

**MISSION**

Loaves & Fishes exists as a mission of love and faith to provide food and temporary support services to residents of Ayer, Devens, Groton, Harvard, Littleton and Shirley and advocates for changes by its clients that will promote independence and self-reliance.

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

Cynthia Thomas, *President*  
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**STAFF**

Patricia Stern, *Executive Director*  
Paul Niemira, *Food Coordinator*  
Theresa Wilson, *Client Advocate*  
Gail Wilson, *Volunteer & Office Manager*

**OPEN PANTRY HOURS**

Wednesdays and Fridays  
9:45AM – 12:30PM Doors open at 9AM  
First and third Saturdays of month  
8:45AM – 11:00AM Doors open at 8AM  
Second Tuesday of month  
6PM – 8PM Doors open at 5:15PM  
Closed when Ayer-Shirley Regional School District is closed or delayed due to inclement weather.

**FOOD DONATION TIMES**

All Open Pantry Hours and Mondays and Wednesdays  
7PM – 8PM

**CLOTHING DONATION TIMES**

Mondays 10AM – 12NOON and 7PM – 8PM

**LOCATION**

234 Barnum Road  
Devens, MA  
Mailing address: P.O. Box 1,  
Ayer, MA 01432  
Phone: 978-772-4627  
Fax: 978-772-7395  
[www.loavesfishespantry.org](http://www.loavesfishespantry.org)

Over 29 years of service to the communities of Ayer, Devens, Groton, Harvard, Littleton and Shirley

THE GENEROSITY OF OUR COMMUNITY CONTINUES TO AMAZE ME!

As the lines grew longer outside of the Pantry during the early Fall—I worried. As I read the reports from our Treasurer indicating that our donations were down significantly—I worried. As I watched the inventory dwindle in October—I worried. And then it happened—“magic” that is at the heart of Loaves & Fishes! The donations began to stream through the door—food, holiday gifts and monetary support. Every nook and corner of the facility was filled and we could barely move—a good problem. We all breathed a sigh of relief and stood back in amazement. Once again the community had heard our call for help and they responded!

According to Feeding America “...America is the land of plenty. But for 1 in 6 Americans, hunger is a reality. Right now, millions of Americans are struggling with hunger. These are often hard-working adults, children and seniors who simply cannot make ends meet and are forced to go without food for several meals, or even days.”

Each day we see the face of hunger at the doors of Loaves & Fishes, but thanks to the incredible outpouring of support from our community, we are able to continue to help those that come to us in need. This season, the hearts of our clients were made glad and their thankfulness was expressed to us in many ways. If only you could have heard the sincere words of thanks from the single mother of two when she was given all of the fixings for a Thanksgiving meal. Seeing the joy on each child's face as he/she chose the perfect gift for mom and dad at our Shop for Your Parents event was priceless. Perhaps you can imagine the relief felt by a couple when they were given the opportunity to shop for Christmas gifts for their two young children—he's been unemployed for more than a year, his unemployment benefits exhausted, her hours have been reduced in half. They're “finding it hard to stay afloat and not sink further.” If only you could have been there to see the tears gently flowing down a senior citizen's face as she hugged me tightly and thanked me profusely for her holiday gift bag. She would be spending the holidays alone and planned to sip a cup of tea on Christmas morning as she savored each item in her gift bag.

Moments such as these are priceless! Through kind words, joyful smiles, warm hugs, and yes, tears, the sincere gratitude was expressed and I was fortunate enough to witness it all. It reminded me of the true meaning of the holiday season: heart felt giving and genuine compassion for one another. Helping to make the lives of so many in our community just a bit more bearable during these difficult times was a highlight of my holidays. I will cherish these memories forever.

With your generous help we gave them hope. Hope that 2012 will bring brighter days—employment, good health and relief from the heavy burdens of this challenging time. Please know that your gift, whether it was in the form of food, holiday presents, monetary support or the contribution of your precious time, made a huge difference in the lives of so many. On behalf of our clients, I thank you!

