

# BREAD FOR LIFE FOOD CO-OP:

## *Celebrating a Decade of Service*

Ten years ago, Home Sweet Home Ministries embarked on a new journey transitioning from a food pantry to the Bread For Life Food Co-op. What started out as an opportunity for others to gain independence in their food choices evolved into a community of hope and fellowship. Your generosity has allowed the co-op to help hundreds of individuals provide food for themselves and their families. From the single mom struggling to feed her children to the veteran with limited income, you have helped them gain access to fresh produce, meat, and canned goods to sustain their health.

2014

*Bread for Life*  
Co-op



*Real Food.  
Real Community.*

When the co-op first opened on July 7, 2014, it was in the basement of our shelter with rows of stocked food and a couple of freezers all nestled in one corner. New co-op members eagerly stocked shelves, greeted shoppers, and sorted food in exchange for shopping trips. Members began to develop meaningful relationships, creating a true sense of family.

News of Bread For Life's success began to spread, inspiring others in at least six other communities across the Midwest and beyond to Tokyo, Japan.

As interest in the co-op grew, so did our need for space. In May 2021, with the aid of volunteers, the co-op moved out of our basement to its current location behind The Junction. This change allowed for several improvements including better accessibility, natural lighting, and a designated kitchen area. It also proved to be an even greater blessing as just a few short weeks later, 38 inches of accumulated rainwater flooded our entire basement.

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## MISSION STATEMENT

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



## A Message from Matt

*“The eyes of all look to you in hope; you give them their food as they need it. When you open your hand, you satisfy the hunger and thirst of every living thing.”*

– Psalm 145:15&16

Ten years ago, we converted our food pantry into the Bread For Life Food Co-op. When we undertook this change, we were convinced that we needed to find a better way to provide food assistance for our community – a way that not only delivered food to those in need, but also placed emphasis on building relationships that reinforce the dignity and capabilities of the individuals we wanted to help.

I can attest that the relationships we’ve made with our co-op members over the past decade (and those they’ve made with each other) go beyond physical nourishment and serve to satisfy the “hunger and thirst” all of us have to be known and valued. I am grateful to each Bread For Life member, volunteer, donor, and staff member who have dedicated themselves to making the co-op the success that it is today.

As you read this newsletter, I hope you share in the excitement we all have as we observe this milestone moment for the Bread For Life Food Co-op. May God bless you all for your faithful support of our ministry.

*Matt Burgess*

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## Save the Date!



Mark your calendars now for our annual Night In A Car fundraiser happening on **Friday, February 7th, 2025!** This impactful simulation fuels HSHM’s efforts to drive out homelessness in our community. Participants “live” out of their cars during the overnight hours, getting a small glimpse of what it is like to experience homelessness.

Your participation can make a real difference. No matter if you can join us for just the evening activities or stay most or all the night, all levels of participation are welcome. Goals can start at \$250 and up, but we challenge you to raise \$1,000 per team to support the vital work of Home Sweet Home.

Looking to jumpstart your fundraising efforts? Registration is now open. Speed your way over to [nighinacar.org](http://nighinacar.org) to sign up today. Thank you!

## POWER OF 10

As the Bread For Life Food Co-op celebrates its 10th anniversary, we kindly ask you to help us continue to provide nourishment and strength to those struggling by supporting our Power of 10 campaign. Going on now through August, HSHM is looking for 1,000 individuals to donate \$10 to help us raise \$10,000 for the Bread For Life Food Co-op. Help others embrace their power by visiting [hshministries.org/donate](http://hshministries.org/donate) and putting ‘Power of 10’ in the campaign box to donate today. You can also contribute by mail or in person to Home Sweet Home Ministries, 303 E. Oakland Ave., Bloomington, IL 61701. Please make sure to indicate ‘Power of 10’ on the gift. Home Sweet Home values your support. Together we can keep our community healthy and happy. Thank you!

*Volunteer With Us!*

Discover ways to get involved at

<https://hshministries.org/volunteer/opportunities-to-serve>

# 10 Years of HA! Hope and Laughs

Stop by the Bread For Life Food Co-op any day of the work week and you may be greeted by Cliff's welcoming charm.

