

Bread for Life Food Co-op: A Staple for Many

As he cleans out the shelves in the Bread for Life Food Co-op, Gregory feels a great sense of pride and strength. He knows that despite his limitations, he's still capable of so much. By supporting the co-op, you have helped individuals and families find self-worth and dignity. You have helped people like Gregory become stronger and confident.

"They kept telling me you're somebody, even though I didn't feel like it," shares Gregory. "You're somebody here. They really helped me adjust to being retired and limited health wise."

Gregory has been a co-op member for almost three years, visiting the co-op once a week. He has learned to do a variety of tasks from stocking the shelves to cleaning out the freezer. In exchange for his labor, he is earning vouchers to shop in the co-op for all his food needs.

"This place is a hand up where you work in exchange for your food. Maybe I have foolish pride, but it's good for my dignity and self-respect."

With access to fresh produce, he's also eating healthier. "I've gotten in way better shape. I've lost weight and I'm still losing weight," says Gregory. "I'm eating more organic foods."

The co-op has become a part of his family. He has enjoyed working together with others, recognizing everyone's struggles and sharing in their joys as they move forward.

**"I gained confidence
to try my chances again
in the work field."**

Gregory adds, "It's a great social network. Some days I come here feeling lousy, but every time I leave, I feel a whole lot better. Happier. Energized. More comfortable in my own skin."

Being a co-op member has created a new spark in Gregory, inspiring him to improve his lifestyle.

"Before coming here, I didn't feel of value. I never considered myself marketable again. Because of my time here, I gained confidence to try my chances again in the work field. I was able to get a job as a driver delivering meals."

"The co-op is a really great place," exclaims Gregory. "It's impacted me by adding more meaning to my life."

Your support has evolved the co-op into something more than just food. You have strengthened our community and sustained lives.



MISSION STATEMENT

Home Sweet Home Ministries demonstrates Christ's love through innovative approaches that instill hope, restore lives, and build community.



A Message from Mary Ann

*In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, Lord,
make me dwell in safety.*

- Psalm 4:8

You were a safety net for Tabitha when she needed it most. When Tabitha came to Home Sweet Home Ministries, fresh from a broken relationship and a lost job, she felt like a failure. Through your support, you provided her with a safe refuge and an opportunity to heal. Your support surrounded Tabitha with staff who accepted her in all her brokenness and helped restore her self-confidence. Before long she was smiling and began to relax. She even found herself offering encouragement to other shelter residents.

Your safety net gave Tabitha the stability and strength she needed to find a meaningful job and a safe place to live. She has you to thank for providing her with a fresh start in life.

The familiar hymn, "Amazing Grace," reminds us:

Through many dangers, toils and snares I have
already come;
'Tis grace that brought me safe thus far, and grace
will lead me home.

Tabitha found a temporary refuge which led to a "home sweet home" of her own, thanks to you and God's grace.

You are invited to contact me to learn more about the impact that you are making through your support of Home Sweet Home Ministries.

Blessings,

Mary Ann Pullin

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Nourishing Encouragement

List in hand, Laura selects yogurt from the shelf. She victoriously checks it off her list. Thanks to you she has access to fresh food and hygiene items to help keep herself healthy.

"It means a lot to me to be able to get good food."

Five years ago, Home Sweet Home opened up the Bread for Life Food Co-op. What started out as an opportunity for others to gain independence in their food choices has evolved into a community of hope and life change. Thanks to your generosity, over 300 members have embraced healthier lifestyles and developed meaningful relationships.

Laura has been a co-op member for three years. She has seen numerous items come in through the co-op doors and has always been impressed by the variety and the quality.

"I do find a lot of organic foods in the co-op. I get all of my eggs, all of my rice. You never know what will come in and that's part of the fun of it," adds Laura. "One time I got a little tin of smoked trout. That was really nice to pick up."

She likes selecting unique items that a majority of others typically don't. "I always get the organic plain yogurt and sometimes that is hard to find. Everybody likes the flavors and I don't like the flavors. It's too much sugar."

Laura is especially grateful to all the farmers, churches, and other organizations that grow fresh produce to donate to the co-op. "I have taken home tons of corn and cooked it and cut it off the cob and frozen it. That lasts me quite a while."

But of course, it's not all just about the food. Over the past few years, Laura has enjoyed her time conversing with others. She is inspired by so many positive attitudes.

"I love working here. It's not just for the produce and food. I like the atmosphere. I love working with everybody here," says Laura.

