

“A Phoenix Rises”

“Taking care of
people's
food
needs”



SACO FOOD PANTRY, INC.

Its Continuing Flight

Dear Reader, You have read about the food pantry in the first three books that cover its life from humble beginnings, its destruction, rebuilding, outreach program, its expansion, complete make over, and culminated with a walk in freezer in July 2011. You may also have read about my personal times on the back porch as well. Now you are invited to follow the flight of the Phoenix in Book 5 as it continues its journey into the future.

Chapter 1 A Month Filled with Generous Hands

In the early part of July 2011, while picking up some items at Shaw's on the way home from the pantry, I was stopped by John De Roche the manager. He inquired about a scheduled food drive on August 13 Th at the store. I explained we were having a rough time keeping the shelves filled because of the extra demand being put on us by the economic situation at that time. With new families being added every week and the total number of people being helped each month standing at about 700 it was taking a toll.

At that point he told me Shaw's was committed to helping this food drive be better than all others. And while listening to John unfolded both Shaw's and his plans for the drive my only thought was "this is going to be the mother of all food drives". An idea that was presented to corporate had mushroomed into unparalleled size. Donations from store suppliers of bicycles, grills, chairs, kayak, etc. in order to bring more people in to donate with all profits realized from ticket sales going to the pantry. The store was also jumping in by putting on a BBQ starting about 10a.m. and running till we ended the drive about 3 p.m. When it ended we had realized 3,500 pounds of food and in chances taken and combined with monetary donations to equal the last three food drives combined. Looking back to all that contributed in some way to this drive I think it can be said best by paraphrasing Winston Churchill's words "this was everyone's finest hour".

To add to support and enthusiasm, I received a phone call on August 9th from Tracy McLaughlin, secretary to Ira Rosenberg, president of the Prime Motor Group in Saco. He had recently read a newspaper article about the pantry being "in dire straights" with regard to funding and wanted to help. Not having two pantry staples, grape jelly and peanut butter, in stock at the

same time was “a first in my fifteen years with the pantry”. I was also concerned about the loss of support from The Emergency Food and Shelter Program for money requested. (This happened to other pantries and meal programs in Maine as well.) Looking at the entire situation, I still felt that we were on firm ground and in better shape than others doing the same job.

However after a short but adequate pause to think about the impending support, I gratefully accepted the offer. A day was put in place for the donation to be made. The hour was set so as not to conflict with my scheduled family meeting at Truslow Center to discuss Flora’s care while I did pantry work. It was agreed that the donation would be made at the pantry and publicity pictures taken. The fact remains that Ira and others in the community do care and are willing to stand and be counted. With all gathered together as one, these are the reasons the Phoenix continues to fly with the eagles.

If that wasn’t enough, on August 16th, I attended a meeting at Jimmy the Greeks in OOB to finalize plans for the upcoming Fourth Annual “Ride and Rock”, to benefit both the Saco Food Pantry and Open Hands, Open Heart. This would take place on Saturday, August 20th, and would be presented by Mike Paul Foundations. I can’t believe it has been four years since Mike contacted me about the first drive. I can still see the van in his driveway, doors open with a table being used for collecting food and money donations. Then, when all were ready, Mike and Christen came up the driveway leading all on that first ride into history.

Now, four rides later, this will be the biggest yet. Mike has gone all out in putting this in motion. He has estimated that there will be two hundred riders taking this ride up to the lake and back. Then on the return swing, they will all converge at the ball park for the BBQ and entertainment that will take place until closing at nine thirty.

It was during this meeting that I found out why the attendance was small last year. There had been an accident in which two of their friends, Andy and Dustin Giroux, were killed. A memorial took place for them at the same day and time. Mike could not reschedule because of the short timing involved. I also found out that after twenty three years of riding Mike had to

take his bike down, having received a concussion and broken bones. He will be wearing a helmet but still backs a free choice for them.

The day dawned bright and warm. All the bikes of every description were there along with Mike's son Madix whom I had not seen in a year. Now almost two, just looking at him you can see on page eight of the picture section that he is a chip off the old block. Though I estimate only about fifty bikes made the run from OOB the site was something to see as they passed us on Ocean Park Road. We with our banners, waving to them, and they, blowing their horns and waving in response, made for a wonderful feeling proving once more that people from different paths in life can and do come together when others need support.

Footnote: the following is a head line from the Daily News in New York, August 23, 2011....

5.9 magnitude earthquake strikes Virginia, shaking felt in New York; White House, Pentagon evacuated.....

