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RIVERDALE - Food pantry gains critical support

(by Leslie Scott - Staff Writer - January 21, 2009)

RIVERDALE - There has been an outpouring of support for the Riverdale Food Pantry.

The pantry opened just as the holiday season approached and clients of the pantry were quickly assisted with food, supermarket gift cards, and holiday presents.

Planning Board and Board of Health Secretary Linda Roetman said that virtually all of the food donations were provided by residents.

On Jan. 12, about \$60 worth of fresh groceries were waiting in Borough Hall to be delivered to the food pantry.

"We did get a large donation from the quarry and several residents donated gift cards to the pantry," said Roetman.

The quarry, Tilcon New York, presented \$5,000 for the pantry and commended the borough for taking the first steps to create the pantry.

Pantry founder and borough resident Gloria Carelli said that it was very kind and generous of Tilcon to make that contribution.

"I just couldn't be more delighted really. We've had a generous response from folks and we have a number of clients," said Carelli.

Although some families have come forward, Carelli believes more are in need but hesitant to seek help.

Roetman said at this time there is no minimum amount a person can make to qualify for this assistance.

"If they need help, we will help them. We have not turned anyone away," said Roetman.

Clients can stop by once a week, or if they need more, twice a week to pick up items.

"Whatever they need, we accommodate, so we are constantly replenishing our shelves," said Roetman.

"They can have whatever they want. Anything that is in there they can have it, and if they need specialty items, they can get the gift cards."

Carelli assures that everything is kept private.

"It is very confidential. The only folks who look at the personal information are Linda and myself," Carelli said.

The pantry wants everyone to continue to make contributions. Some of the needed items include canned foods like vegetables, beans, fruits, meats, and fish. Bakery items, hot and cold cereals, sauces and gravies, condiments, pastas, and packaged one-dish meals are also requested.

Paper products and kitchen and laundry detergents are accepted as well, in addition to supermarket gift cards with a value of \$25 or less, which will be distributed to clients for fresh dairy, produce, bread and meats.

Anyone in need of assistance can call Linda Roetman at 973-835-4060 ext. 6.

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