

From the desk of Larry Buist...

The Buist Community Assistance Center was founded in April of 2008 by my wife, Judy, and I. Shirley Ten Harmsel was hired as the Director and Sheila Pasma was hired in 2009.

Why was it started?

The Buist Foundation had been sponsoring a mobile food pantry from *Second Harvest Gleaners* (now Feeding America) once a month during the year of 2007 and in early 2008. It was attracting approximately 150 families each month at which we would give out 10,000 pounds of food.

In talking with the people coming to the mobile food pantry I could see that there were more needs than were being met. I was troubled by this and was led by God's hand to do something about it. I had read articles by John Arnold (Director of Gleaners) about a different way to procure inexpensive food so more people could be served. Here is an article that John wrote, "A Tale of Two Churches", which explains it very well:

Church X

- Asks its members to bring non-perishable food to the church's food pantry.
- Members purchase food at the grocery store for the pantry, spending a total of \$5,000 over the course of a year.
- Neither the church nor its members receive any tax break for the food gifts.
- \$5,000 worth of store purchased food totals about 3,500 pounds.
- Church members assemble 50—70 pound standardized boxes of food which they offer to 70 families.
- Food preferences, dietary needs, and other factors are not considered, so as much as half of the food goes to waste.

Church Y

- Asks its members to donate funds to the church's food pantry account at the Food Bank or the Buist Community Assistance Center.*
- Church members donate \$5,000 over the course of a year.
- Church members' gifts qualify for a 50% Michigan tax credit and up to a 25% Federal tax deduction, so the after-tax cost to the members is as little as \$1,250.*
- \$5,000 in donations let the church obtain approximately 35,700 pounds of food from the Food Bank.
- Church members stock the shelves of their food pantry and invite 714 families to come and select 50 pounds each of food that fits their families' needs.
- Because the families choose what they can use, virtually none of the food goes to waste.

*NOTE: in July of 2009, the Buist Community Assistance Center became classified as a **Food Bank** by the State of Michigan, which qualifies donors for a 50% tax credit. The maximum donation allowed for an individual \$200 and a married couple is \$400.

The decision was made to move ahead in January of 2008, not knowing where God was leading, but knowing that He was in control.

We opened our pantry in a warehouse at 8306 Byron Center Ave. in April of '08 and began serving about 50 families a week. It was immediately apparent that our space was too small, so during that summer we remodeled the rest of the building to make our shopping area 5 times larger. It is serving us well today.

We are able to assist 225 – 275 families each week and try to provide a full week's groceries. Ninety percent of our clientele are from Byron Township and ten percent are from outside of Byron Township. Depending on each family's criteria, they are able to shop weekly, bi-weekly, or once a month. Receiving a full week of groceries allows for our clients to use the money saved to meet other obligations such as, utilities, rent, gas, medical bills, etc. We have a pantry of choice which allows for our clients to shop according to family size in place of receiving a standard box of food.

Approximately 25 – 30,000 pounds of food is distributed each week. We are open to clients on Mondays 2:00 – 6:30pm, Wednesdays 9:00 – 2:00pm and Saturday morning 9:00 – 11:30am. The hours are varied to be available for all clients. We purchase approximately 45% from *Feeding America* (formerly Gleaners) at \$.06— .16/lb., and 9% from wholesalers. 45% is received free from business surplus and 1% is received from food drives.

We also receive and distribute an estimated 50,000 pounds of clothing per year. A big thanks to the community for their donations! A **clothing only** drop off box is located in the front of our building.

We partner with the Buist Foundation and other organizations to help our clients with needs other than food and clothing.

God owns everything and we are His stewards. As the needs increase in 2010 and beyond we at the Buist Community Assistance Center will do our best to fill those needs with God's continuous blessings.

Jeremiah 29:11

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."