Footnote: I thought I was having an attack of some kind as I sat at the computer...all of a sudden I was moving in the chair and something was happening in my arthritic neck or possibly my heart. It was a motion I had not felt before even when I went into A-Fib. Then my sister Barbara called from New York to see if I felt it. My first reaction was, 'Felt what?' She explained about the earth quake and I asked 'How long ago?' 'About 2:00', she replied. Then I told her of my experience here and learned that was the cause of the movement. I'm glad I didn't call 9-1-1...My first quake and I lived through it ... What a relief!

Chapter 2 Batten Down the Hatches

On Friday August 25, 2011, with Irene, no last name, barreling up the coast, it was time to secure everything that wasn't nailed down or growing around the pantry property. In answer to a call to Mike Paul about picking up the foam insulation, I found out he was in Tennessee for a motorcycle run. George, Mike Marcotte, and I stacked it in the freezer as it was the easiest to reach, because it would be picked up by Mike on Tuesday or Wednesday when he got back.

August 28th: It's here! What started in the oceans of the South Atlantic / Caribbean area grew to a category 3 hurricane, battered the coast from North Carolina up to New Jersey, lost some of its punch, and almost ran out of steam by the time it got to Maine. What a relief! The thing most on my mind was the possible loss of power with over \$5,000.00 worth of frozen food in the freezer. We dodged another weather bullet and for that I am very happy. As of this writing at 2 p.m., Sunday, the 28th, the wind is blowing anywhere from 3mph to 30mph. I think someone up there likes what we do and this is our "Thank you".

Footnote: On August 31st, the Salvation Army in OOB had spot announcements on the radio looking for help. The storm knocked out their power and as a result they lost all their frozen food. When Al, our chairwoman, got to the pantry and caught up with me she wanted to know if we could give them some of ours. "Sure I'll call and find out what's needed". After about an hour of trying, we reached a real person and were able to get a list.

Having a walk in freezer, and larger amounts of stock available, we could now demonstrate one of the reasons it was installed. Some chicken and French Fries from York County Food Rescue, two large boxes of Cordon Blue received the day before from the Red Cross disaster center at the Saco Rec-center, not used and non-returnable, two banana boxes of 2 pound block chicken and about 36 whole chickens purchased from Good Shepherd, were put into the van by Sue Sajecki and me. We were then ready to carry out the mission and the reason we're here. While in OOB their pantry called and I picked up six banana boxes of bread that went into a hole created by the removal of some chicken. Another win- win situation...I love a good plan.

Cue the music: It's the Phoenix flying once again to the rescue.

P.S. to a footnote: While eating lunch and watching the news on Thursday, the first of September, there was a segment dealing with the OOB pantry. They also lost all the food in their freezers. After making a call to Mary and then to the church where the pantry is housed, I typed this while waiting for a return call. When that takes place it will be time for the Phoenix to spread its wings and shelter another beneath them.

Chapter 3 A Concert Remembering 9/11

It is that time of year when people stop for a minute, remember, and in their own way, say a prayer for those who have passed this way but once. As in past years, the Alumni and Italian Heritage Bands combined to remember them as well by offering their talents and time. By making the pantry the recipient of a free alms donation, they, and all in attendance, were able to give back to the community. In giving back, those we serve can only wish all continued peace and say "Thank You". We realized about 900 pounds of food and \$500.00 in cash and checks.

Footnote: The following is a copy of the remarks I made that night as the spokesman for the pantry board and clients.

At this time, we thank both the Alumni and Italian Heritage bands for their performance tonight. That said, it gets emotional from here on.

Tonight is a night of memories: memories of the scenes 10 years ago that unfolded before our eyes; memories of people from every walk in life, age, religion, color, country, all coming together in order to understand and comfort one another in this their greatest hour of need.

You may also have memories of what took place 11 years ago... on this very spot... when both church and pantry were destroyed by fire... with each rising again.

The pantry walls hold memories as well... of you and others like you... and the generosity of your support over the years: generosity...that in the last 6 years made it possible to help 16,485 families in need...generosity...that helped their 38,490 dependents make it through one more month...generosity...that helped us dispense approximately 461,880 meals... based on our rule of thumb and fixed at homeall this made possible because you care.

This is why the pantry that Bryce Milne, our deceased chair, referred to as a Phoenix rising from the ashes, began its mission in 1982 on this sacred ground and continues today. Speaking for all we serve, and on behalf of the entire pantry board, I say, to you here and those not present but standing in the shadows.... "Thank You and God Bless".