*Patty-*

Patricia A. Stern, Executive Director

TONS OF CHEER FOR THE HOLIDAYS!

At our special Thanksgiving and Holiday Dinner Events, we distributed over 7 tons of food to cheer our clients including:

- 3 1/3 tons of turkey and ham
- 1 ton of fresh and frozen vegetables
- 1 1/2 tons of holiday dinner fixings
- 1/2 ton of bread and pastries
- 1 ton of juice and beverages



Visit us on Facebook by scanning the code with your smart phone's Quick Response (QR) code reader, or by logging into Facebook and searching for “Loaves-Fishes-Pantry-in-Devens-MA”



# THANKFUL FOR FOOD PANTRIES

Reprinted with permission from "Jobless Dad."

Neighborhood food pantry programs are filling an urgent need for the jobless and their families—whose resources are being stretched by extended unemployment.

Today was the first time I ever made use of a community food pantry. It was an experience that really makes you stop and think. Okay, so I've been through the routine of applying for unemployment insurance before. But not a food pantry...until now.

It took quite a long time to go through it all, from the first intake "interview" with the pantry volunteer, to actually being able to do the "shopping trip" in the food area. It could have been due to the holiday season—I'm told this is the busiest time of year for them. But it did take an entire morning. Knowing that we were going to get some much-needed help, food-wise, at the end of the process, made the wait worthwhile.

I can't be thankful enough for this resource—especially since our family is trying so hard to pull ourselves up out of our situation, but are finding it extremely challenging to stay afloat and not sink further. If it weren't for the food pantry, we would have to spend that amount of money at the supermarket, resulting in less left over to pay bills or buy gas to go out job-hunting. It can be a vicious cycle.

But the food pantry, through its services, gives us a small break in our constant worries over survival. Looking around at how many other people are also being helped by this particular food pantry (the Loaves & Fishes program in Devens, MA) makes you realize that the country is in pretty sad shape, for this large number of folks to need this kind of assistance. And the number of food pantry users keeps growing, I hear.



In school, we read about soup kitchens and other programs of the Great Depression in the 1930s—but how many of us stop to think, "Hey, history is repeating itself. This is really serious!" Self-respect preserved.

But, to sum it all up, I have to say, that my first-time food pantry experience wasn't so bad after all. If you ever have concerns

that it would be an embarrassing or shameful thing—don't worry. All the volunteers there were very, very nice. And they really tried to make sure that for all the users of the pantry, no one would feel any loss of dignity or self-respect as the result of their visit there. In fact, just the opposite. The fact that all of us were there out of the same, common need made me feel less "odd" or "strange."

We're all in this boat together—and if we can all help each other find resources like this, maybe it's the first step in getting this nation back on its feet. So tell that to your elected representative!

Visit joblessDad at  
[//joblessdad.hubpages.com/hub](http://joblessdad.hubpages.com/hub)  
to view more of his work



## CLIENT EMPLOYMENT STATUS:

Working: 31%

Unemployed: 27%

Retired: 22%

Disabled: 13%

Other: 7%

## OUR OPEN PANTRY HOURS ARE CHANGING!!!

### EFFECTIVE MARCH 2, 2012:

#### Every Wednesday and Friday:

9:15 a.m. – volunteer meeting

9:30 a.m. – doors open for clients and client meeting

9:45 a.m. – shopping begins

12:30 p.m. – doors close

#### First & third Saturday of each month:

8:30 a.m. – volunteer meeting

8:45 a.m. – doors open for clients and client meeting

9:00 a.m. – shopping begins

11:00 a.m. – doors close

#### Second Tuesday of each month

5:30 p.m. – volunteer meeting

5:45 p.m. – doors open for clients and client meeting

6:00 p.m. – shopping begins

8:00 p.m. – doors close

# A New Year's Resolution

Steamy hot chocolate topped with whipped cream after an afternoon sledding expedition, a slice of warm apple pie with vanilla ice cream for dessert, fragrant roast beef with fresh vegetables while enjoying the love of family and friends... all comforting winter activities involving food that many of us take for granted during this frosty winter season! It's hard for us to imagine not being able to enjoy these delicious treats during the bitter New England winter, but for many of our clients, it is an unimaginable joy to sip hot chocolate, taste that warm apple pie, or indulge in that roast beef dinner! A simple meal of soup and crackers would be considered a feast for many families.

