

NEWS



Hinsdale Junior Woman's Club members Lauren Kavanaugh, Erin Goodwin and Kristin Hull prepare to hand out turkeys while fellow HJWC member Nancy Nyheim stacks boxes of side dishes during HCS Family Service's annual turkey meal distribution Monday at Anne M. Jeans School in Willowbrook. Nabeel and Ismael Sultan, sons of HJWC President Shazia Sultan, are eager helpers as well. (Jim Slonoff photos)

HCS helps families with holiday celebration

Gratitude and giving go hand-in-hand at food pantry's Thanksgiving meal distribution

By Ken Knutson

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The spirit of Thanksgiving was on full display Monday afternoon at Anne M. Jeans School in Willowbrook as

Hinsdale-based HCS Family Services held its annual turkey meal distribution for local families in need.

Helping pass out the 135 meals collected for the event were volunteers from

Hinsdale Junior Woman's Club.

"We're excited to be able to take a minute away and connect with families who need a little bit of a helping hand this season," HCS President

Shazia Sultan said.

Stan Cook, HCS executive director, said being able to stage the distribution at Anne M. Jeans, where the agency also operates a weekly food pantry, is highly significant.

"This particular area is an under-served area, and it's an area that is in need," Cook remarked.

Guests each received a turkey, a bag of potatoes and side dishes, a feast made possible by the philanthropic heart of partners such as Evergreen Bank.

"Their employees took a contribution over the year to be able to provide turkeys at this event," Cook said.

Support also came in from the youth sector, including Hinsdale Cub Scout Troop 10.

"They collected at their schools and among their families, and they generated about \$700 to buy turkey dinners," said Cook, who also lauded area churches, supermarkets and an anonymous donor of 25 turkeys for their generosity. "It's definitely a community effort."

HJWC member Denise Marron organized a pop-up clothing market of gently used items for guests to peruse while picking up their meals.

"I sent the message out to

friends and family and collected a lot of stuff," Marron said. "I just want to give back, and I'd rather give the items to someone I know is going to use them."

Citing the data ranking DuPage County second only to Cook County among the state's largest food-insecure populations, Cook provided a sneak peek to an addition under construction adjacent to the current pantry space that will house a community center with an expanded food pantry, medical and dental clinics and adult education spaces.

"This is going to be a gathering spot for the community," he said.

Any unclaimed turkeys after Monday's distribution were taken to Hinsdale to be given out at the food pantry in Memorial Hall on Wednesday.

Sultan said having teen members of both the HJWC and HCS junior boards help out was a powerful way to plant the seed of service in the hearts of the next generation. Even her two little boys have come to enjoy the annual outreach.

"They were like, 'Are we giving turkeys out? Yes! This is our favorite time of the year to do that,'" she said.



A selection of gently used clothing, collected by Hinsdale Junior Woman's Club member Denise Marron, was also available to food pantry guests. "Everybody's looking for a way that they can make an impact locally," said HCS Family Services Executive Director Stan Cook said. "So things like HCS and what the Juniors are doing really gives people that vehicle."