Chapter 4 A Donation from the South

While preparing for the concert, I received a phone call from an old church friend, Mary Puleio. She was now working for the Franciscan Guest House, in Kennebunk and had some news that could prove to be a source of money to the pantry. They had a large collection of returnable bottles to pass on to a charity and wondered if I would I be interested in picking them up. When and where?

As I had not been to the center of Kennebunk in about ten years she gave me a general direction and the rest I took from Map quest. Mike Marcotte and I drove down, and upon entering the town square, it was easy to see nothing had changed: slow moving traffic on narrow streets and tourists still walking around taking pictures, stores still open and waiting for business... everything the way I left it almost ten years earlier. We found the office, and I was introduced to the staff and then met Mary at the rear of another building. The woman had really understated the amount of bottles they had! Large collections are a manageable amount; this was a bonanza of bottles to boggle the eyes. There were bottles of every shape, size, and description imaginable. Every available container was overflowing! After loading about fifteen milk cases and twenty garbage bags, we called it quits. We were afraid the plastic bags would break, because of the glass bottles that we had put in them. We pulled out and I stopped in the office to thank them for the donation.

While taking our leave, I informed them that we did not get them all on one swing and a second trip next week on Tuesday, the 13th, would be necessary. I was told at that time by Mary and Mike the manager that they were doing this on a trial basis to see what was involved and how much we or another charity would realize from the venture. Going home, I thought it over. On the next trip I explained how it could work, if we were given the option. I would set a system up between us where I would supply the containers and pick up every few weeks or on their call. We would continuously swap empty containers for full. Doing this would give us an extra source of money, and for them, a working system that would eliminate a lot of labor on their part.

Footnote: On Thursday the 15th, the redemption center called with the balance of the money from the last load. All totaled we were \$89.05 to the

good. When I called Mike to give him the total he told me that we would be the recipient of their good will and they would call me when they were ready again.

While on the subject, I call your attention to the redemption center I used that helped pull this entire thing together. It is the Biddeford Bottle & Can Redemption Center at 310 Alfred Street, Biddeford, located a stone's throw from Five Point's traffic circle. With the help of John, the owner, and Heather, the turning of returnable's into cash to feed those in need went off smoothly. I could keep doing other jobs and they could sort mine without pressure during their slack time. This was another win-win situation for all. From the pantry board and our clients, we say once again, "Thank You".

Footnote: I called OOB pantry again this morning, September 14th, and told them I was able to bring the freezer and some frozen replacements. They told me as of now they have replacements from Good Shepherd and everything was OK. They suggested I call back in a week or so and check again. I don't think so! I gave them a chance and two bites of the apple. They will not get a third.

Chapter 5 the Phoenix Laments

In the quiet of the night the Phoenix, with gently bowed head and folded wings, mourned the passing of a devoted friend and supporter of the pantry. It was 1:30 a.m. on September 19th that Helen Finn, after one hundred years of sharing a life of caring, love, gentle warmth, and a lifetime of knowledge as a teacher to both young and old, closed her eyes and began her journey home.

Though what some from by-gone eras call a spinster, as she never married; she was to every one who knew her, the sister, niece, daughter, friend or other relative they longed to have, but never did. If you engaged her in conversation on any subject of the day preparedness' was the key factor. Not by her, but you, the visitor. She could, to the last, hold her own on a given subject and got her thoughts across. Her mind was always alert. She wanted to know everything that was going on beyond the four walls of her home.

Every one who knew her stood in awe of this remarkable woman. If you were called by name, when she saw you and she always did, you knew by

the simple tone of her voice, the smile on her face, the sparkle in her eyes you were special to her. As you continued a conversation you felt the warmth of the lady encircle you and wrap you in love. We have all lost a wonderful and gracious lady. There will be an empty place in our lives and hearts but one that is easily filled knowing she is where she wanted to be; God speed Helen.

Footnote: Flora and I of course attended both the wake and funeral mass at Most Holy Trinity Church for Helen. I said previously that she was well known and liked by all who were fortunate to know her. The celebrants' at her mass also knew, respected and loved her. Father David Schlaver CSC, was the main celebrant of the mass, with additional priests Father Charlie Kociolek CSC, driving from PA., Father Bob Wiseman CSC and Father Jim Doherty CSC, a former pastor of the church, coming up together from MA, and Father Richard Rice, a friend of Helen's from the Brunswick area. Others worked on their schedules in hopes of also being here, but unfortunately could not. Knowing her sense of humor she would say something to the effect, "the Pope couldn't make it"?

