



Lunch Buddies encourages kids to choose healthy food options.

Making a Difference for Families

Having the kids home from school over the summer and the rising costs of back-to-school can add strain to a family's budget that's already stretched thin. Flat River Outreach Ministries (FROM) helps ease this pressure by offering two programs for families with school aged children (ages 3-18) that live in the Lowell Area School District; Kid's Lunch Buddies and Backpacks. These programs make a big difference for families. As one mom shared, *"You made the difference for us making it this summer. Thank you!"*

Kid's Lunch Buddies makes a difference by providing lunches for kids over school breaks (summer, winter and spring). Each child receives 5 free lunches per week and they are able to shop in a store designed specifically for them. Healthy food options kids like, including whole grain cereals, fresh fruit and vegetables, and snack options are always available. Arrow Readers was even on site to encourage reading and held a special story time!



Arrow Readers encourages reading comprehension.

FROM was able to provide **7,035 lunches** to **289 children** from **115 families** this summer. Children said their top favorite foods were "the big apples" and bosco sticks. Parents expressed thankfulness for the difference it made in their family budget this summer.



An eager student shows off her back-to-school supplies.

The **Backpack** program provides children with a backpack full of school supplies (specific to their school and grade) so they can start the school year off on the right foot. This year FROM was able to provide **326 children** with a backpack full of supplies! We even delivered some supplies to the elementary schools for any kids that came without the needed supplies.

The children were excited at all the colorful backpack choices and enjoy picking out their own backpack; even the ones who weren't looking forward to the start of school had smiles on their faces. One parent expressed her appreciation for FROM and the backpack program,

"Thanks for doing this and thank you for all the help you give all of us."



Siblings pose with their new backpacks.

What's New

New Website Coming Soon!

FROM recently received a grant from the Lowell Area Community Fund to help us give our website a fresh new look. The site will still have information about our programs, the latest news/publications as well as our calendar of events, but will feature a fresh new look. Haven't been to our website? Visit www.fromlowell.org where you can schedule a monthly donation, sign up for Treasures Thrift Shop weekly Sales Alert, find out about programs, see our volunteer needs, and more.

Treasures Thrift Shop: More Volunteers Needed to Staff our Store

FROM relies on volunteers in every aspect of our ministry. Many volunteers serve in Treasures Thrift Shop running the cash register, sorting donations, pricing, displaying and restocking items. With the exception of the Treasures Thrift Shop Supervisor, everyone working in the store is a volunteer. As you can imagine it takes a lot of volunteers to run a Thrift Store five days a week and **we are so thankful for those that volunteer their time and go above and beyond in Treasures Thrift Shop.**



The Display Team prepared a special display for fair week.

But Treasures Thrift Shop is more than just a store. It's the financial backbone of our ministry and proceeds from the store make up nearly 40% of the income for FROM, which allows us to serve our neighbors in need. Without the thrift store and a dedicated team of over 300 volunteers (organization-wide) we would not be able to serve as many of our neighbors in need.

While we have many volunteers, we are in desperate need of more people to serve in key areas such as cashiering, donation room and sorting/pricing. When these positions go unfilled it means we have to close the Thrift Shop early or are unable to process donated items quickly. When store sales decline it affects our ministry of walking alongside our neighbors in need.



The DIY Team tests, prices and stocks the the DIY shelves.

Please consider volunteering once a month, once a week or more to help serve our neighbors in need. If you are a current volunteer, encourage your friends, church or social group to volunteer with you! We have open positions during mornings, afternoons and evenings (up to 6:00 p.m.) for men, women, and teens (13-14 year olds do require a parent/guardian be present when you volunteer). Volunteer with a friend, group, family or by yourself. We'd love for you to join our amazing team of volunteers already making a difference in our community. **All volunteers must attend a Volunteer Orientation (see dates on back or visit www.fromlowell.org/calendar).**

Director Spotlight

As we enter a season of thanksgiving I'm reminded of all we have to be thankful for at FROM. This year we were able to implement policies and program changes modeled after the book *Toxic Charity*, that encourages people to play an active role when seeking assistance as it helps build confidence, recognizes self-worth and restores dignity. We do this by walking alongside participants and encouraging them to do what they can to make the changes they want to see in their own lives. I'm thankful for all who have helped us implement these changes and also for the clients and volunteers who have voiced their support as we have gone through this process.

