

Doing the Work



FALL 2022 NEWSLETTER



“

After the economic crash, my wife and I, while employed, we were just barely covering things. It was the food pantry that kept us from being completely destitute, and allowed us some pride, regardless of our poverty.

– Phil C.

”

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2. Hold your phone camera over the QR code
3. Wait for our webpage link to open
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www.friendshipcenterchicago.org
2711 W. Lawrence Avenue
Chicago, IL 60625
Fostering hope and dignity through access to food and vital resources

Hello Friend,

In the six or seven months since I last provided an update to you, The Friendship Center team has been hard at work transforming itself to better serve our neighbors facing hunger. You may recall reading in the Spring newsletter about partnerships we began, allowing us to build capacity and grow to be better positioned to address the unmet needs in our communities. Now, in these pages, I invite you to learn how we are executing with our partners' support for the further benefit of our mission.

I'm pleased to report to you on the progress of our completed renovation. It's not often a project of this scope comes in on time and on budget! The resulting space, made possible by our partnership with Northshore-Swedish Hospital, will allow us to evolve quickly and provide a dignified shopping experience for folks who visit.

The Greater Chicago Food Depository continues to provide much of the food we distribute, as well as provide needed infrastructure for us to do more to help our neighbors experiencing food insecurity. They provided us with a refrigerated van, and we've made quick and good use of it. Continue reading to learn how we are deploying it daily to rescue wholesome, unsold meat, dairy, and other perishables from grocery stores, as well as delivering boxes of food to senior living communities and other shelters and pantries.

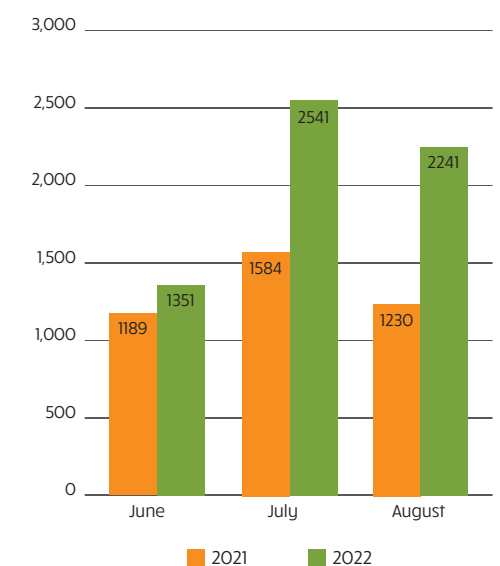
The Friendship Center is lucky to have a strong partner in the restaurant industry to ensure our hot meal program is scalable. We share how as demand continues to grow, the Fifty/50 Restaurant Group has stepped in to not only provide guidance, but help us do the work of feeding our neighbors in need.

The numbers tell their own story: over the summer, we've served 35% more clients than last year during the same period. Doing the work of feeding more folks means evolving to meet the need in our communities. I'm glad you're with us in our journey!

Warmly,

Justin Block
Executive Director

Neighbors Served





Scaling Hot Meals with the Fifty/50 Group

Earlier this year, The Friendship Center needed support and guidance for its hot meal program. Being fans of our neighborhood pizza spot, Roots Handmade, we reached out to see if they might know anyone who could help us. Almost instantly, we got an email back from the Fifty/50 Restaurant Group's co-owner, Scott Weiner, who volunteered to come in personally each week, until our program was running right. "This is exactly how we want to partner in our community," he said. "The Fifty/50 Group is striving towards a bigger purpose, something bigger than myself or my business partner, and that drives me."



We soon found out just how dedicated he and his team would be. The first week, out of existing pantry inventory came winter lamb & sausage stew over roasted potatoes - yum! Since that time, our hot meals have more than doubled in volume, and again, Scott and his chefs are helping us maintain the quality meals we want to serve, but at the scale we need to. The Friendship Center's Executive Director, Justin Block, says the support can't be over-

stated. "The Fifty/50 Group have been invaluable in helping our hot meal program grow and I shudder to think where we'd be without their assistance."



Renovation Update

We couldn't be more pleased with the results of our facility renovations! Our goals were to optimize existing inventory space and increase cold-storage capacity, while creating a welcoming, normalized shopping experience for our neighbors

facing hunger. With foundational support from Swedish Hospital, we've built a well-organized stock room with almost 300% more cooler and freezer space. Our distribution area is now flooded with natural light, made bright and lively with a wall mural painted by a neighborhood artist. Chrome shopping racks mounted on wheels can be repositioned on the polished concrete floor to fashion a community meeting space or classroom - or accommodate any social distancing measures that may still be in front of us.

Van Update

With our new refrigerated van, courtesy of the Greater Chicago Food Depository, hitting the streets in June, we have rescued over 75,000 pounds (and counting!) of wholesome, nutritious food from area grocery stores like Jewel and Mariano's. In addition to increasing our sharing with the onsite pantry at Swedish Hospital, we have started supporting two other food pantries with that surplus bounty. The van has allowed us to perform even more weekly homebound deliveries, providing dozens of grocery boxes to seniors facing hunger in one trip. What's next for The Friendship Center van? Doing even more rescue pickups from new grocery partners, supporting more organizations with food to distribute to clients, and creating new opportunities to engage others in the community. If you see us on the street, honk and say hi!

