

Sabathani gears up for largest food drive of the year

Written by

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It's that time of year, and Sabathani is once again asking the community to help fill the stomachs of hungry children and adults who rely on its food shelf every day. Sabathani hopes to be a recipient of people responding to Minnesota FoodShare's March Campaign, an annual effort focusing on the problems of hunger in communities across the state. Sabathani encourages individuals, schools, churches, businesses and civic groups to "be a superhero in the fight against hunger," this year's campaign giving slogan.

Sabathani's food shelf is the organization's most used program, distributing more than a half million pounds of food a year to more than 6,000 families throughout South Minneapolis and beyond.

"If it weren't for Sabathani, many, many people [in the community] would have a hard time getting access to food," said Sandra Richardson, program manager in Family Resources at Sabathani. Sabathani is asking as many people as possible to donate non-perishable food items this month. Cash donations are acceptable, too.

Groups and organizations are encouraged to have fun and be creative. Donating for casual days at work, giving competitions between company departments or church ministries, food donations in lieu of wedding gifts or home fund raising parties are a few ideas that people use to get food donations.

Of the families who use Sabathani's food shelf, nearly 90 percent earn less than the federal poverty levels, while the remaining subsist with household incomes between 100% and 200% of poverty.

However, a growing number of food shelf users are middle-income families struggling in the present economy with lower wages because of reduced hours on their job or surviving on unemployment income, said Richardson. "These are people who have not used a food shelf or other support services before. When they do find out about Sabathani, they've often been suffering for a while. We want everybody to know that we're here for them."

Food donations can be made directly to Sabathani Monday-Friday between 9 am and 3:30 pm. Weekend deliveries can be made by appointment by calling Kevin at (651) 276-9646. Drop-off is in the left rear of the parking lot through the large gates. Cash donations can be mailed to the building address at 310 E. 38th St., Suite 200; Minneapolis, MN 55409 or made online through the website at <http://www.sabathani.org>. The building is located on 38th Street in a former school building between Third and Fourth avenues.

Sabathani was created in 1966 to provide structured activities for area youths. Today Sabathani serves 20,000 people a year through four core programs:

Family Resources (food shelf, free clothing and household goods, emergency assistance and navigation services);

Horizons Youth Program (after-school academic support through mentoring and behavior modification);

Senior Center (onsite medical services, transportation and shopping assistance, physical fitness and social engagement);

First Access Health Center (free medical and low-cost dental care for children, registration for fitness classes, gardening education and a Farmers Market).

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Sabathani's mission is to strengthen youth, children and families and to build the capacity of the community that it serves. The overall goal of the organization is to move families from crisis to stabilization and self-sufficiency.