittner

Rebecca Klaw

Stewart Lawrence

Judith Lightner

Mabel &, Glenn Matteson

Melissa Mencotti

Candace Morgan

Kathleen Mulligan

Thomas Ochs

Mark Roth

Joyce Rothermel

Sue Schaefer

Roger Schneider

Mary Beth Simon

Pamela Sovich

Melanie Sprenkel

Barbara Thaw

Claudia Viehland

Mary Chester Wasko

James Wedd

***In Remembrance of Lynn Kittner, 1924-2023***

Gail Cookson

Amy Enrico

Madelaine Dusseau

Jane Jessell

Peter Gilmore

Gail Gratton

Jody Guy

Carol Hall

Mary Hart

Michael Jehn

Patrick M Joyce

Ruth Kittner

Ann Lasher

Kate Luxemburg

Caitlyn McNulty

Patrick McShea

Audrey J Pobutsky

Mark Roth

Barbara Thaw

William & Paul Schryba

Christine Nelson Tabor

Virginia Tiger

Diane Vencius

***Migrant Workers in the Food Economy***

That salad you ate? Who picked the lettuce, the carrots, the onions? Carrying a sack, scooping the head of lettuce from the ground, walking row after row, stooped over. That milk? Who milked the cow, attached the milking clusters to her udders, and monitored the pumping? Who cleaned the equipment after? That crab meat? Who shelled the crabs and picked the meat out? Every meal you eat passes through the hands of agricultural workers.

Agricultural work requires skill and is relentless, exhausting, and can be extremely dangerous. Immigrant workers make up an estimated 73% of agriculture workers in the United States. Agricultural work requires skill and is relentless, exhausting, and potentially dangerous. The American Farm Bureau Federation estimates that, in total, U.S. agriculture needs to hire 1.5 to 2 million workers a year.  Farmers have struggled to fill positions; and in 2021, California farmers reported being unable to find all the workers they needed over the last five years. Maryland seafood suppliers reported similar shortages, from 30-100%.

A graph of a job

Description automatically generatedThe H-2A program allows U.S. employers or U.S. agents who meet specific regulatory requirements to bring foreign nationals to the United States to fill temporary agricultural jobs. The process of controlling the influx of essential agricultural workers across the border is time-consuming and costly and can frequently make the workers arrive to pick crops 22 days late. The standard filing process for hiring H-2A workers *should* take 60-75 days and requires that the farmer know exactly when his crop will be ready to pick. Farming is not an exact science. The 15-day swing can be the difference between a successful crop and a failure. Farmers in year-round production sectors (dairy and pork for example) cannot even participate because visas are only available for seasonal workers.

The legal status of H-2A workers is also temporary and subject to an employer's sponsorship. The visa can be re-approved annually for up to three years, and then the worker must leave the U.S. for at least three months before applying to receive an H-2A visa again. No matter how many years a worker returns, there is no path to citizenship or permanent legal status for the worker or family - despite the reality that many immigrant workers have been working on the same farm for years, sometimes year-round. The current agricultural workforce is also aging, requiring younger workers to replace them. Immigrants have filled these shortfalls in the workforce for decades, but in recent years, fewer immigrants have come to the U.S. to work in agriculture, a result of current U.S. immigration policy and rising incomes in Mexico.

These workers pay taxes and contribute to the economy, especially to the food economy. They are not protected by U.S. labor laws, and they live every day under the threat of arrest and family separation, all while working in extremely difficult and physically taxing conditions. The dairy industry estimates that the cost of milk would nearly double if farmers lost their foreign-born workers.  The current H-2A program helps address some labor shortages, but more needs to be done to ensure farmworkers have access to basic rights and protections from persistently low wages, overcrowded or unsafe housing, and lack of access to health insurance and education. Stabilizing the workforce would help U.S. farmers stay open for business, keeping jobs available for U.S. workers and pushing back on the increasing food and production costs driven by the shortages of workers.