Chapter 6 Show Us the Money

On Friday, September 23rd, John de Roush asked me if I was available on Tuesday, the 27th, to accept a check from another Pepsi and Frito Lay fund raiser. He had to coordinate with Jeff so the required photo shoot could take place. I agreed and told him to call with a time. At the designated time of 10:30, I dutifully stood smiling for the camera with a hand poised below the check to prevent any chance of it being damaged by an accidental dropping. Like the first check presented to the pantry in July, the second bite of the apple was just as sweet.

Our hats are off as we give a standing ovation to Shaw's, Pepsi, and Frito Lay for their commitment of support to the pantry, its clients and the community as a whole. With raised bottles of Pepsi we say to all "Here's looking at you".

Chapter 7 Notice of Eviction

On Oct. 3, I received a phone call from Bob La Bell at Good Shepherd Parish. I was expecting it but hated the thought of receiving it. After eleven years of being able to use the walk in refrigerator in back of Notre Dame de

Lourdes School, we were being asked to vacate as it was being donated to the Friends of Community Action food pantry in Biddeford. The school had been closed previously and its pupils are now being educated at Saint James School in Biddeford because of consolidation. The refrigerator was no longer needed here. I thanked him for the heads up and said I would be contacting Don Bisson at Friends about a time frame.

On October 6th, I put in a call to Roger at Hair Works. A month before this, he and I had talked about the situation previously mentioned. At this time he told me about a hair salon on Elm Street in Saco across from Mike and Judy's at what I would call "a little five corners". I tried to get together with Tim Fournier who has a set of refrigeration units in his store left by the previous occupier, an ice cream parlor.

After missing him a few times on that day I took all the information and measurements from one of them, assuming it was a refrigerator unit. When we do connect about the disposition of it I will forward it to Jim Godbout with the hopes it will work for us and all the ducks can be put in a row. Based on that assumption, I measured a place it would work in the pantry and will keep my fingers crossed.

Footnote: I was finally able to connect with Don Guay, the owner of the units, and was given the bad news. He told me there were three units there and all were connected with a common wall between two of them. The only way they can be removed is by taking out the rear wall. Evidently they must have been assembled (they are a panel design like ours) while the wall was open during construction, then sealed in place. I guess its back to plan A.

Chapter 8

Back in Jail

Though this chapter does not directly deal with the pantry as a whole, it does have something to do with me as its operations officer. The way I see it, it all came about because of my position and the fact my name was put forward as a candidate to help the MDA when Mike Paul used "Jimmy the Greek's" as a staging area for his fundraiser. Then the fun began!

On October 19th, I was summarily put behind bars for the second time in my life. Oh the shame of it all! Unlike the first time, I won't be getting paid as the money sent for my bail will be turned over to the MDA. I get an hour off and MDA gets the help they need ...another win-win situation.

At 9:15 a.m., my one time best friend, someone I considered family, Officer Mike Trembley of the Saco Police Department called me and announced he was coming to arrest me. Not knowing my whereabouts, he wanted to know where he could carry out his orders. I think this may be the only time in the annals of crime fighting that the police called ahead to make reservations with their intended perpetrator, so they could perform their sworn duty. At the pre- arranged time and place, he arrested me at my home. Adding insult to injury when he arrived with lights and siren going, he calmly walked up the driveway, into my house and gave Flora, my wife, a hug and a kiss. The man has no shame!

With laughter from all present, as well as our neighbor Martha Perkins, we were ready to do what we had gathered for: help provide for those less fortunate who have MD. To all on the association board, we thank you for giving us the opportunity to help you make it through one more day, as we do the pantry clients.

Footnote: in answer to a question from my niece Irene in North Carolina, as to how this event went, I put the following together. I enclosed it as a story to accompany the pictures sent. It is available on line at the pantry's web site. The print varies as it was copied directly, I hope you like it....

Greetings from an Ex-con in Maine,

It's over! The long arduous task of coping with other inmates at MDA jail is finished. After a long, sometimes sleepless stay, behind bars, lasting almost an hour I was again able to breathe fresh air. ...all made possible by those who were willing to go to the mat for me by sending bail money, coming across with \$876.00 for a good cause.

I never want to go through that again. Imagine me, the original Mr. Nice Guy, being locked up with the likes of Kevin Savage, President of the prestigious Saco and Biddeford Savings Institution. If that wasn't bad enough I was hauled away and incarcerated by Saco Police Officer Mike Trembley, a man that I considered more like family first and a city beat cop second. The shame of it all is too much to bear.

Then to add insult to injury he came into the house, hugged and kissed Flora, like a sweetheart and handed me a warrant for my arrest. What a swell guy!

That's not exactly the way and rotation it happened but it sure makes for good reading and I think some laughs. Eat your heart out, Ernest!