"On days I don't even work, I love to come here just to stop by and chat. As soon as I walk in, everybody smiles," shares Cliff.

Cliff has been around since the co-op began. He appreciates the opportunity to easily shop for what he needs. "It's just like a grocery store. I come in and pick out what I want. I don't get stuck with something I can't eat," adds Cliff.

He expresses how much he enjoys the atmosphere, and that the best part is the people. Cliff values working together with others, recognizing everyone's struggles and sharing in their triumphs as they move forward.

"I come here and try to help people here. I show them what the mission did for me," says Cliff. "I stayed here for a year, and then I got my own place. I'm 15 years in recovery by the grace and mercy of God. The co-op is my safe zone."

He feels blessed to help himself and help others at the same time. "I love being here. I love making people laugh. I'm a fun guy who loves to talk."

If you're in the neighborhood and would love to learn more about Bread For Life, come in and say, 'Hi!' Chances are Cliff will be there.



# HA! HA!



## Partner With Us for Big Give

Home Sweet Home Ministries, Midwest Food Bank, and Thrivent are busy preparing for Big Give and we need your help! We are looking for churches, youth groups, schools, and businesses to get involved. Big Give occurs in September and October. We are asking you to collect items for meal boxes that we will distribute during Thanksgiving. You can choose to do special shopping days or a planned food drive. We are happy to provide shopping lists, boxes, and arrange pick-ups. It is a great opportunity for you to give back in a big way! Your efforts helped to feed 1,800 families last year and we look forward to helping more this year. If you are interested in participating, please reach out to Leslie Bunge, HSHM's Director of Development at [lbunge@hshministries.org](mailto:lbunge@hshministries.org) or 309-319-2820. Thank you!

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Home Sweet Home Ministries

Like Us!



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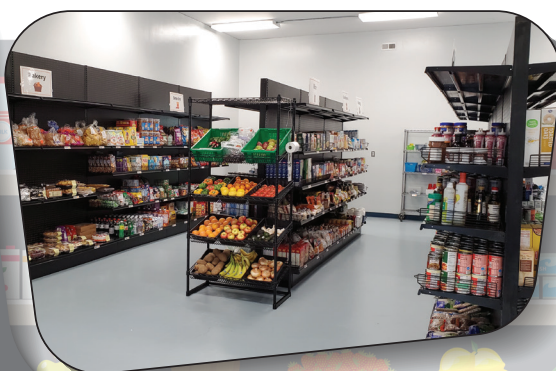
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Fast forward to today, you can see that the co-op remains strong, averaging 1,500 shopping trips per year. Bread For Life is also in the early stages of adding a garden with raised beds outside the main entrance to grow fresh herbs, carrots, and onions. We continue to explore better ways to help our members find self-worth and dignity.

All these strides are made possible through your gracious desire to share. Donations from churches, businesses, youth groups, farmers, and other caring individuals help the co-op to thrive. You have strengthened our community and sustained lives.

Home Sweet Home has truly appreciated all your efforts and prayers these past years. As we look to the future, HSHM is grateful to have caring neighbors like you we can count on. Together we will continue to fulfill the physical and spiritual needs of all those who enter our doors.



## Current Needs

Because of you, Home Sweet Home can provide strength and renewal to individuals and families seeking refuge. We kindly ask for your help in collecting the following items:

- Bottled water
- Ziploc snack/sandwich bags
- Toilet Paper/Paper Towels
- Individual Bags of Chips
- Coffee
- Deodorant (Men's and Women's)
- Body Wash

Donations can be dropped off at the Bread For Life Co-op at 301 East Oakland Avenue in Bloomington anytime Monday through Friday from 9 am to 4 pm. Be sure to check out [hshministries.org](http://hshministries.org) and click on the "Ways to Give" tab for our most up to date urgent needs. Thank you so much!

## Invitation to Prayer

As Home Sweet Home cares for our neighbors this summer, we appreciate your help in praying for:

- the Bread For Life Co-op and its members.
- individuals, families, and Veterans seeking a fresh start.
- our staff and community partners involved with The Junction.
- community gardeners that provide HSHM with fresh produce.
- the well-being of volunteers, clients, and staff who devote their time to our shelter.

Your loving thoughts and prayers are truly appreciated. God Bless!