While the response to our clients' needs over the holiday season was tremendous, it is important to recognize that this kind of need continues year round. During the past six months we have averaged 570 family visits each month. That translates into a lot of food! Historically, our donations dwindle during the winter months and again during the summer. Please consider making a resolution for 2012—to help those in need in your own community. Every can of soup, every box of cereal and every penny helps.

This winter there are many ways to become involved and assist our clients. What a great time for:

- Scout troops to begin planning a town-wide food drive.
- Schools to waive admission costs for events and instead request food donations for entry into the event.
- Civic groups to give the gift of their time to volunteer at the Pantry
- Local businesses to organize a friendly competition amongst their employees or between businesses to collect food—a great way to build camaraderie and help those in need!
- Houses of worship to encourage their youth groups and outreach committees to develop creative, fun ways of addressing the basic needs of so many in their midst.
- Families to consider what they can do to teach their children about the importance of giving.

Challenge yourself, your friends and your co-workers to engage in activities that will promote food items and financial donations to help our clients. The winter months provide us with great opportunities to work together in our communities or businesses to help our neighbors with the staples they need year round.

All of us at Loaves and Fishes look forward to working with you during this winter to help our neighbors in need. Together we can provide many struggling families with the staples they need for survival. Commit to helping as a New Year's resolution. Won't you join us?

# Special Thanks!

Loaves & Fishes has received enormous support from individuals, companies and organizations both within and outside of the communities we serve. Here are some friends in our communities who made their neighbors' lives a lot easier during the past few months by donating food and personal care products, holiday gifts, supporting us monetarily or providing the gift of their time. Unfortunately, we can not recognize everyone who contributed, but know that we are appreciative for every can, box, penny and hour of your time.

360 Gymnastics  
ACE Foundation  
Ann Perreault  
Area houses of worship  
Area scouts  
Area schools  
Ayer Fire Department  
Ayer Police Department  
Ayer Recycling Committee  
Bemis Associates  
Bill & Judy LeSage  
BJ's Wholesale Club  
Bristol-Myers Squibb  
Brookfield US Foundation  
Catalano Company/Dunkin Donuts  
Children's Center at Groton School  
Christian Arthur  
Congregational Church Mission One Effort, Littleton  
Cynthia & Stephen O'Brien  
Dan & Lori McElroy  
Daniel & Patricia McCloskey  
Davis Family  
Delux Corporation  
Diane & Phillip Rayla  
Diane Reilly  
Dickinson Family  
Donald & Janet Stevens  
Donelan's  
Douglas & Elizabeth Williams  
Douglas & Sandy McPherson  
Epic Enterprises, Inc., Ayer  
Federal Bureau of Prisons, Devens  
Gallagher Sales Associates, Inc.

Groton Community School  
Groton Garden Club  
Groton Police Department  
Groton Woman's Club  
Groton-Dunstable Girls Field Hockey Team  
Groton-Pepperell Rotary Club  
Hannaford Supermarket, Ayer & Townsend  
Harvard Elementary  
Harvard General Store  
Harvard Lions Club  
Harvard Police Department  
JK Farnsworth Company  
JM Coull  
John C. Morrison & Eunice B. Morrison Charitable Foundation  
Johnson Matthey Pharma Services  
Julie Kirkwood  
Kathleen Cole  
Keith & Vicki Bilafer  
Kimball's Farm, Westford  
Laurance & Melissa Yahia  
Lawrence Academy, Groton  
Littleton Boy Scout Troop 1 & Pack 21  
Littleton Elementary & Middle School  
Littleton High School Humanitarian Club  
Littleton Police Department  
Luth's Family Karate  
MagneMotion  
Mark Haddad  
MassDevelopment  
Maugel Architects  
MCI, Shirley  
Medtronic Navigation, Littleton  
Megawave Corp.  
Middlesex Savings



Above, Employees of Vitasoy USA supported our Shop For Your Kids Program by sponsoring a toy and gift card drive.