Chapter 9

Building Bridges and Giving Back

About the last of September, I was contacted by Marilou LaChance at Thornton Academy. She and Creg Milledge are Community Connections Coordinators, something new since I was in school, that head up what is known as the Thornton Academy Bridges Program. They wanted to know if I could use some young, strong, willing to work students at the pantry. They would do the lifting or any other work needed. As I had had two student volunteers off and on during the summer that worked out great, this was going to be even better. When I accepted their invitation, Marilou and Creg said they would bring them in by the bus load. Now I know the meaning of the phrase “youth is wasted on the young”.

After missing a turn because we could not coordinate at first, we finally made contact and got the ducks in a row. What a great marching column I had. Only eight, but with youth, eagerness, and an “I can do that attitude”, I was able to see first hand, as they unloaded the van of food from Good Shepherd in Portland, this was going to work just great.

Dear Reader: Let me introduce you to my team. As I type your name, step forward and take a bow: Anthony Beaulieu, Ryver Daigle, Tommy Vasquez, McKenzie Smith, Joey Schmader, Jon Ouellette, Treabhar McCoughlin, and Brandon Ange. Laughter, competitiveness, and willingness to listen are a few of their strong points. Though I don't have access to all the students at one time, the ones I do have more than make up for those missing. From the approximately seven hundred people you are helping to feed each month, “Thank you”.

Chapter 10

Good Shepherd is Here

This chapter may be a little miss leading with regard to the title. Normally when the pantry refers to the title Good Shepherd people think of the food bank that supplies most of the food we need to feed those in need.

This time though I am referring to the Good Shepherd Parish created when the consolidation of Catholic Churches that took place a few years back.

When this happened the buildings became vacant and the former Notre Dame de Lourdes School was combined with the Saint James School in Biddeford, becoming one. When that took place the freezer / refrigerator unit behind it and used in part by the pantry for over eleven years was vacated and became just another asset to be disposed of as read about in the preceding chapter seven.

On October 21 St I received word from Bob La Bell that the pantry it was once offered too was declining the offer and would I be interested. Since we had a new 16 x 20 freezer that part was not needed but the refrigerator section was. Since neither could be separated because of age and a common wall, a new plan had to be considered with a different approach taken with regard to the use of the refrigerator side. To this end I drew up the following proposal: *see footnote

On October 25 Th while in the parish office trying to find out where Bob was I was introduced to the parish Business Coordinator David Gadbois. He told me that the agreement submitted by me and read over by him was acceptable. I thanked him and thought no more of it until I went back on the 26Th on another matter. It was then while looking through a shared box with the Meals Program that I found the signed document by David agreeing to the terms set forth.

As I slowly came back from cloud nine I was thinking; now the missing part to additional needed cold storage and two desperately needed freezer parts were by agreement handed over to the pantry. With this happy news I took a copy of the agreement to Jim Godbout so he had a record authorizing the removal of the freezer motor and evaporator which he had previously agreed to remove and install in our freezer to up the output needed.

These parts are needed even though ours is new because I am under a layman's impression that although the evaporator donated by Hannaford was for a 16 x 20 freezer, I think it is more for a sheltered model. Ours is out side the building and may require a larger size evaporator to compensate for the temperature fluctuation especially during the summer months. We have what we need now but the time spent trying to come up with them all over the last month or so is making an old man of me.

Footnote: the agreement between the two parties in the preceding is available to both Good Shepherd Parish's legal representatives' and the Food Pantry board with each having a signed copy. Until such time as the release of that information is granted I will be the only one with access to the information.

Chapter 11

Attention! Idexx on Deck

On October 25th, Laurie Marcotte an employee of Idexx Laboratories Inc., Westbrook emailed me. Her company was taking a different approach to taking an extra step. Knowing that the food pantries and meals programs in the area as well as the entire state were up against it because of the increase in people seeking help, they decided it was time they gave something back.

They would pay their employees two days wages if they in turn volunteered to donate their time to a non-profit of their choice. Taking another's place would give a volunteer a little time off to spend time with his/her family. It would also give us a needed extra pair of hands for re-packing food. We were chosen by her because of our proximity to her home and familiarity of the name. On Friday, October 28th, at 7:30a.m. she, under my direction, started learning another trade. Volunteer work doesn't pay a salary but, putting the reimbursement for her time aside, I'm sure she left with the same feeling all our volunteers feel: "I gave back a little today for what I have been given and the reward of knowing I, in some way, made a difference in someone's life was worth it all." Welcome aboard, Laurie, that's what they call a 'gotcha'!

