

Festival Committee makes changes to Missouri Packs

The Festival of Sharing Coordinating committee met in early November to start making plans for Festival of Sharing on October 20th, 2012. Each year representatives from main line denominations plan how to best continue to focus the needs of the hungry and poor in our midst. Part of this is to evaluate the Missouri packs. The committee made minor changes to the Backpacks of Love and the Youth Personal Care Packs distributed to the Division of Social Services and there is a minor change in the Paper Products Pack. The major changes this year, is to the Family Food Box distributed to Missouri food pantries.



Changes to the packs reflect the need to reduce the cost per pack with providing the needed items. For the Family Food Box the content has been cut in half and the beans and rice have been removed. The Family Food Box will provide a family with food for three days. Regarding the decision to remove the dry rice and beans, Rev. Howard Cupp, Disciples of Christ clergy and Chair of the Festival Coordinating Committee commented, "There is a quality control component that we have no way of verifying before distribution. Removing the dry rice and beans avoids possible meal worm contamination of the other items in the box." Moreover, since the Festival of Sharing started purchasing rice and beans in bulk, they will still meet the needs of the hungry.

The food pantries that receive food boxes are very appreciative of this much needed item. Nearly all of the food pantries have increases in the number of people asking for assistance. Several are starting to see food lines similar to the food lines during the depression. Terri Williams the Associate Director/Coordinator for the Festival of Sharing said, "The number of churches making the family food box has been declining in recent years. This year we were only able to provide 13% of the requested Family Food Boxes. We know that families across the state are struggling to make ends meet that includes the families in the congregations that support the Festival of Sharing." The Coordinating committee is hopeful that by making these changes to the Family food Box more congregations can provide this much needed gift through the Festival of Sharing. The goal for 2012 is to increase the number of Family food boxes to meet the needs of the Food pantries.

This spring the Festival of Sharing will also help Missouri by providing Hunger Grants to feeding programs and gardens seeds to garden community across the state. While the packs are collected and distributed primarily in the fall the need is year round. To see the updated list of Kits and Packs for 2012 please visit the Office of Creative Ministries website at www.umocm.com/festival. You can also contact Terri Williams, at festival@socket.net or calling 573-474-3332 for more information.