

Food Pantry Officially Opens at New Location

Bill Ambrose

The Gorham Ecumenical Food Pantry held an open house and ribbon-cutting ceremony on February 7. The new location, at the west side of the parking lot of St. Anne's Roman Catholic Church, will replace the original site of the pantry, which was housed in essentially a closet and hallway in the church basement.

According to the pantry's director, Fran Doucette, the previous spot was severely limited in space and was clearly inadequate to meet the needs of the clients served by the pantry. Upwards of 200 people a month now avail themselves of the provisions provided by the facility. She stated "St. Anne's was giving us all the extra space they had, it just wasn't enough to meet our growing demands."

The portable building donated by the Town of Gorham was the former home of the Planning Board and was located at the old Municipal Center. The property was provided by the Catholic Diocese, and a \$44,000 Community Development Block grant was secured through the town to pay for moving the building and constructing a foundation for it. Fund-raising efforts by the food pantry's Board of Directors paid for utility hookups and finishing the interior of the building.

Doucette took visitors on a brief tour of the new facility, stating that they try to make the experience "as comfortable and un-intimidating as possible for the clients." She was especially proud of the new waiting room, where she plans to have a toy box and bookshelf for the children.

Paul Willis, the chairman of the pantry's Board of Directors since 2001, believes that the new building will "make using the pantry a more pleasant experience, not only for the clients, but for the volunteers as well." In addressing the gathering, he thanked the many local contractors for their generosity with their labor and their materials and expressed his gratitude to his fellow board members and to other community residents who have given so much.

In his prayer of dedication, Rev. Phil Shearman thanked the Almighty for making the transition to the new facility possible. He recounted the efforts and support



Gorham Food Pantry



that the pantry received from the community and commented on the relentless effort by the Board to see this project through. Rev. Sherman also singled out Paul Willis for the countless hours he worked as he oversaw the entire project.

Attending the gathering were local and state officials. Representing the Town Council were Brenda Caldwell and Shonn Moulton, as well as Town Manager David Cole.

Pictured at the Gorham Food Pantry's grand opening are many local and state officials with the Food Pantry Board of Directors. Foreground (l to r) Aaron Shapiro, Dan Grant, Paul Willis, Fran Doucette, Rev. Phil Shearman. Background (l to r) Town Councilor Shonn Moulton, Maynard Charron, State Rep. Jane Knapp, Sue Dunn, Town Councilor Brenda Caldwell, Diane O'Neill, Cherry Finck, Chris Moody, Dede Perkins, Ernie Mander.

Photo Credit Martha T. Harris

Aaron Shapiro, Community Development Director for HUD, from Cumberland County. State Sen. Phil Bartlett and State Reps. Jane Knapp and Linda Sanborn were also in attendance. In view of the current economic conditions in the country, the timely nature of the pantry expansion was pointed out repeatedly.

At 10:00 A.M. the gathering moved outdoors to the front entrance. Fran Doucette wielded a pair of scissors to cut the ribbon and officially open the food pantry, to the enthusiastic cheering of the audience.





Inside the Gorahm Food Pantry