Chapter 12

Giving New Meaning to Reaching Out

This will be a very long chapter, to put it mildly, as it covers both time and distance... my best judgment about a cup and a half of coffee, Bunkie. When this was proposed to me by email on October 11th, by KrisGalasyn of First Parish Congregational Church, my first thoughts were "You've got to

be kidding”. Getting food donated to the pantry is one thing; getting enough people to line over a mile between church and pantry is something else, and on a late Sunday morning, pardon the pun, that’s really stretching things a bit far.

After many meetings of their church committees, and one with Jodi of YCFR and me in the church office, taping into our knowledge of food drives, the “Line Up Against Hunger” began to take shape. Not knowing just what was expected of me on the big day, Carol Holt, a pantry volunteer and parishioner, emailed me on November 2nd with the plan of attack. *

A week prior to the November 6th kick off, Hannaford spotted a pup-trailer on the property. Then a sign was hung along the side announcing the coming event. A few days later, they also managed to obtain a portable electronic road sign that really gained attention. I can’t say, but I think they stole, sorry appropriated, it from the police department, a construction site or the town. As for me, like Schultz said on “Hogan’s Heroes”, “I know nothing”. Needing some banana boxes, I gave them what I could spare, telling them how to double the amount by splitting them and using the tops for light stuff and the bottoms for canned goods.

I think this was destined to take place and be watched over by a higher power as the day dawned slightly crisp and clear like the sound of a ringing church bell. At the assigned time I made my three minute speech, and before services started, left to do other needed work. When I returned after eleven o’clock, the people started to line up at the curb for the big food pass-along. We, of course, needed and had an escort from Saco’s Finest. Police Officer Sargent Bruce Cote was in a lead cruiser with lights and an occasional blast on the siren. Following was a vintage fire engine, on loan from one of our supporters, Ira Rosenberg of Prime Auto, with representatives of the city * *, then Jodi and Jackie, in the York County Food Rescue truck, and me in the Bryce Mobile * *. In his squad car behind me was my nemesis from my recent run in raising funds for the MDA, Officer Mike Trembley, with flashing lights. I know he was only protecting the vehicles from other traffic not in the caravan, but those lights and his constant smile, reflected in the mirror, gave me an uneasy feeling...not really, but since this is my story, I intend to milk it for all it’s worth.

All told, it was the slowest trip I ever made. It took forty- five minutes to go from point A to point B but it was worth it as it was covered by TV and newspapers alike. Hunger and the people who wanted to do something about it now had a face. Ages of the participants were quite diverse, running from the very young to older men and women who have probably lived through some tough times of their own over the years. When I got to the pantry, I was stopped outside by Heather Mason. She told me the idea came up at a youth group meeting at the church and that her son, eleven year old Henry Mason, was the one that put forth the idea. What's the saying "Out of the mouths of babe's"?

Somewhere I heard that the First Lady, Michelle Obama, had sent a letter so I put out a request to Kris to have it forwarded to me so it could also be included.

See below, on separate pages, the thoughts of the First Lady and Chellie Pingree, member of Congress. Though we didn't have the First Lady in the line of helping hands, we did have hands from Trinity Episcopal Church, Good Shepherd Parish, First Parish Church in South Berwick, Thornton Academy students, local Boy Scouts. They set no Guinness Book of Records but each brought forth eager willing hands and hearts making a difference by bettering someone's life. For that, from the pantry board, volunteers, clients and me we say, "Thank you and God Bless".

Footnotes:

** Dignitaries: soon to be ex- (Election Day is next week) Mayor Roland L. Michaud and First Lady of Saco, his wife Hilda, along with Bob Fralley from First Parish as the recording photographer.

The Bryce mobile was the last piece of equipment before he joined an even better food pantry on October 16, 2008, my mother's birthday.

Footnotes continued:

On Monday, November 7th, a new record of 31 families and 81 people was set for one day. The old record dates back to 2001, at what is now Shaw's Shopping Center, after the fire that destroyed the church and pantry.

With the above said that record only lasted until Monday, November 21st, when it too was shattered. The new record now stands at 30 families or 87 people. I was told this in a phone call from Al Finnegan, the chair, who was on the desk both times. Jokingly, you could say it must be her magnetic personality that made this happens. Realistically, it was the times we are living through that are wreaking havoc on clients who are trying to cope and volunteers who are trying to keep up and help them "carry the load". Sorry I missed the record but being in the hospital with another bout of A-Fib took priority.



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

October 28, 2011

Dear Kris Gasalyn:

Thank you for inviting the First Lady to attend your event.

