

The Islamic Food Bank Pantry at Weiler Homes

In keeping with its mission to feed the hungry and spread peace in Northwest Ohio, the Islamic Food Bank of Toledo (IFB) identifies and fills gaps in the food system for underserved at-risk populations. The IFB Pantry Programs are designed to assist our neighbors in need with resources close to home.

The IFB Pantry at Weiler Homes is the second of two signature pantries created to ensure residents in specific communities have consistent access to nourishing food options.

The Need

The IFB Pantry at Weiler Homes was created in late 2023 in collaboration with Lucas Metropolitan Housing (LMH) to serve two residential communities in East Toledo. Per LMH, all households at Weiler Homes and Spieker Terrace have an annual income of \$10,000 or less, well below the poverty line. More than 90% of households at Weiler and 40% of households at Spieker are home to families with children. Spieker is also an affordable housing for the elderly and disabled.

Weiler and Spieker are located within a “food desert”, meaning availability and affordability of nutritious food items is scarce to none. The nearest grocery store is nearly five miles away and many residents have little or no transportation.

The lack of consistent access to nutritious food is not only a leading health issue in adults and children but may also take an economic toll with increased health care costs. The need for food pantries to provide critical assistance in the region is clear and immediate.

Positive

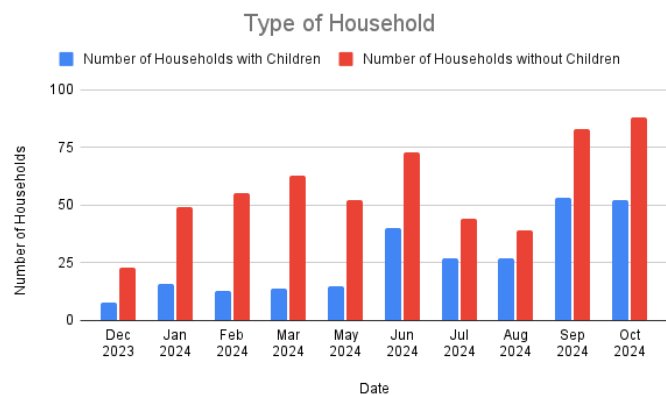
Outcomes

In just nine months of operation, the IFB Pantry at Weiler Homes has contributed to positive outcomes for residents. Pantry guests rate overall satisfaction at 4.5 out of 5 points.

The pantry reached about 37% of all households in Weiler and Spieker as of August 2024. It serves about 158 people per month on average, a third of whom are children. Pantry use has increased as word has spread, and both LMH and IFB expect this trend to continue.

Guests note that the pantry now serves as their primary source or as a significant supplemental source of food. Residents often start forming a line an hour before the pantry opens, as they are eager to shop for needed food items. Many residents rely on the pantry to sustain them until their SNAP benefits reload for the month.

The wide selection of items enables residents to make choices based on their needs. For example, residents with severe health



conditions like high blood pressure and diabetes shared that being able to access fresh fruits and vegetables helps them feel better and have good control over these conditions. IFB data also highlights this outcome. A third of households surveyed report a perceived improvement in health and 22% of households report worrying less about food.

Key Success Factors

Robust Collaboration

Collaboration is a key component of IFB's overall approach to food security. IFB carefully selected the community partner organization for this pantry once East Toledo had been identified as a potential service location. LMH was selected because it operates under a similar mission as IFB – it strives to provide pathways to a better quality of life and empower vibrant communities.

IFB and LMH worked closely to define expectations and responsibilities. IFB provides all the inventory to LMH to stock in the pantry. IFB also created a standard operating manual and trained LMH staff and volunteers on it prior to pantry launch. In turn, LMH personnel and volunteers pick up inventory from IFB on a regular basis and manage day-to-day operations. LMH provided a secure space on-site at Weiler Homes as well as shelving, cold storage, and other supplies. IFB and LMH hold regular check-ins to ensure the pantry remains responsive to residents.

Variety of Quality Food Options

IFB thoughtfully purchases and provides food to ensure that pantry guests can shop in line with their preferences. Many items are not available in other area food pantries.

- Cooking essentials – cooking oil, sugar, broth, etc.
- Produce – peaches, apples, garlic, squash, spinach, etc.
- Dairy – milk (2%, whole), yogurt, mozzarella, sour cream, margarine, etc.
- Meat/ Seafood – eggs, tuna, turkey sausage patties, etc.
- Bread and Breakfast – oatnut, multigrain, bagels, cereal, etc.
- Condiments – ketchup, hot sauce, mustard, etc.

Resident Engagement

Residents of both Weiler Homes and Spieker Terrace play an active role in the pantry. These volunteers have shared with IFB staff that they enjoy having a pantry on-site and are proud to be part of administering this service for their own families and for fellow residents.

With residents owning day-to-day operations alongside LMH staff, any stigma or hesitation that guests might feel about relying on a food pantry is diminished. This is reflected in feedback from pantry guests, who share that they love coming to the pantry and eagerly anticipate seeing the food selection available each visit. Volunteers and staff strive to ensure that pantry is a welcoming and kind place to visit.