If the migrant and immigrant farmers are the backbone of the food supply chain, truckers are its feet: they play a critical role in the food supply chain, transporting food from producers to consumers. The food supply chain is relatively simple, with three main parts: production (farmers and pickers), transportation (trucks and trains), and marketing and sales (stores). The trucking industry is a vital link in this chain, moving 72.5% of the total domestic tonnage shipped in the United States. According to the USDA, trucks are responsible for transporting 83% of all agricultural freight in the United States, including more than 95% of all meat, poultry, fish, and seafood and more than 70% of grains. Yet a long-term shortage of truck drivers continues to pose a challenge.

But this is not the last hand in the supply chain. Another player has a smaller role but takes a larger chunk.

***The Last Word: Average shoppers spend more and come home with less***

Why is food so expensive? Grocery prices are 30% higher than four years ago and it makes no sense. In the wake of World War II, the [grocery industry](https://scholar.google.com/citations?view_op=view_citation&hl=en&user=K9n1hP0AAAAJ&citation_for_view=K9n1hP0AAAAJ:hC7cP41nSMkC) ensured a cheap, convenient, and abundant food supply. Decades later, the same industry leveraged pandemic-related supply chain crises to raise prices and reap *enormous* profits, all while selling less food.

The U.S. grocery industry is a $1.03 trillion monster. Prices are up nearly 30% since 2019, while unit volumes are flat. What does this mean? Increased price for less food! Boxed cereal dollar sales are up 17%, but unit volumes are down 12% (less in the box). Based on box volume, prices are up 33%. The top three brands, General Mills, Kellogg’s, and Post Holdings, possess over a 70% market share. ***Consumers pay more money for smaller volumes of product***. In 2022, Kellogg’s Chief Executive referred to this as a sign of consumer resilience! Those of us in the food security sector refer to this as shrinkflation and exploitation of the consumer.

Kraft Heinz dominates the packaged cheese category at 65% of the market share. In 2022-23, the company’s profits [skyrocketed](https://time.com/6269366/food-company-profits-make-groceries-expensive/), from $225 million to $887 million, an increase of 448%. Gross profit margins reached 34%, up 400BP over Q3 2022. Beef demand is highly elastic. As prices go up, volumes go down. Prices have gone through the roof, up over 50% in just four years. The average beef price per pound is now over $7. The top four meat processors hold around 50% of the market share. One of them, Tyson Foods, doubled its profits from 2021-2022. Since 2020, ***COVID-19-related food inflation has created over 60 new food billionaires***.

Figure Top 10 price increase and volume trends across all grocery channels, 2019-2023. Data courtesy of NIq

***Sellers’ Inflation explained: Shrinkflation, in other words***

Sustained higher prices are not only a burden on consumer budgets but are also an [ongoing policy failure](https://www.forbes.com/sites/errolschweizer/2022/12/18/why-the-federal-reserve-cant-solve-food-price-inflation/?sh=3df060053bbb) by the last three administrations that allowed food processors and distributors to develop a monopoly on the food supply.Sellers’ inflation is pressure from suppliers to increase prices. How? Supply shocks, like those during COVID, allowed corporations to tacitly collude, hike prices, and rake in record profits. This implicit collusion does not require the need to talk to one another to know that a cost shock is a great time to raise prices. *Groundwork Collaborativ*e, a Vermont-based non-profit that works with people and systems to create solutions to end hunger and homelessness, [recently](https://groundworkcollaborative.org/news/new-groundwork-report-reveals-key-drivers-of-grocery-inflation-and-what-government-can-do-about-it/) found that over 51% of the drastically higher inflationary pressures of 2020 and 2021 were direct results of corporate profits. The [Kansas City Federal Reserve](https://www.kansascityfed.org/research/economic-bulletin/corporate-profits-contributed-a-lot-to-inflation-in-2021-but-little-in-2022/) pegged this around 40%, indicating that sellers’ inflation is now a pretty mainstream idea.

According to typical inflation doctrine, consumer demand and labor costs drive inflation: blaming business for inflation is “bad economics.” Some experts maintain, though, that these [orthodoxies](https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2023/06/larry-summers-was-wrong-about-inflation.html) are not supported by the math, at least not this time. Corporate profits as a share of the national income are at historic highs; workers’ share of these same profits is lower than before the pandemic. The labor shortages get a lot of media attention. Retail labor costs increased as food workers demanded better pay and benefits during and after the pandemic after getting stressed out, sick, and even dying at work during the crisis. Even if retail labor costs went up 50% across the board, this would result in price increases of just 5-10% at grocery stores, not price hikes of 25% since November 2020.

