



LITTLE BLUE PANTRIES

Jack Stanfill and Beverly Kincaid began creating the Little Blue Pantries in Bremerton in March, 2020. The purpose of the project was to bridge the food insufficiency gap in high needs neighborhoods. Jack builds the pantries in his well-equipped workshop while Beverly researches potential sites to locate the pantries and finds donors who are willing to help sponsor/support a particular pantry.

Beverly had a history of donating food items to other pantries in the community but found that those other pantries were not always established in neighborhoods where the greatest need existed. She was determined to help support neighborhoods that met two primary criteria:

- 1) At least 45 percent of children who attend the nearest school are eligible for free/reduced price meals;
- 2) Households in the neighborhood must not have easy access to food banks or grocery stores.

Since the food banks in Bremerton are only a mile or so apart, there are several neighborhoods in the Greater Bremerton community that do not have easy access to the food banks or grocery stores. Often, households do not have resources to purchase food items near the end of each month. We have also discovered that a number of individuals who may not have homes also access the pantries.

Shortly after the first Little Blue Pantry was installed near Crownhill Elementary School, the local library closed and children began receiving home-based education. Beverly instructed Jack to add an extra shelf to future pantries so that gently-used children's books could be included in order to get more books in the hands of children and hopefully help them build their reading skills.

We have been gradually installing pantries in other neighborhoods, based on the afore-mentioned criteria. We now have three pantries with book shelves and one without a book shelf. In addition to the food items and books, we also stock the pantries with face masks in 3 sizes (child, teen, and adult sizes), hand soap with a wash cloth, bottled water, hygiene items, toothpaste and toothbrushes.

The children are allowed to keep the books they select. Some do bring the books back to the pantry and select different titles. A group of retired school teachers has taken on the task of supplying used books for two of the pantries.

We, along with other volunteers, furnish all of the food. Perhaps the most interesting experience I have identified in relation to the addition of the book shelves is something that has occurred at a decrepit trailer park which is located in a “food desert”. Everyone in the trailer park is low-income, and the households consist of Guatemalan and Mexican families, senior citizens, and a few Caucasian households. I have been told that 15 people reside in one two-bedroom mobile home. We take an extra stock of food to that pantry and leave enough with the woman who “supervises” the pantry to make sure everyone is treated fairly. She recently told me that the little Mexican kids loved the books that I left in the pantry that were written in Spanish with English translation. These Mexican kids began teaching the English-speaking kids how to speak Spanish while using those books. Cross-cultural communication!!

We have plans to install about 2 additional pantries, two of which will have book shelves, before the end of the 2020. We have discussed the possibility of forming a nonprofit or perhaps partnering with an existing nonprofit. Right now, we are totally volunteer-driven and it seems to be working. To stock the pantries, we include non-perishable food items and shelf-stable milk and fruit juices, in addition to handmade cloth face masks, finger and toe warmers, toothbrushes, toothpaste, and other needed items.

Current Little Blue Pantries can be found at the following locations:

- 816 National Avenue (Navy Yard City)
- Corner of Elm Street and Lebo Blvd. (Sheridan Park near boat launch)
- Aero Mobile Home Park 7420 Highway 3, Bremerton
- 1150 Marine Drive (adjacent to parking lot of Bremerton United Methodist)
- In the alley across Sheridan Road from Iglesia ni Cristo Church

Please contact Beverly Kincaid at 360-627-7259 if you would be interested in partnering with us to support this much-needed resource for struggling community members.

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