"It's a nice place and I love visiting every Monday."

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A Lifetime of Volunteering

It's 5:30 a.m. on a Monday morning. Eileen Sronce gives a discerning eye to a fluffy pink comforter and deems it okay for resale. She carefully folds the bedspread and puts it in a bin labeled processed.

By the time most of us start our day, Eileen has already accumulated a few hours volunteering at Home Sweet Home Ministries' Warehouse.

"It's fun and I really enjoy it. I've done it for so long, it's just a part of my life."

For the past 25 years, Eileen has amassed over 10,000 hours of service sorting linens donated to Home Sweet Home for the purposes of resale in the Mission Mart thrift store and salvage operation. It is estimated that she processes approximately 54,000 items annually and is responsible for generating \$37,000 annually in revenue from the sale of the items she processes. She handles each item with care as she measures, folds, rolls, and labels everything from pillowcases to comforters to kitchen towels.

"Every day we have new stuff, and I'll admit, sometimes I go, 'What is this?' It's fun to figure some items out."

Eileen volunteers up to eight hours per day at least twice a week. Knowing that she is helping others, keeps her motivated.

"I'm the youngest of eight. I didn't have a lot growing up. I wanted others to have a better quality of life than I did. Especially families and children." Becoming teary eyed, Eileen shares, "They deserve better and I'm fortunate to help in their journey towards a brighter future."

Even when faced with a broken hip a few years ago, Eileen didn't slow down for long. She recuperated and anxiously returned to volunteer. Eileen credits her strength to God.

"As long as God keeps me healthy, I figure I'm doing what he wants me to do. I have to give Him the credit. I just feel very blessed beyond measure."

Recently, Eileen was recognized with a Presidential Service Center Distinguished Service Medal for her outstanding years of service to HSHM. Join us in congratulating Eileen for her endurance and strength. May God continue to bless you for many years to come!

Home Sweet Home is truly grateful for Eileen. We would love to have more dedicated volunteers like Eileen be a part of our family. If you're interested to become more involved, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator, Felicia Young, at 309-319-2821.



For the past 25 years, Eileen has amassed over 10,000 hours of service



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Live Generously



Calling all Central Illinois Thrivent members! Thrivent Member Network-Heartland Region is partnering with Home Sweet Home Ministries for Big Give this fall. The focus of Big Give is to supply Home Sweet Home Ministries and Midwest Food Bank with the food needed to fill the boxes we distribute at Thanksgiving.

Joining the movement is easy! As a Thrivent member, simply apply for an Action Team and use the promo code **biggive2019**. It's a great way to shop for the cause and increase your impact this September! We would love to have more churches and families get involved. For more details please contact Community Engagement Leader for Thrivent Financial, Liz Mikel, at 309-205-9898 or Home Sweet Home Ministries' Chief Operating Officer, Matt Burgess, at 309-319-2847. Together we can help thousands this Thanksgiving. Thank you!

Women's Auxiliary

The Auxiliary meets at Home Sweet Home Ministries, 303 E. Oakland Ave., Bloomington, at 11:30 a.m. Join us for our monthly potluck and program. Yearly dues are \$10.00; a life membership is \$100.00.

Upcoming meetings are:

- **August 12:** Joan Garber, Mary Kay Consultant, Beauty Has No Age
- **September 9:** Darla Hearth, Evergreen Senior Living

Please check us out on Facebook at Home Sweet Home Ministries Auxiliary.
Thank you.

Current Needs

Each day Home Sweet Home strives to provide Hope For All Who Enter. Families come to our shelter seeking better access to food and other basic necessities.

Help brighten someone's day. Please help us collect the following items:

- Low Sugar Cereals
- Boxed Meals
- Razors
- Shaving Cream
- Full Size Shampoo & Conditioner
- Baby Wipes

Donations can be dropped off at the shelter at 303 East Oakland Avenue in Bloomington at any time. Thank you so much for providing food and hygiene items to co-op members and residents.

The Power of Prayer

There are so many ways to support HSHM and the services we provide including through the power of prayer. We graciously ask for you to keep in prayer:

- Bread for Life Food Co-op and its members.
- Community members working in gardens to support our food services.
- Our food source providers, including local restaurants and grocery stores.
- Individuals and families in need of shelter.
- Volunteers, clients, and staff who devote their time in our shelter, Mission Mart, and warehouse.

Thank you for lifting our ministry up in spirit.