

*From the Heart is published by the Northeast Emergency Food Program (NEFP) at Luther Memorial, a community ministry of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO). NEFP meets urgent food needs while working to develop community solutions to secure access to adequate, affordable and healthy foods.*

## So how's the new place working out?

This place is just great! Big, pretty, excellent condition, nicely appointed. We now have a few months of operation under our belts, and find that we are operating very smoothly. From January through March, NEFP has helped over 887 families with clothes. Our food numbers have returned to pre-move levels. From January through March, we have helped 1,460 families, representing 4,187 people, an increase over 2007.

We continue to struggle with outreach to our former neighborhood, as well as our new neighbors. Few people take advantage of our shuttle van service from inner northeast Portland. We've started a more aggressive outreach effort via other food programs in that area. In addition, we've been working with the good folk at the Ortiz Community Center, in our own Cully neighborhood, hoping to get out the word to their predominantly Hispanic clients about our services.

In February, we began helping people with their Pacific Power past-due accounts. The folk at SNOWCAP asked us to help with the paperwork, since folk coming to us tend to live in the Pacific Power service area. Once again, good cooperation between local agencies brings rewards to people in need.

In April, the EMO Interfaith Network for Earth Concerns brought cooking classes to NEFP. Our space provides us so many



The new NEFP location at Luther Memorial allows guests to "shop" for groceries in the food pantry.

opportunities. We would love to offer more services, but we need volunteers to do so. Our current crop of wonderful servants are pretty maxed out keeping up with our food and clothing ministry. In fact, we could use extra help for those areas right now. Do you know someone who would be a good helper for us? How about you? Contact John or Jeni at (503) 284-5470 or [nefp@emoregon.org](mailto:nefp@emoregon.org) to find out what opportunities await you.

Have you come in to visit yet? We have multiple art pieces completed by Program Assistant Jeni Broussard, as well as two wonderful murals by high school art students from Vancouver. Please stop by to see what wonders your support has created.

### Letters of thanks & gratitude

*"I am writing you this thank you letter because I want you to know how much I appreciate what you have done for me and all the others who you help. Whether they are blind like myself, or just down on their luck, you see, you give hope to the hopeless, faith to the faithless and love to those that feel that life is not worth living. When a person has no hope, faith or love in their heart and does not know that they are loved and they have no home, no food to fill up their belly, and they are starving, they give up hope and become numb inside and just want to give up on life. And then, at just the last second before they were going to put that gun in their mouth and pull the trigger, you came along and gave them a flicker of hope and made them feel like someone cared about them. So their planned suicide had a stay of execution for just today. I hope you will remember that you give more than food, clothes and shelter—you give people a chance at a brand new life. It is you that our past president John F. Kennedy spoke of when he said, '... not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country.' He would be proud of you.*

*"And so, from the bottom of my heart, I say to you I am proud to know you and say thank you for all your support, and I want you to know that even though I do not have much, I made sure that I shared some of the blessings of what you gave with others. So they, too, would not go without, because I want them to know they are loved also! And not forgotten about. I hope for just today we made a difference in someone's heart and change their life forever. My God bless you. Merry Christmas"*

Received Dec. 1, 2007, from DH

*I'm a grandmother raising my grandchildren and at times, after paying rent, bills and buying shoes, there was very little left for food. I'm so very thankful for Northeast Emergency Food Program. Without them and all the caring people who donate food and personal care needs, my grandchildren and I would have gone without. On behalf of myself and my grandchildren, we thank you, NEFP, for always being there in our times of need. The staff is so caring and understanding. God Bless you all.*

— Received March 6, 2008, from PF, matriarch of a family of 8 (with 6 teenagers)

## Volunteer perspective by *Cristina Stella*

In a city like Portland, residents are expected to care about their food. It is less expected for low-income and homeless residents to be able to choose and care about fresh, healthy foods. At Northeast Emergency Food Program (NEFP), the unexpected is exactly what guests encounter: a cheerful waiting area with hand-painted murals and lively music, a friendly staff, snacks and coffee, well-stocked produce and bread selections, an ample clothes closet, and the ability to choose their own emergency food box items.

