



## The Founding of the LIFE Food Pantry

The L.I.F.E Food Pantry can trace its roots back to 1984 when Loveland resident Eleanor Baker established what she named the “Loveland Free Store” at the MacArthur Park Apartments. It was located in a tiny extension of a laundry room. Eleanor recognized a need for fellow residents to have additional food especially, for the elderly, moms, and young children. She also recognized how generous folks living in subsidized housing could be when asked. Eleanor started giving people the food out of her cabinets, however residents of MacArthur Park soon began bringing Eleanor the excess from their cupboards when they had some and she began distributing items to those in need throughout the entire community.

The laundry room quickly became inadequate when the broader community found out what Eleanor was doing, chipped in, and helped her collect food and daily necessities. The program grew and soon began organizing during Thanksgiving and Christmas to provide meals and presents for children. The Loveland Firefighters Association gave them space to operate, from their Loveland Firefighter’s Hall at the intersection of St. Rt. 48, Broadway, and Second Street (the 5-Way intersection in Historic Downtown) until it was demolished.

In 1999, the demolition of the Firefighter’s Hall led to the Loveland Free Store closing its operations.

With no place for community members to receive food assistance and with the 1999 holiday season fast approaching, David Miller put out a call to individuals, churches, and organizations in Greater Loveland to attend an emergency meeting to address the crisis.

Having volunteered for Eleanor from the beginning when she was operating from that laundry room and the Firefighter's Hall and especially during the holidays, Miller knew first-hand how vitally important a food store was for the community.

At the time, Miller worked almost full-time as a volunteer of the Loveland Shalom Initiative. He was a founding member and knew how dependent the clients of the Shalom Initiative were on Eleanor's Free Store. The Shalom Initiative had focused their efforts within McAuthor Park, Westover Village, and The Pines, all predominantly housing for those who qualified for Section 8 assistance. The Shalom Initiative later changed its name to The Loveland Initiative.

Miller wrote a draft proposal and business plan titled The Community Food Store - a proposal to provide emergency and holiday food assistance in Greater Loveland on October 19, 1999, and summoned the community to to the emergency meeting.

The first meeting was at the Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Loveland on November 8, 1999. A series of meetings were quickly held with the agenda of holiday help, writing of by-laws, and an organizational structure. Soon, more than 50 individuals came forth as "The Holiday Food Drive Committee" to help with the holiday food drives and during that

Thanksgiving more than 160 baskets were distributed. David and Hildi Korse (a member of the Prince of Peace congregation) were instrumental and worked tirelessly during those early months.

“The Holiday Food Drive Committee” of fifty persons caught their breath and began the important but overwhelming task of how to fill the void left when Eleanor’s Free Store had closed.

The new organization was named the Loveland InterFaith Effort and operated in space provided by Loveland’s Prince of Peace Lutheran Church.

The Pantry moved into a new location in October of 2021 at the Shoppers Haven shopping center.

The pantry is currently located in a much larger space at Shoppers Haven (677 Loveland-Madeira Road) across from the Loveland Primary and Elementary schools. (513) 583-8222.