Montachusett Area Rotary Club  
Nashoba Valley Chamber of Commerce  
Nashoba Valley Express Company  
Nashoba Valley Fitness Center, Ayer  
Neptali & Regina Rondina  
North Middlesex Savings Bank  
ODIC, Inc, Devens  
Page Hilltop School, Ayer  
Paul & Mimi Matisse  
Philip Rayla & Diane Herlihy-Rayla  
Renaissance Electronics  
Robert & Joan Dircks Foundation  
Russell & Linda Shappy  
Scott & Betsy Howard  
Seven Hills, Devens  
Shaw's, Groton  
Shirley Police Department  
Shirley Scout Drive  
Shriver Job Corps.  
Sorrentos Pizzeria  
Stephen & Mary Keville  
Steve Bakke & Julie Staraitis  
Target  
Ted & Mary Shasta  
Ted & Connie Lapres  
Tom & Verna Sefranek  
Trader Joe's, Acton  
Vitasoy USA  
Walmart  
Webster Veterinary Supply, Inc,  
William & Susan Coney  
Willie Wickman  
Windsor Communitie



Left, Students from Littleton Middle School collected 4000 items of food for L&F. Great job!

# ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL YEAR

Tuesday, December 13, Shop for Your Kids Day marked its 11th anniversary by hosting over 211 client families who came to shop for toys, books, games, crafts and more for their children who ranged in age from newborns to teens. In all, about 500 children received gifts as part of this program. Over 50 volunteers and coordinators helped set up shopping areas for parents to choose that hoped-for toy, the perfect book, or that craft that will keep little hands busy for hours. Thanks to generous individual and corporate donations, all teenagers received a \$25 gift card to select the perfect gift for themselves. This program helps parents and caregivers provide gifts for the holidays, especially important when times are tight and there is often no money for “extras.”

Shop for Your Kids was generously supported by the area police departments (Ayer, Groton, Harvard, Littleton and Shirley), civic organizations, scouts, numerous toy drives—the largest of which was held by the Ayer Police Department--and many businesses including Epic Enterprises, JM Coull, Vitasoy USA, Middlesex Savings Bank, Luth's Family Karate, MagneMotion, 360 Gymnastics, Renaissance Electronics, and others. Refreshments, to keep our volunteers energized, were provided by Hannaford Supermarkets and Dunkin' Donuts (the Catalano Company), and entertainment by Neptali and Regina Rondina and Janet O'Connell.

We are so grateful to everyone who donated or volunteered for this event. The effort made by all involved helps keep the magic in the season, and it is easy to imagine the smiles and laughter when all those new gifts were opened.



## UPCOMING EVENTS

**FEBRUARY**

Annual Appeal

**APRIL**

Campership Program begins

**APRIL 6TH**

Good Friday Walk

**MAY 12TH**

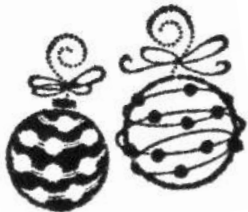
Postal Workers'  
Food Drive

**MAY**

Backpack Program begins

**JUNE**

Bottle & Can Drive,  
Littleton Recycling Center



Right, Volunteers Karen O'Neil and Kathy Ellis are all smiles as they help our clients shop for their children.



Judy Grande, Co-Chair of our Shop for Your Kids event, and Patty Stern, Executive Director, pose for a photo with our friends from Hannaford who volunteered their time to help with this wonderful event.





Left, Santa rechecks his list with Elf Joan's help.

Right, A young shopper waits patiently with Santa as his gifts are wrapped at our Shop for Your Parents program.

Below, Some of our volunteers really dressed-up for the occasion.



