



March 13, 2018

Dear Friends of the Pantry –

As I write this letter, the winds of our mid-March Nor'easter howl outside. We've had nearly blizzard conditions for almost 24 hours, and the temperature continues below freezing. Even so, it's been a mild winter overall so no complaints, and we look forward to seeing the daffodils when this all melts!

We have been busy during Fall/Winter service. We began offering Saturday hours for those folks who are not able to come mid-afternoon during the week. We kept Monday and Wednesday 2 – 4pm but substituted Saturday morning 10am – noon for Friday. It was a bit of a slow start getting the word out, but we now have larger numbers on Saturday than we have on Monday. It was a good change that many Saturday folks thank us for when they come.

In early February, we changed to a total self-serve shopping experience. We have Grocery and Produce areas, along with our Donated Food table (items from food drives and our Purple boxes). Volunteers are available at all of the areas to answer questions about the selection and to suggest items to try. I truly enjoy seeing people linger at the shelves reading labels and spending time deciding what suits their tastes and needs.

We had a special treat late Fall. **Island Grown Initiative** received a grant allowing them to be able to process excess venison from our island hunting season. Jefferson Monroe of the **Good Farm** ground the meat with a bit of pork to make it tasty. We received 270 one-pound packages, which flew out the door. IGI is hoping to expand the program next year - wonderful!

We are starting now to plan for Spring/Summer service mid-April. We hope to field enough volunteers to again offer both Wednesday and Saturday hours this summer. If you are able to help out in any way, please send us an email. Also we hope to increase our Food Donations – drives and Purple boxes—which are so important to what we are able to offer. It is still such a struggle to have enough to fill our donation table. We hope to build on our initiative last year of collecting food left by renters or seasonal residents. Check around for our posted brochures. Contact us if you want to help spread the word.

We are grateful for all of the support that we receive year round from so many school groups, businesses, and other organizations. In particular, I want to celebrate the food drives from the **Oak Bluffs** and **Tisbury Schools** and the **Honor Society** and **Culinary Class** at the **High School**, the pre-show spots at the **Film Society**, and - for the first time - our partnering with **The Martha's Vineyard Film Festival** for donations. We thank **Stop and Shop** for their support from customers and associates Food for Friends campaign. Thank you to these and more.

"April is the cruellest month." T. S. Eliot's oft-quoted line gives most of us a wry smile as we look forward to spring. But for the folks I greet coming into the Pantry this time of year, it is a hard reality. Even in a mild winter, heating bills have been onerous. Employment opportunities are still few, as restaurants and stores are barely beginning opening hours. Most will not be opening until May. And many Vineyarders must now leave their winter rental for still-to-be-secured summer housing.

We could not be present for these our neighbors without the support of all of you who are so faithful with your donations. We are 100% volunteer, and every dollar we receive goes to support the acquisition and distribution of food. We greatly appreciate all donations. Monthly donations, however small, help us to predict what we can provide for those who would otherwise go without. Please feel free to give online at [islandfoodpantry.org](http://islandfoodpantry.org).

Thank you so much for your help throughout the year. I look forward to hearing from you anytime.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Margaret Hannemann".

Margaret Hannemann, Coordinator

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