

NEW HARMONY FOOD PANTRY IN DANGER OF CLOSING!  
By: Dan Barton, Publisher August 2019 Edition

Jesus said, according to what is written in 1 John 3:17, “ If anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him?”

One morning in early July as I was peddling to my office at 505 Main Street, I noticed a small gathering of people at the back door of the First Baptist Church in New Harmony. I decided to pull over and inquire as to what was going on. It was not Sunday. Right away I recognized some of the faces in the small gathering. Several were members of the New Harmony Kiwanis Club, as am I, but also others who have been helpful as volunteers in our town many times during our occasions of need.

I was told that they were awaiting the arrival of a delivery truck from the Tri-State Food Bank. They would be unloading the food supplies on this Wednesday morning in July, to be stored in the basement of the church for the next time that they would open their doors to the poor, who needed food, in our community. I was also told that the New Harmony Food Pantry was searching for a new location in which to serve the less fortunate who come to them for assistance each month. They will need another facility, preferably all on one floor, without stairs or steps. This, so that those who help out in unloading the truck, and eventually moving the containers into the grocery area, would not have to be continually climbing and carrying the heavy, bulky items up and down stairs. At the same time, I was told, the Director of the New Harmony Food Pantry was also going to retire and they needed someone to replace her. Both the closing of their current building to them and the need for the new director would have to take place by the end of 2019.

I was astonished, to say the least. That’s a pretty tall order to fill in a small town like ours in just five or six months. They wanted to know if I would help out by running an appeal in The New Harmony Gazette. “Sure!” I said. That’s the least I could do. “Who is the current director of the New Harmony Food Pantry?” I asked. I was told that it was Mary Ellen Gerard. I had never met Ms. Gerard but asked if I could speak to her. She came to the basement entrance and motioned me downstairs. The truck then arrived and the food was offloaded by the volunteers onto a manual roller type conveyer that took it into the basement. There, they began carrying and stacking the boxes in the appropriate locations.

When I went downstairs I was met by Mary Ellen. I noticed that there were even more familiar faces from Kiwanis, along with Mary Ellen’s husband, Gary Gerard, who was on hand. The two of us went up another flight of stairs into the grocery area and Ms. Gerard began to explain their dilemma.

Mary Ellen Girard has been a part of delivering food to the poor and the needy in New Harmony, as well as in our immediate surrounding area, since about 1991, when the operation started. Initially, she told me, it was a small operation, only items such as crackers, peanut butter, powdered milk and cheese. It started in a building across the street from, and was supported by, St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church. Eventually, in 1993, the New Harmony Ministry Association was established by the seven Churches in New Harmony to serve those in need in Posey County from one central location. The organization at that time ran two programs; a living assistance program to help folks with rent or utilities, and the Food Pantry. The Food Pantry program is funded by the New Harmony Churches as well as other Churches in the area; the United Way of Posey County, individuals, businesses, organizations and foundations. If the New Harmony Food Pantry continues in operation after the end of December of this year, the

Ministry Association will continue to oversee the Food Pantry under the new leadership. New Harmony Food Pantry has been located at the First Baptist Church for over the twenty years.

Today the operation is quite large. Mary Ellen said that around 60 local farmers help them in their efforts by each one planting an acre of crops that is set aside to assist the Food Pantry. The farmers then raise cows and pigs to have processed at DeWigs into ground beef and sausage. It supplies the Pantry with up to 700 pounds of meat for distribution to the poor about three or four times a year. The New Harmony Food Pantry is open to the public every third Thursday of each month from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.

This is a vital service to the people of our community. It can only be imagined how much good this Pantry, and the folks who have dedicated themselves to it's operation, have done over its many years of service.

Right now, they are asking for your help in return for the almost 30 years that they have served New Harmony. Hopefully, someone, or some organization, is willing to step forward and fulfill their needs; a new Food Pantry facility and a person who can take over as its Director when Mary Ellen retires. This is an unpaid, volunteer position. Mary Ellen Girard said to me that she will not simply abandon the new Director but will act as a consultant to ease the new Director's transition into her old job. To reach Mary Ellen Girard, if you are interested in either becoming the Food Pantry Director, or if you know of, or have a facility that can be used by them, call her at 812-682-4077.

Ms. Girard added that she would like to thank the First Baptist Church for providing the New Harmony Food Pantry with a wonderful location to run it's operations for over twenty years. She would also like to thank, she said, the Ministry Association and all of the volunteers who have worked so diligently in this effort and for their support during those years.