The First Lady values each and every invitation, but due to time constraints, she must decline the majority she receives. We have reviewed your invitation, and unfortunately, the First Lady will be unable to attend.

The First Lady sends her best wishes and appreciation for your interest.

Sincerely,

The Scheduling Department
Office of the First Lady

WWW.WHITEHOUSE.GOV

From: Frazier, Elizabeth [mailto:Elizabeth.Frazier@mail.house.gov]
Sent: Friday, November 04, 2011 2:14 PM
To: kris
Subject: Re: Letter for Line Up for Hunger

November 5, 2011

Dear Friends,

I wanted to send along my thanks to everyone here for supporting the very important cause of helping to feed our neighbors. Whether or not you break the world record for longest human food chain today, you are making an incredible difference for Maine food pantries and the thousands of families they serve. I'm very sorry I couldn't be here to join the chain myself.

We are all feeling the weight of these hard times, but our local food pantries bear an especially heavy burden. As the economic downturn continues to impact Maine families, more and more people are calling on these organizations to help them put food on the table. But as demand rises, food pantries in Southern Maine have lost some essential federal funding in the last few months. I am working in Congress to reinstate that support, but at many pantries right now, the shelves are bare.

In other words, your donation and support are especially important. There could be no better way to represent what we need today than this human chain. Our strength lies in each other, in our connections, and in our collaboration. Working together is our best hope for making it through these hard times.

Thank you for the hope you're offering today. My gratitude and congratulations also go to the young leaders of the First Parish Church who have brought you all together. Their compassion and energy indeed represent hope for the future.

Best wishes and good luck,

Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress

Chapter 13

Standing with Giants

The following is an account pertaining to a donation the pantry recently received. Though some will say it was average, we consider it among the largest and most notable ever received. I'm sure after you read the story behind it you will agree with us that the person named is very capable of standing with giants.

Ghost written by Mike "Woody" Woodbury, a proud father:

"Reese, my son, is 5 years old and attends Young School in Saco. They recently had a food drive and Reese came home and decided that he wanted to organize a fundraiser to raise money for the Food Pantry. I own a local basketball club and we host tournaments and showcases etc. for basketball players throughout the state and he came up with the idea of going around gathering donations. He told everyone what he was doing and we let him take total control over the fundraiser. He raised \$300 all on his own."

Footnote:

Also received...I have attached photos for you and have forwarded some from my email. * Thank you for reaching out. Reese plans to make this an annual fundraiser!

* The pictures mentioned can be found on page 10 in the photo section.

Chapter 14

The Phoenix Pitches In

Well sort of...Leo Menard, the point man for the expansion, called me about the Saco Spirit's Holiday Festival of Lights on Saturday, December 10th, that would be held on Main Street at 5 o'clock. They were going to take part and would be using golf carts for their participation. Therein was the problem. They needed a place to store them over night as delivery would be on Friday. Could I accommodate them? After all they did for the pantry, sure thing, bring them on. They are insured and posed no problem being housed for a night. The going rate is \$10.00 each.

All save one pink one were parked in my neighbor's rear yard. They tried to use my yard but because of the high water table and recent rains it was mush. To leave them on hard ground, they used Dolly's yard as I thought she would not be home until Saturday night after it was over and they were gone. Then the fun began! Neighbor Dolly Anagnostis got back early and drove in to find all the carts parked in her yard. I did some explaining when she asked me what was going on and upon explaining the smile started to appear on her face. John her husband and my brother was a member of the Saco Bay Rotary and would have done the same thing, I'm sure.

Since the Rotary was going for laughs and a good time, I felt though not directly, I as the ghost writer for the Phoenix should also get in on the fun. To this end I submitted to the driver of the pink one parked on my driveway and blocking the garage the following for their future information should it ever happen again:



This is a warning

You will be ticketed in the future if you fail to display a handicap placard while parked in a handicap space.

Please take note, it is the Christmas Season and we are extending this courtesy now but we will, in the future, both ticket and tow you vehicle.
Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

Signed Elmer Fudd

Chief of Patrol

Well that's the tale of the touring golf carts. Thanks to all at the Rotary for what you did and continue to do for those in need. Who said pay back's was a b.....*

* see line 10 in the picture section

Chapter 15

The Phoenix Sheds Tears of Joy

During the start of the holiday season, in the early part of November, 2011, the pantry was trying to hold it together for the clients, who were now increasing daily. With a job market going nowhere, families struggling to cope with little income, and children to care for, the pantry became the life boat on a stormy sea.

