



Jane Charmelo

out & about

The Outreach House 'reaching out' to provide more services to guests

Seniors, veterans to have their own pantry day

Since The Outreach House opened its new facility in 2022, it has been able to coordinate its walk-in assistance, infant needs outreach, a community clothes closet and a food pantry in one location—all in order to make its services more accessible to guests.

As the needs have grown, so have the services being offered—thanks to networking and partnerships with other agencies—according to Executive Director Catherine Lynott, who recently announced the addition of a senior citizen day (for ages 65 and over) on Thursdays.

When asked how the idea for a senior day came about, she responded, "When I go to sleep at night, I try to think about how to make The Outreach House better."

It occurred to her that with an estimated 200 new families—adding up to between 450 and 500 families visiting the food pantry each week—and 2,000 visits in February alone (the most visits in one month since the new facility opened), "That means longer lines. The seniors are waiting a long time."

"I decided to start a trial in February [on Thursdays] to see how it would go," she continued, com-

menting, "We started the trial with food only and now expanded so seniors can shop for clothes ... We've had enough volunteers to open the clothes closet as well."

"They [senior guests] are not waiting in line as long," the director observed. "The response has just been fantastic."

Several senior guests last week commented on having a day set aside to shop:

Shaheen: "During the day, [the] time is more convenient and easier for older people. Also easier for parking. Any way you look at it, it's good."

Judy: "First of all it's less of a wait so it's wonderful. It makes you happy to be a senior. It's calmer and less crowded. You have more time to make contacts with others and talk to people."

Rory: "It's been great for me because it is less people."

Another guest: "[You] don't have to wait in line, and get in and out quickly. People are very, very friendly. It's a nice place to visit in and say hi."

Lynott said that on April 4, the Thursday seniors-only day is being expanded to include military veterans.

Several other services and assistance are also being made available to guests.

"We're partners with other non-

profits," she explained, "to give guests more local resources."

For example, in March Access DuPage (www.accessdupage.org) provided CPR, AED (automated external defibrillator) and Narcan training, which was held at the Helen Plum Library; 27 people attended. Lynott said Access DuPage plans to install an AED device at The Outreach House sometime in April.

Serenity House (www.serenityhouse.com), an Addison-based nonprofit agency that provides addiction recovery services, will be providing a distribution box containing Narcan, as well as fentanyl testing strips, according to the director, who said she connected with Serenity House during a conference call, and "I reached out."

The Glenbard Early Childhood Collaborative (www.casedupage.com/glenbard-early-childhood-collaborative) is planning to reach out twice a month to guests with young children, "to make sure they [young children] are hitting their developmental milestones," the di-

rector described.

Other providers include Lisle-based Christians Against Poverty (capamerica.org), which will help guests with financial literacy; Senior Home Sharing (www.seniorhomesharing.org), which will provide counseling for seniors; and Endeavor Health (endeavorhealth.org), which will provide blood pressure screening and stroke prevention information.

The University of Illinois Extension (extension.illinois.edu) has been visiting the food pantry to provide nutrition information to guests, as well as nutritious samples, and will be offering nutrition programs, such as "Healthy Cents," to be held Thursday, April 4, at 1:30 p.m.

The discussion will focus on what is healthy food and is it affordable, food shopping strategies to save money and healthy recipes, plus a tasting of a healthy snack.

For this particular program, contact Lisa Mills at lamills3@illinois.edu or call 630-955-1123, ext. 16.

Giving DuPage Days (www.givingdupageday.org) will run May 1-3, which is "our biggest fundraiser of the year," Lynott emphasized.

She said the main point of the additional services is "trying to provide more resources" to The Outreach House guests.

"They're going to get information for these services that they didn't know existed," Lynott summed up.

The Outreach House, located at 805 S. Main St., Lombard, is open Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 9-11:45 a.m.; Wednesdays from 5-6:45 p.m.; and on the third Saturday of each month from 9-11:45 a.m. Plan to arrive 15 minutes before closing time.

Senior and veteran hours on Thursdays are noon to 1:45 p.m.

Municipalities covered include Lombard; Villa Park; Oak Brook; Oakbrook Terrace; Glendale Heights; Addison; most of Elmhurst; and York Township sections of Downers Grove, Glen Ellyn, Hinsdale and Westmont.

Visit theoutreachhouse.org for more information.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF CATHERINE LYNOTT Rock Valley Publishing

The Outreach House is networking with other nonprofit agencies to provide more resources and services to guests. In one photo (left), Endeavor Health visited the Lombard food pantry to provide information on stroke screening and blood pressure testing. Another photo (above) shows Access DuPage "Be a Hero" training in March at the Helen Plum Library. Twenty-seven people attended, including 25 volunteers and two guests.