Wall Street profit rates and stock buybacks are the highest since World War II. (Stock buybacks are the reacquisition by a company of its own shares. It represents an alternate and more flexible way [relative to dividends] of returning money to shareholders.) Food and agriculture billionaires added $400 billion to their wealth from 2020-2021. Walmart’s Walton family has a combined net worth of over $238 billion, increasing by $8.8 billion from 2020 to 2022. The Mars family added $21 billion to their fortune from 2020-2021. Food and agriculture billionaires added $400 billion to their wealth from 2020-2021. Instead of blaming workers’ increases in their hourly wage, it’s time to call the price hikes what they really are. Sellers’ inflation is Robin Hood in reverse: massive wealth concentration bankrolled by consumer spending on necessities.

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***What does this mean for Wilkinsburg Community Ministry?***

To maintain our support of increasing numbers of families who rely on us for groceries, our food budget jumps higher and higher. The food we obtain from the **Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank** is subsidized but still not free. We also receive food from several partners, but for them, food is expensive to purchase. We buy some wholesale fruits and vegetables through our partnership with Linea Verde Green Market. Five Points Bakery offers us day-old baked goods, especially bread.

**Costco**, **Whole Foods, East End Food Cooperative,** and **Trader Joe’s** offer us fresh and processed food from their shelves, items that are mislabeled or surplus. **Grow Pittsburgh** keeps us supplied with fresh items in the summer as well.  **Worm Return** and **Zero Waste Wrangler** help us with composting because, inevitably, some of the food donated to us is past its use. We will also share some excess with the Humane Animal Rescue Wildlife Rehabilitation Center in Verona because, well, raccoons and owls will eat almost anything. Despite our best efforts, by Mondays, the shelves are skimpy, and we spend the rest of the week restocking. Often, as we bring it in, it goes out with one of our neighbors. They are waiting in line every morning (except Tuesdays) for whatever we can provide. Tuesdays are the exception because we are open Tuesday evenings from 3:30-7:30; on Tuesday afternoon, the line starts to form at 2 o'clock. The average intake of food for the storefront pantry is 42,000 pounds a month; the average for the Mobile Pantry is approximately 32,000.

A graph of a number of individuals and individuals

Description automatically generatedWe are fortunate to live in the United States: our food system doesn’t always serve everyone, but it functions. There are areas of the world—Congo, Myanmar, Palestine, Sudan, and Ukraine, to name only a few—in which the internal food systems no longer function: in some cases, they have been destroyed by climate change, and in others, they’ve been destroyed by war. The annual CROP Walk, in which a dozen local organizations raise funding and awareness for worldwide hunger, continues to be an important activity for WCM: a quarter of the funds we raise in the Crop Walk comes to WCM, and the rest goes to Church World Service programs worldwide. Clearly, the migrants and immigrants who harvest our crops, milk our cows, tend our flocks, and process our crabs, meats, and fruits are not the culprits here. The farmers insist there are not enough of them and that the young workers aren’t entering the pipeline fast enough. There are easier jobs than the back-breaking labor of picking! Clearly, the truckers who transport these groceries throughout the country are not the problem either.

Wilkinsburg Community Ministry’s two pantries are distributing food full tilt. Our Mobile Pantry is out six days a week and distributes food until it is empty. Our storefront pantry has regular hours, 9-1 on Monday and Wednesday through Friday; on Tuesday evenings, the pantry is open from 3-7:30 (since March 2024). The charts below indicate who we feed. Families can come up to twice a week. This is indicated by the line for duplicated households (and duplicated individuals). Our families have a complicated juggling act of social benefits (SNAP), food they can purchase, and items they can acquire in another way. For example, the Pittsburgh, Wilkinsburg, and Woodland Hills school districts all provide free meals for the pupils and students.

