

NEW FRIENDS AT THE PANTRY



JUNE 2021

"Often when you think you are at the end of something, you are at the beginning of something else"

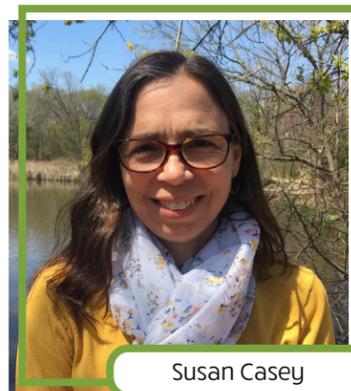
- Fred Rogers



Michelle Cahoon

Michelle Cahoon has been a volunteer at The Friendship Center since July 2019 after spending 30+ years in the financial services industry as the CFO of an investment management firm and a certified public accountant. Michelle has been a long-time financial supporter of the Greater Chicago Food Depository due to her strong belief that no one should go hungry and becoming a regular volunteer at the pantry was a top goal after her retirement. Michelle joined the board in April 2021 and brings both her hands-on knowledge from volunteering as well as her financial skills to that role. Michelle enjoys food, wine and travel and has been an avid Blackhawks fan since before their recent Stanley Cup wins.

Susan Casey joined the Friendship Center board in April 2021 and helps with Saturday food deliveries to seniors. She has lived in the North Park community with her family for over 20 years, where she's enjoyed volunteer leadership roles in the local community association and a local school. As a program manager for the environmental nonprofit Seven Generations Ahead, Susan helps K-12 schools reduce waste. She was a middle school science teacher prior to that. Susan looks forward to contributing her nonprofit, education, and community-building experience to the work and mission of the Friendship Center.



Susan Casey

If you recently saw the Friendship Center in the Chicago Tribune, FOX-32, or WTTW - then you were looking at the handi-work of our PR guru/volunteer **Mike Roach**.



Mike Roach

After a 20-plus years career making news for national brands including Budweiser, Harley-Davidson, KFC, and Snickers, Mike launched his own agency to help entrepreneurs, nonprofits and small businesses elevate their storytelling.

Mike loves visiting farmers markets with his wife Katie and daughter Ella. In fact, it was at the Ravenswood farmer's market where he first found out about our food pantry and got involved. We became his first "pro-bono" client.

You can follow Mike's travels to markets around the world via his Instagram feed @ATheFarmersMarket.

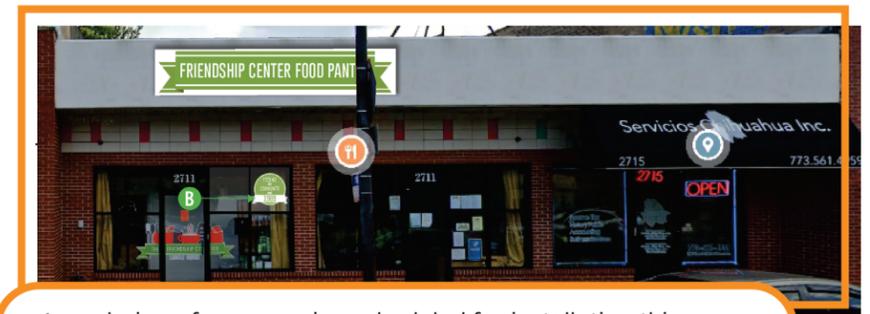
"There are so many unsung pantry volunteers doing such amazing things, it's humbling to be able to help tell their story" Mike said. "I just hope this media attention inspires other professionals in the neighborhood -- be they accountants, plumbers, painters or social media gurus - to join me in donating some of their time and talent to support this important work."

Dear Friend:

Warm spring weather and the easing of restrictions have us feeling a renewed sense of optimism at the food pantry. We are so proud of our volunteers and community of supporters for what we have accomplished together over the past year. We are also ready to start thinking about the future.

