



The need to feed / Central Illinois Foodbank celebrates 25th anniversary

Springfield State Journal-Register

By JOHN REYNOLDS

June 8, 2007

Anne Smith, a member of the board of directors for Menard Caring Inc., liked what she saw Thursday as she toured the Central Illinois Foodbank in Springfield.

Smith's group runs a small food pantry out of Central Presbyterian Church in Petersburg, and she said the many items stored in the food bank's 20,000-square-foot warehouse at 2000 E. Moffat St. could definitely come in handy.

"They have a lot of items we can utilize to help families," Smith said. "I didn't anticipate how big the building was or how much food is supplied there."

Smith was among dozens of people who toured the Central Illinois Foodbank on Thursday as part of its 25th anniversary. The food bank opened June 7, 1982, with an initial donation of 2,000 pounds of apple cobbler. Since then, millions of pounds of food have passed through the facility to pantries for the needy in Sangamon and 20 other central Illinois counties.

Last year, the Central Illinois Foodbank distributed 4.2 million pounds of food.

Executive director Pam Molitoris explained that the food bank operates as a distributor, soliciting donations from a variety of sources, including corporations, and then passes the food to other agencies, charging them up to 18 cents a pound to cover expenses.

"What we do is take care of the warehousing, the distribution and the storage. The agencies actually work with the people and families who are in need," Molitoris said.

The Central Illinois Foodbank began operation at 410 N. 19th St. It moved to its current location in 1986 or 1987.

Molitoris said she has seen the hunger problem grow worse locally over the years.

"We've got a lot more people who are struggling," she said. "We have folks who are certainly working, but they just can't make ends meet."

"I think at one time, food banks and food pantries were geared more around emergency food," Molitoris added. "... Now, we are dealing more with: How do we feed people over time?"

Smith said the need for food is also growing in Menard County. She cited rising fuel costs as one of the factors stretching budgets. With more money going toward gas, there's less for food.

"People are spending more money to get back and forth from work ... and going to the grocery store is costing more because of the cost of transporting food," she said.