It was during this time that the volunteers held their combined effort with Trinity Episcopal Church for the second 'Fill the Bus' food drive. Because of the holiday season, this was a good source of food and monetary donations for the pantry. Even though the helping hands and hearts are there all year, this time of year takes on a different feeling, a special glow if you will, in the faces and hearts of our supportive public.

Whether it be a single contributor reaching into his pocket for that dollar, a child asking a parent for a coin, or a company asking its employees to share with others... all give new meaning to caring. The doors to the pantry swing wide during open hours to receive the donations that come forth from all that say in deed rather than word "Let me help".

As this takes place, the Phoenix, with open wings and teary eyes, can only say to each "Thank you. Thank you for being here, for the needed food, the sharing of your heart, the caring of those less fortunate". In addition we say: "May blessings be on you, your families, all you hold dear, and may the New Year bring Happiness, Joy and Peace".

Chapter 16

End of the Year Letter

Dear Food Pantry Supporters,

As this will be the last thank you for support of the Saco Food Pantry this year, it will be different. The Phoenix has paused in flight to look back on some of what has happened over the year. I, as its ghost writer, will try to note some of the changes made possible. You provided the supportive shoulders and outstretched hands needed to help your fellow man.

The above was the original sent to the papers. Below is the way it appeared when it was printed. As the reader and ultimate authority, it is given over to your judgment.

Titled by the Journal Tribune it was "Saco Food Pantry wraps up successful year of support".

This will be the year's last thank you of support for the Saco Food Pantry, a time to look back on some of what has happened over the year.

We were able to see a walk-in freezer erected, not only for our use, but as temporary storage for other pantries in our area when needed. Food donated and delivered by York County Food Rescue was always welcomed as it allowed us to give a little extra. A variety of frozen foods, in larger amounts from Good Shepherd, was possible, taking advantage of their lower maintenance fee. We also could accept frozen donations from other sources such as Sure Winner Foods.

With no jobs and little income, sadly we witnessed 273** new families register for needed help and when counting their dependents, the total of new people registered skyrocketed to 600**.

We, with hearts filled with pride, also witnessed the outpouring of support from our churches and all of our financial institutions, both near and far, private businesses like Leeward Landing in Wells, local businesses that form the heart of communities like Auto Mile Dinner and Saco Valley Auto Care, fraternal organizations such as the Elks, Masons, and Rotaries. Help also came from citizens like five year old Reese Woodbury and the clients themselves who may have only gave a widow's mite. We also received donations and encouragement from supporters in other states such as New York, Massachusetts, Wisconsin and Texas. We were constantly encouraged by this newspaper as it helped us reach out to the supportive public by keeping all informed over the year.

It is to that end that, speaking for the volunteers, the 9,647** people we were able to help in 2011, as well as all pantries and meals programs, I say to each of you: “ Thank you for your generosity, caring and unwavering support. May you and all you hold dear find good health, peace, and God's blessing, throughout the coming New Year. Sincerely,
Bob Nichols, Saco

**Footnote: I put in the newspapers these numbers for the year. Some place in calculating prior to actually receiving them from Lois I picked up the wrong numbers and told them it was 9,647. Actually it was 243 new families and counting their dependents that total was 540 people. A corrected yearly total then is 8278....I'm off by 1,369...but who's counting.

Footnote: The total number of dependents helped this past year of 8,278 when multiplied by; our meals to people rule of thumb, amounts to 99,336

meals to be fixed at home were distributed this year...now I know where all the food went.

Footnote: below was received via email on December 23, 2011 and came as a great surprise when I read the following:

This past summer our family was in Old Orchard Beach. My daughter saw the article in the local paper how you were running low on food. My wife and daughter dropped off a bunch of food before we left for home. They wanted to help.

My daughter wanted part of her Christmas money to go towards helping others. Today we sent you a check. It's not much but I hope it helps someone in real need.

Have a Merry Christmas!

Chris, Jody and Reilly

Brookfield, WI 53005

Because of the content and last names that were given, I felt it would be prudent for some of the above to be cut from the original. Even with this said and the time of year, the remaining statement is a Christmas present that will long be remembered. The one thing that I had come to mind was the movie "It's a Wonderful Life". Thanks, Folks, for being part of the pantry volunteers and now a piece of the life of the Phoenix.

Dear Reader, as this book following the life of the Phoenix flying into the future, will be written in real time, the chapters will take time to be posted. Therefore we ask you to be patient, as the chapters will again be spoon fed in cereal form. If you fall behind you can always re-visit us and do some ketchup work... after all this is a food pantry. Bon Appétit, Mangia, enjoy.