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WE MOVED!
3448 NW Yeon Ave
Portland, Oregon 97210
503-221-1224
www.lifturbanportland.org



March 14, 2024

First United Methodist Church
1838 SW Jefferson St.
Portland, OR 97201

Dear Rev. Karyn Richards-Kuan & the First United Methodist Church Community,

We genuinely thank you for your generous partnership over the past year. The community at First United Methodist Church has played a pivotal role in our ability to expand food security services for residents of Downtown and Northwest Portland.

The need for Lift UP's services has never been greater. In 2023 you helped us serve **13,218 shoppers** with groceries through Preston's Pantry. This is a **26% increase** over 2022! Inflation has increased food costs by 10% over the past year, and recent reductions in pandemic-era Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits have caused food insecurity to soar for many in our community. Preston's Pantry experienced a surge in shoppers after these cuts went into effect, with many families needing our services for the first time.

Lift UP conducted an in-depth program evaluation in the Fall that included surveys and focus groups with Pantry shoppers. The people we serve described the incredible need by sharing, **"My SNAP benefits went from \$270 a month to \$23 a month. No one can eat on that,"** and **"The end of the emergency SNAP benefits was huge. People went from having enough to hardly getting by."** Fortunately, through volunteer support, food donations, and financial contributions from members of First United Methodist Church, you have helped Lift UP grow to meet the demand. In 2023, your community:

- Donated over 200 pounds of food
- Gave over 500 volunteer hours
- Contributed \$5,552.52 in funds

Thank you for your generosity and commitment to reducing hunger for our Portland neighbors!

Pantry shoppers also expressed their enthusiasm and gratitude for the quality and variety of food available through Lift UP. One shopper explained, **"Preston's Pantry changed my diet completely – I hadn't had fruits and veggies for three years before coming here. They're too expensive on SNAP."** Another shopper wanted us to know, **"The quality of the produce is awesome. Since I started coming here, I've been eating a lot healthier."** The food that you enable Lift UP to



Program Manager Teresa Steichen and Friday Lead Volunteer Steve Cromer

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provide does more than provide a nourishing meal; it can help our neighbors heal and thrive in a wide variety of ways. We are proud of the impact nutritious food access has on the health of the community we serve, with 93% of Pantry shoppers saying that food from Lift UP enables them to take better care of their health.



Volunteers from First United Methodist receiving food donations.

At Lift UP, we believe that food security is more than having enough food to eat; it means having the abundance and choice to meet one's needs with dignity. In focus groups, Pantry shoppers emphasized the powerful impact of the service they receive when shopping at Preston's Pantry. ***"To be without food is a lonely and difficult place,"*** one shopper shared. ***"It's hard to admit I need help. When I come here, I don't have those negative questions in my head. I am more motivated to help others."*** Another shopper explained, ***"There is a shame when you are lacking***

food. Coming here I don't feel that way. Once I am here, I feel welcome." The warm welcome of pantry volunteers helps our neighbors overcome the stigma of experiencing food insecurity. Another shopper expressed their gratitude by sharing, ***"Staff and volunteers are amazing! They know clients by name. They make me feel like there is no disgrace."*** Thank you for fostering a welcoming and warm experience for Preston's Pantry shoppers!

In light of heightened need for nourishing food access in Portland, your partnership has made it possible for Lift UP to continue on our path of strategic growth to meet the increased demand. Last fiscal year, across all programs, Lift UP distributed a record **696,286 pounds of food (a 20% increase!)**. We also maintained our commitment to making fresh food accessible, as **48% of the food we provided to our neighbors was nutritious produce**. You make our growth possible!

Thank you for helping ensure our Portland community could continue to count on Lift UP for abundant, nutrient-dense food. By working together, we can make sure our Portland neighbors have the nourishment they need to live healthy, stable, and independent lives. Your partnership is invaluable, and we greatly appreciate your support.

With gratitude,

Stephanie Barr
Executive Director

**names changed to honor client confidentiality*

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