## SMILES ALL AROUND

On Saturday, December 10, Shop for Your Parents celebrated its 11th anniversary by hosting over 250 children and more than 300 family members for breakfast, a visit with Santa, and a special shopping trip for the children. Thanks to the generous donations from businesses, the community and our special partners, Shriver Job Corps, Nashoba Valley Chamber of Commerce and Bristol-Myers Squibb, the children were able to choose gifts for their parents or guardians at no cost. Guided by volunteers, many of whom put on their most festive sweaters, hats and reindeer antlers for the occasion, the children visited each “shopping station” and then brought their gifts to the wrapping table where volunteers helped them wrap and decorate their gifts. The last two stops were the Christmas decorations table, where each child chose an item for display, and the ornament table, where they chose a handmade ornament to decorate their tree. The children returned to the waiting room to greet their parents with smiles, giggles and sheer excitement!

This annual event remains extremely popular with our clients and our volunteers, and it was a fun day for all – so much so that it was difficult to determine who had more fun – the children or the volunteers! Many of our volunteers return year after year for the event, and we even have a few families who have made volunteering for SFYP part of their annual holiday tradition.

Thank you to everyone who donated or volunteered for this event. It helps make the holidays even more special for our clients and their children, and we are truly grateful for all the assistance we receive from the community to make this event a success.

*A sincere thank you for the lovely senior gift bag that was given to me for Christmas. I had a wonderful time opening it and seeing all the useful things you so graciously gave me. You made my Christmas.*

*Sincerely, Judith*



## GRATEFUL RECIPIENTS

Approximately 60 senior citizens were the grateful recipients of holiday gift bags assembled by our Shop for Your Parents volunteer team. The bags included warm clothing, scarves, socks, umbrellas, and other personal care items. For many, who live alone and don't have family to share the holidays with, this was the highlight of the season. To those who supported this initiative, our deepest thanks. You helped make the season a bit brighter for many of the elderly, and most vulnerable, in our community.

**LOAVES & FISHES** *Food for Thought*

**NEWSLETTER TEAM**  
 Hana Barker, Martha Dean, Judy Grande, Karen Gartland, Susanne Harrington, Julie Kirkwood, Maureen Lemieux, Kathleen O'Connor

## MOST-NEEDED ITEMS

Canned Pasta  
Canned White Tuna  
Canned Meats  
Canned Pears  
Canned Pineapple  
Crackers  
Helpers/Sides  
Boxed/Flavored Rice  
Pasta Sauce  
Deodorant  
Shampoo  
Toothpaste  
Feminine Care Products

The gift of your time is priceless to us and those we serve. Volunteer orientation sessions are held on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of each month at 6:30 pm.

## HELP NEEDED!

Open pantry session  
workers  
Data entry/clerical  
Writers  
Drivers  
Graphic designer  
Grant researchers & writers  
Videographers

## Food Drop-Off Locations

**AYER:** Ayer Post Office, Nashoba Valley Medical Center, North Middlesex Savings Bank, The Cottage Restaurant

**DEVENS:** North Middlesex Savings Bank, Anytime Fitness

**GROTON:** North Middlesex Savings Bank, Donelan's Supermarket, Groton Post Office, Groton Public Library, Shaw's Supermarket, Middlesex Bank, Town Hall

**HARVARD:** Harvard Post Office

**LITTLETON:** Citizen's Savings Bank, Donelan's Supermarket, North Middlesex Savings Bank, Littleton Police Department, Littleton Post Office

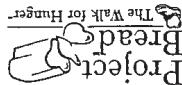
**SHIRLEY:** Shirley Post Office, Hazen Library, Shirley Fire Department, North Middlesex Savings Bank, Phoenix Park

**ALL 6 TOWNS:** Many places of worship

For more information or directions to Loaves & Fishes, visit us online at:  
[www.loavesfishespantry.org](http://www.loavesfishespantry.org)  
or call us:-978-772-4627



Has your address changed? Please e-mail us at  
[tohelp@loavesfishespantry.org](mailto:tohelp@loavesfishespantry.org) or  
call 978-772-4627x300



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