As a Jesuit Volunteer, I have spent a great deal of time at social services agencies around Portland and have been volunteering weekly at NEFP since October. After spending just one week at the former location, it was obvious to me that the move to Luther Memorial would necessitate a lot of changes for the program. Guests would have to travel much longer to reach us, and the population served would be different. Most importantly for the volunteers, there would be no more stairs to climb! Until my first week at the new site, I underestimated the benefits the move would have for our guests. While the previous house was inviting and warm (in personality, not temperature), the new site gave off the feeling that guests were truly welcome; stepping inside was not shameful or embarrassing, but could actually be a nice experience.

There's no doubt that our guests have spent even more time at social service agencies than myself, so when they tell me that our volunteers are nicer than any others they have encountered, I believe them. They repeatedly ask me to thank

all the volunteers for being so kind and helpful, and tell me that after all the red tape they deal with in various agencies, it is a relief to be taken care of at NEFP. Most guests, both new and old, are pleasantly surprised to find that they can choose food for themselves rather than have a prepared bag brought to them. It has been great to listen to them talk through their food choices, as they tell me about which of their children likes what or how they cook creatively to make more nutritious meals. It is equally satisfying as a volunteer to answer their questions about food, or to offer suggestions for healthy ways to prepare items.

Watching volunteers and guests engage in conversation as they peruse the shelves brings the food pantry experience to another level for all of us involved. Now at NEFP there is true interaction and exchange, which has made both the volunteer and guest experience much more valuable. As a volunteer, I am proud to be a part of a program that empowers all residents—and not just those who can “afford” it—to care about their food.

### EMO's Annual Community Awards & Celebration Dinner

— May 6, 2008, at the Governor Hotel in downtown Portland. Reception & silent auction at 5:30 p.m., dinner & awards presentation at 7 p.m. Cost: \$60 per person or \$600 for a table of 10. For reservation, visit [www.emoregon.org](http://www.emoregon.org) or call (503) 221-1054.

### NEFP celebrates 25 years of service

#### *Share your memories with us*

This wonderful ministry began in 1983, when a group of churches in northeast Portland wanted to respond to the economic decline of their neighborhoods. If you are reading this article and remember the good ol' days at NEFP, please contact John at (503) 284-5470 or [nepf@emoregon.org](mailto:nepf@emoregon.org). We are looking for stories about NEFP “back in the day.” We would love to publish stories about the last 25 years, and remind us all about what called forth the first workers who responded to the urgent food needs of their neighbors in need.

### Refund? What do I do with this?

Remember late last year when a check showed up in your mailbox, and you wondered what to do with the money? This is the Oregon tax “kicker”—a strange figment of Oregon financial management for those of you out of state. So many of you shared part of the “kicker” with NEFP at Luther Memorial. Thank you so much.

This spring each of us will get a refund as part of the Federal economic stimulus package. The purpose of the check is to stimulate the economy, so spend the money! But how? NEFP at Luther Memorial can solve that problem. I assure you we will put your donated refund check right to work, helping people dealing with crises. A side benefit of donating your refund to your neighbors in need is that you get a tax benefit.

And, NEFP at Luther Memorial does need your help. Our expenses jumped up right along with the size of our facility. Our rent doubled. Our costs for running our shuttle service didn't exist before November, and as gas prices rise, so does our red ink! Have you noticed the price of food in the grocery store? We have, as our food costs also escalate. Your donations of cash and food or gently used clothes really are important.

To make a donation to NEFP, please fill out the donation form below and put in the mail using the enclosed envelope. You may also donate on-line at [www.emoregon.org](http://www.emoregon.org).

## Yes, I'd like to help provide food for my neighbors!

Donor's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Honoree's Name (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

Honor/Memorial     Celebration

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Church/Denomination/City \_\_\_\_\_

Please make tax-deductible checks to *EMO Northeast Emergency Food Program* or pay by (check one)

Visa     MasterCard     American Express

Credit Card No. \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. date \_\_\_\_\_

I would like more information about making a gift of appreciated securities.

### *Your gift makes a difference . . .*

- \$25 would provide food for a family of five people for five days
- \$50 would provide food for three families of three people for five days
- \$100 would supply 1,000 pounds of donated food from the Oregon Food Bank
- \$500 would provide a can of vegetables for every person served in a month
- \$1,000 would provide five days of food for 77 families
- Other amount \_\_\_\_\_