



Daniel, a client of Breakthrough Church's food pantry

## FOR OUR PEOPLE, FOR OUR COMMUNITY

*Pastor Joseph Carr and Lady Stephanie Carr founded Breakthrough Church with bigger goals than becoming just another house of worship. Driving by the former factory building one night, they saw the potential for a church that could be a community hub for everyone. What they've built has become a vital source of food - and more - for Hamden residents in need.*

During a Saturday morning food distribution, the church was buzzing with volunteers directing traffic, moving boxes, and greeting clients who can walk up or drive through. A whiteboard inside the distribution space lists out groups of ingredients to make breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks. Instead of distributing whatever mismatched items fit in the bags and boxes they distribute, the pantry aims to provide clients with food to make complete meals.

But Breakthrough Church's services stretch beyond just faith and food. "Our clients are struggling

with all of it; housing, mental health, employment, transportation." With their neighbors having trouble finding help, Pastor and Lady Carr have begun to expand. The church now operates a warming center through the winter, and a mental health counselor is available on-site. Their ultimate goal is to become a bridge between different resources, fostering deep connections with their clients.

"We've used food assistance before, but this pantry has been the most helpful. The people here value me and want to help me. They're not just doing a job,"





says Daniel, who has been coming to the food pantry for a few months while work has been slow. With his wife, kids, and father at home, Daniel picks up enough food to feed the entire family. “We tend to be very resourceful. We don’t waste anything, and we make sure nothing goes bad. We can get a good week or week and half out of everything we get here.”

The church is beginning to convert its food distribution into a grocery store style pantry where clients can choose their own items, and they are bringing in a nutritionist to promote healthy choices and help plan meals. Directly across from the pantry will be a full commercial kitchen to expand a recently launched

community meal program to provide prepared grab-and-go meals.

Looking back on the early days of the church, Pastor Carr says, “We saw so many people who needed food. We knew our community from getting out on the streets. We created a little budget and started the pantry on our own dime.” Although the scale has changed and the goals are now much larger, the passion for service remains the same. “Our driving force is to make sure families have what they need.”



Pastor and Lady Carr



## A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT JASON JAKUBOWSKI

It’s hard to believe that it has already been six months since Connecticut Food Bank and Foodshare merged into one statewide organization! By bringing these two longtime non-profits together, it continues to be our goal to provide greater support to our partner agencies, to assist seniors and children in need, and - of course - to collaborate with the broader community. In April, we awarded nearly \$500,000 to 260 partner agencies to help fund their increased food distribution and safety protocols. In May, we announced that we would continue our drive-through distribution sites throughout the summer with help from funding that the state of Connecticut received in the American Rescue Plan Act. With a recent study from our Institute for Hunger Research & Solutions showing that three in every ten Connecticut

residents are struggling with food insecurity,\* the dedication of our volunteers and partner programs, like Breakthrough Church, is more essential than ever. But the pandemic did not affect everyone equally. People of color are twice as likely as white households to struggle to get enough healthy food.\* To help us provide an equitable and efficient response to this crisis, we turned to partners like Hartford Healthcare, who offered COVID-19 vaccines at our mobile distributions - giving Connecticut’s most vulnerable populations barrier-free access to critical health resources.

We look forward to the impact that we will now have as one organization, where research, equity, and collaboration are at the center of everything we do.

\* This study was generously funded by Stop & Shop and the Hunger to Health Collaboratory.



Left: Volunteers in Wallingford sort through frozen meat donations. / Right: Rentschler Field volunteers place boxes of a food in a recipient's truck.

## WE'RE LIKE A FAMILY:

VOLUNTEERING THROUGH THE PANDEMIC

*When COVID-19 shut down the entire world, food banks across the country sprang into action. With local businesses sending their employees to work from home and civic groups no longer gathering, the food bank's steadiest sources of help had run dry, and the need for food assistance was skyrocketing.*

But within weeks, the food bank's calls for help were met with resounding enthusiasm. Regular volunteers returned to their posts, adapting their routines to new safety protocols, and new volunteers jumped in, eager to lend a helping hand. In our Wallingford facility, a team of volunteers, from different towns and backgrounds, had been inspecting, sorting, and packing frozen meat for years when the pandemic brought their regular Wednesday shift to a halt. A few months later, they picked up right where they left off. While sorting the thirty-pound boxes of protein in a refrigeration room, Terry from Guilford said, "We didn't really miss a beat. It was difficult with masks and glasses in the cold air - they kept fogging up - but we just kept doing what we've always been doing." And although they didn't know each other when starting out, they say it's the family atmosphere and the feeling of making a difference that's kept them coming back - even through a global pandemic.

Twenty-five miles north, at our Rentschler Field drive-thru distribution, a similarly diverse and dedicated group was just beginning to form. People like Paula, who saw an ad calling for volunteers, and Patty who was laid off from her job and needed a way to fill her time, volunteered at every distribution. They kept

the lines of cars stocked with household staples like bread and produce through wind, rain, snow, and heat. "I'll be crying when the last car comes through. I think a lot of us will be. We don't know what we're going to do afterwards," said Paula on the final day of distribution, nearly a year from when she first started volunteering. Today, the Wallingford team is back to their normal schedule, sorting thousands of pounds each week, and the Rentschler Field team is now volunteering at other distributions throughout the organization. The bonds formed over the last year and a half will last so much farther into the future. "When I compare the experience that we had to the average person who stayed confined at home - being here has given me so many really incredible memories," said Gary, another Rentschler Field volunteer. Michelle, standing next to him added, "I never didn't want to go. There's days you don't want to go to work, but this was always something to look forward to."



*In loving memory of our friend and co-worker*  
**VOLUNTEER MANAGER**  
**DELORES TRACEY JOHN**  
1976 - 2021



SATURDAY  
SEPT

18<sup>th</sup>

Walk steps off:  
10:00 AM  
Registration: 8:00 AM



REGISTER ONLINE AT [WWW.FOODSHAREWALK.ORG](http://WWW.FOODSHAREWALK.ORG)



# Help Us Knock Hunger Out of the Park!

The first-ever statewide Walk Against Hunger is just around the corner on Saturday, September 18! Thanks to the Hartford Yard Goats, the Walk will return to Dunkin' Donuts Park. Last year's Walk raised over \$300,000 to benefit the work that we do year-round with over 700 partner programs throughout the state. Our partners help us serve the estimated 545,000 people who are food insecure in Connecticut. The Walk is a free, fun-filled event with live entertainment and giveaways hosted by local media personalities Renee DiNino and Scot Haney.

## SPONSOR THE WALK

Have a visible impact in your community by helping us continue to provide healthy food for our neighbors.

### LEARN MORE

[www.foodshare.org/sponsor](http://www.foodshare.org/sponsor)

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