FROM also strives to provide a welcoming and respectful environment for everyone who walks through our doors; to be inclusive to all regardless of our differences. I'm thankful for staff, volunteers and Board Members who seek to make clients, donors, and each other feel accepted and valued as neighbors and members of the great community we call home.

This year, I've seen our partnerships with other organizations and individuals grow and strengthen. I'm so thankful for those who invest their time, talents, expertise, finances and more at FROM. You are truly making a difference in our community and your support helps us serve our community well.

From the heart,

Dawn Broene



Dawn Broene, FROM Executive Director

Kindness in Bloom

The raised garden beds installed last year at Main Street Housing not only benefited the residents, but also the community as the tenants happily shared their plentiful harvest. In fact, they enjoyed it so much that they decided to do it again this year.

Mark and Tim went out and purchased tomato, pepper, green bean, and radish plants and began the process of tending and weeding the garden daily. FROM's Main Street Housing volunteer work crew installed an outdoor faucet to make the watering easier this year which both men appreciated.



Tim said they wanted to do the garden again because "it's a benefit to us" and, Mark added, "we are good at it and it's fun, you know." Tim said when you grow your own food "it makes you more appreciative because you spent the time on it." They plan to can some of the vegetables and enjoy them fresh. They have also blessed others by donating their harvest to the FROM Food Pantry and some local churches.

Want to learn how the Main Street Gardens started? Visit www.fromlowell.org/news and click on our Fall 2018 Newsletter.

Christmas Distribution Gets a New Name!

FROM's Christmas Distribution (held December 14, 2019) is getting a new name! The gift distribution will now be called "Christmas Toy Store" and the food distribution will be called "Christmas Food Basket." Both are available for those who live in the Lowell Area School District and are in need of either gifts for their children or food for a Christmas meal.

Christmas Toy Store will allow parents to shop for gifts for their children (up to High School seniors) from a selection of new items while **Christmas Food Basket** provides all the fixing's (a mixture of fresh, frozen and non-perishable items) for either a ham or turkey Christmas dinner. Both require registration (details below).

NEW for 2019! On Dec 14, Treasures Thrift Shop will be open exclusively for Christmas Toy Store/Food Basket families who wish to shop from new and gently used items at 50% off regularly marked prices.

Registration will take place in the Food Pantry during regular hours (Mon, Tues, Thurs 2:00-4:30 pm, Wed 5:00-7:00 pm and Fri 10:00-12:00) between November 4 and December 10. You must bring in a photo ID and current piece of mail to register.

FROM will be accepting **Donations** November 4-December 10. Donations of children's gifts (for boys and girls up to age 18) can be dropped off at FROM or at the barrel locations around the Lowell area. Financial or gift card donations can be mailed or delivered to our Main Office.

For a list of items we are looking for (including an Amazon wish list, **visit www.fromlowell.org/christmas**

Donated items not selected during Christmas Toy Store will be sold in Treasures Thrift Shop to support our mission of walking alongside our neighbors in need.





IMPORTANT DATES

Nov 4: Christmas Registration Begins (during Food Pantry hours) and runs through Dec 10

Nov6, 6:00-7:00: Volunteer Orientation

Nov 6-8: Senior Food Commodities (during Food Pantry hours)

Nov 21, 1:00-2:00: Volunteer Orientation

Nov 23, 10:00: Mobile Food Pantry

Nov 27-29: Food Pantry Closed

Nov 28: Main Office and Thrift Shop Closed

Dec 4, 6:00-7:00: Volunteer Orientation

Dec 4-6: Food Commodities (during Food Pantry hours)

Dec 11-13: Senior Food Commodities (during Food Pantry hours)

Dec12-13: Food Pantry Closed

Dec 14: Christmas Distribution (must pre-register) Thrift Shop Closed

Dec 30, 1:00-6:00: Lunch Buddies

for more dates, including holiday closures, visit www.fromlowell.org/calendar