This has a varied impact on our budget. First, our food budget has exceeded our projections by about $22,000. Our volume is higher than we expected and the cost of food we purchase has been higher than anticipated. Second, our labor costs have gone up. For every hour of paid staff labor, we have 1.5-2.0 hours of volunteer labor to process donated and purchased food. All cans, bottles, and packages need to be wiped down and stored properly (oldest to the front). Everything is checked against contents and labels to confirm that the product is not out of date (we cannot offer canned products after their date). As products go off the shelves or out of the refrigerators in the front, it is moved from storage to the front shelves. This is a constant process because of the size of our distribution area. The same happens for the mobile pantry. All products are checked in, counted, and verified against the order sheets so we know, in total, what we have in inventory. We receive two vanloads of products a week in our own van from the Food Bank. We receive a truckload of products (about 25,000 pounds) from the Food Bank twice a month. Our deliveries from Costco, Trader Joe’s, Market District, Five Points Bakery, and any other deliveries via 412 Food Rescue are all weighed, noted by category, and processed by the volunteers. In an average week, we have over 60 volunteer hours logged.

A table with food on it

Description automatically generated

Figure Food Donated in 2023 by the Pedal for the Pantry Bike Group

In June 2024, we contacted Kenneth Wasserman, Certified Public Accounts, for a full audit, which we ask for every five years. An audit provides the most comprehensive level of assurance of financial examination. In alternate years, we contract for a compilation or a review, which offers an intermediate level of assurance. Wasserman and his accountants also prepare our annual 990 statement. Both documents can be viewed at <https://www.guidestar.org/profile/25-1196619>. There, you can choose a more detailed look at our financials, our practices, and our programs.

WILKINSBURG COMMUNITY MINISTRY

## STATEMENT OF FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES - MODIFIED CASH BASIS

Year Ended December 31, 2023

Supporting Services

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Program  Services | | Management  and General | Fundraising | Total | Expenses |
| Salaries and Wages | $ 187,080 | $ 35,078 | $ 11,692 | $ 233,850 | |
| Payroll Taxes | 15,823 | 2,967 | 988 | 19,778 | |
| Professional Fees | 0 | 10,277 | 0 | 10,277 | |
| Office Expenses | 0 | 20,723 | 0 | 20,723 | |
| Interest Expense | 0 | 442 | 0 | 442 | |
| Occupancy Expenses | 31,692 | 5,593 | 0 | 37,285 | |
| Insurance | 0 | 10,864 | 0 | 10,864 | |
| Depreciation | 10,713 | 0 | 0 | 10,713 | |
| Store Front Pantry Expenses | 49,812 | 0 | 0 | 49,812 | |
| Mobile Pantry Expenses | 57,882 | 0 | 0 | 57,882 | |
| Operation Backpack Expenses | 3, 616 | 0 | 0 | 3,616 | |
| Garden Expenses | 12,239 | 0 | 0 | 12,239 | |

Total Functional Expenses $ **368,857 $ 85,944 $ 12,680 $ 467,481**

The Well Staff

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Contributors: Tom Ochs, Virginia Farnsworth, Sabreen Megherhi, Adam Morgan, Alex Firestine

Logistics: Deborah Dimasi, Sales Force Consultant

Printer: Knepper Printing

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **2024 Budget** | |
| **TOTAL PROJECTED Operating INCOME** | **555,000.00** |
| **Total Pantry Expenses:** | **76,700.00** |
| **Total Mobile Pantry Expenses** | **71,500.00** |
| **Total Garden Expenses** | **9,700.00** |
| **Other Programs 65500** |  |
| **Total Other Program Expenses** | **6,000.00** |
| **Total Cost of Programs** | **163,900.00** |
| **OPERATING EXPENSES** |  |
| **Total Wages & Taxes** | **226,710.00** |
| **Total Office Expenses** | **94,200.00** |
| **Total Operating Expenses** | **320,910.00** |
| **Total Expenditures** | **484,810.00** |
| **Net Revenue** | **70,190.00** |

*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](https://www.linkedin.com/company/62163072/admin/feed/posts/) (or go to LinkedIn and search for us)

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

Instagram: @wilkinsburgcommunityministry

*.*

**A white and blue square with black text

Description automatically generated**

**Neighborhood Realty Services’ Holiday Food Drive**:

All food items are welcome, especially items with a seasonal flavor!

**November 17, 2024,** 1028 S Braddock Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15218