



“Hi, I’m Lorie and this is my grandson Camden. This food pantry has helped us tremendously. We are residents of Chillicothe and we love everybody here.” After she said she was done and I put away my camera she said that she was about to tear up because her family was there that day because all they had at home was a bag of frozen French fries in the freezer and no money for groceries. (Location: Richland Bridge Food Pantry in Chillicothe)



“Hello, my name is Sue and I come to this pantry because me and my husband are on social security/disability. My husband has been sick since he was 35 years old; he turned 65 this year. He has had a stroke, he is blind in one eye, he has an incurable skin disease and without the pantries and the vendors and everyone that gives we would have no food at all because the money doesn’t go that far. I want to thank all of them and I want to thank God for putting it on their hearts to give to the food bank.” (Location: Liberty Baptist Food Pantry in Pekin)



“My name is Stacie. I am forty-something years old. We were a family of five when we started coming here. My older two children are independent and living on their own now, but we are still a family of three. We used to use Share Food in Peoria through the Catholic Diocese and then they closed. We tried to function with the same amount of money that we were spending at Share at Kroger’s or Aldi’s or where ever and it just didn’t work. So...I was proud for a while until there was literally nothing in the cabinets, so if I didn’t go (to a food pantry) then my children wouldn’t eat. I was a stay-at-home mom at the time and I did do daycare but things were tight. The first day I stood in line I literally prayed “God this isn’t who we are, but we’ll come out stronger on the other side.” And that was eight years ago and we started volunteering within that first couple of weeks actually because that’s who I am. In a weird sort of way you feel like you’re kind of earning back something or giving back something. Then we found out how beautiful the people are who actually run it and we call it our Saturday family. There are weeks we don’t need the food which is beautiful, but we still come every week to serve because our weeks are not the same without our family every Saturday. My husband has always worked full-time and he works in manufacturing and so there are ups and there are downs and there are lay-offs. Through every step we have felt loved...loved in a very tangible way with the cart of food, but also with the warmth of the pantry. When they would ask you ‘how has your week been’ they really meant it. Sometimes I’m reminded when I greet people because what I do know is that sometimes we are the only people that really care about how the week is going. So when we do follow up every week asking ‘how is your mom now’ or ‘how is your son doing in school now’ it means a lot that we do make that connection and that we care.” (Location: Community Harvest Food Pantry in Morton) (Background on Share Food: If you don’t know what “Share Food” was, it was a non-profit program where a family could still pay for their groceries and retain their dignity, but the prices were considerably lower than a grocery store. Kind of like the share maintenance fees we charge our member pantries.)