

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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Island Grown Initiative  
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### **Island Food Pantry Relocates to Portuguese American Club**

In a move to increase storage capabilities, improve the flow and variety of food, and become wheelchair accessible, the Island Food Pantry will relocate from its longstanding home at the United Methodist Stone Church in Vineyard Haven to the Portuguese American Club (PA Club) in Oak Bluffs on Feb. 22<sup>nd</sup>.

The relocation culminates negotiations between the Holy Ghost Association which owns the PA Club and surrounding property and Island Grown Initiative (IGI), giving the Food Pantry a two-year lease with the option to renew. The centrally located PA Club, within walking distance from a VTA bus stop, will enhance the Pantry's ability to meet its mission of providing a reliable source of wholesome food more effectively to Islanders in need.

The decision to find a larger home for the Food Pantry to meet the growing demand, follows the merger of the Pantry with IGI. The Island Food Pantry became a program of IGI on Jan. 1. 2021, but maintains its own budget, name and mission.

"It's remarkable to bring this level of transformative change to the Island Food Pantry and its customer base so quickly following our merger," said Rebecca Haag, IGI's executive director. "The merger and now this important move for the Pantry will strengthen the Island's support resources for those who face food insecurity and enable us to build a stronger, more integrated food equity infrastructure."

The PA Club provides a streamlined and accessible layout for easier shopping and creates a safer, more distanced environment for staff and volunteers. It also more than doubles the amount of fresh and frozen food that can be stored leading to not just a greater amount of healthy food, which often requires refrigeration, but a great variety as well.

The Island Food Pantry has operated out of the basement of the Stone Church since 1981 when it began as a cupboard by then-Methodist Minister Helen Oliver for parishioners in need. It expanded under the leadership of Armen Hanjian for 25 years and in 2017, when Margaret Hannemann took over, it began a partnership with the Greater Boston Food Bank and greatly expanded its hours and days of operation.

"We can't thank the leadership of the Stone Church for providing a stable home all these years for the Food Pantry," said Kayte Morris, IGI's Senior Program Director of Food Equity Programs.

"Last year, the Pantry served over 1,400 families which is 50 percent more than 2019 and we clearly needed a new space to meet the Island's ever-changing demands. This new location is a game changer across the board for us."

The Pantry's hours of operation will remain the same: Monday 2:00-4:00 p.m., Wednesday 2:00-6:00 p.m. and Saturday 10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

**Island Grown Initiative**

Island Grown Initiative works to build a regenerative and equitable food system on Martha's Vineyard that engages, informs, and integrates the community.

**Island Food Pantry**

The Island Food Pantry strives to cultivate a healthy, hunger-free community on Martha's Vineyard. Together with our many volunteers, partners, and supporters, we help sustain our neighbors in times of need by providing a dependable source of wholesome food.