Two long delayed projects are finally coming to fruition this summer:

First, we are (finally) installing a new sign for our food pantry! The Lawrence ave facility we opened two years ago has been instrumental in helping us navigate these challenging times. A new sign will finally make it feel like home.



A rendering of our new sign scheduled for installation this month. Follow us on Facebook to see it when it's finished!

Second, we are launching a new website this month, so please visit us at

www.friendshipcenterchicago.org to see our new page with updated photos, links to food pantry stories in the neighborhood, and important features like a regularly updated in-kind donation needs list!

Also - if you haven't done so already, sign up to receive our electronic newsletter!

Yours in Friendship,

Ross Outten,
Director of Development

www.friendshipcenterchicago.org



HELPING IN NEW WAYS



EXPANDING OUR CAPACITY

Delivering for Our Seniors

Last year around this time, we started getting calls from partners like our local ward office and Swedish Hospital, asking if we could help get groceries to seniors and other homebound people in our area. Networks of friends and other community supports that were strained by COVID left many households unable to get the food they needed. We took down a few names and addresses, and started reaching out to our volunteers for help making deliveries.

One of our first clients was Bill North. Recently returned home from surgery, barely able to walk, and afraid to go out to the store, he called 40th ward community engagement coordinator Lisa Bowden, who reached out to the Friendship Center. We now serve eleven seniors in his building, and more than three dozen other regular clients around the neighborhood. We also brought groceries to seniors in nearby Humboldt Park for several months while their local pantry director was stuck at home in recovery and had to suspend operations.



Bill North with Groceries

This program was a 'build the airplane while it's flying' kind of effort - such has been required of so many in our food systems and community resource centers over the past year. We've learned a lot and grown in the process, and plan to continue to develop our capacity for delivery where it is needed.

"It means so much to have someone personally call, follow up with me, and make sure I have all my basics covered - THANK YOU to Lisa, Ross, Justin, & everyone at the Friendship Center. I don't know how I would have made it through this last year without your group." - Bill North

Making Friends on the South Side

Pantry volunteer Bonnie Tawse got involved with the Free Street Theater because of her son, Sam - and when the pandemic hit, they launched a pop-up pantry (or, as they call it, an "Alt-pantry") at their Storyfront Theater location in the "Back-of-the-Yards" neighborhood on Chicago's South side. They are working hard to reach underserved communities in their area with an innovative approach and a lot of grass-roots energy, but they don't have the same access to bulk food resources as we do.

Because of our committed network of supporters, sometimes we may actually hold a surplus of certain grocery items. In past issues we've described how we "resource-share" with other, neighboring pantries to make sure nothing goes to waste. In this case, we decided to go out of our way to divert excess product to a part of the city that really needs the help, and support them as they build and grow their own much needed food pantry.



Bonnie and Elizabeth at "Alt-pantry"



Stirring the pot!

Hot Meals To-Go

Over the last year, our Thursday dinner program has doubled in volume - even as our dining room remains closed and all meals are served to go. We now average 75-85 people every week, who leave with a hot and nutritious meal and a bag full of RTE ("ready-to-eat") snack foods.

Creating and executing the menu every week has turned into a team effort, with volunteers doing prep work on Wednesdays, cooking and serving on Thursdays. We feature a changing variety of ingredients from local garden plots and restaurants to global flavors representing a plethora of cultures and nationalities.

"This place doesn't just give you a ham and cheese sandwich - there's heart and soul in every meal here!" - P.M. Regular Thursday Dinner Client



Cashew chicken with green beans & rice



It's A Grind!

We've been getting LOTS of coffee donations due to a city-wide decline in demand from coffee shops over the last year. Usually, these come in 5lb bags of whole beans. Grinding these down and parceling them out into Ziploc bags has been a major project, and we've been borrowing equipment from local coffee shops to get

the job done. Thankfully, our friends at Beans & Bagels offered to convert their loan of a commercial coffee grinder into a donation! We now own our very own grinder, and the place smells great on "grind day" when we parcel out all of the donated coffee for our clients.

