



Food for thought: The many faces of food pantry users here in the South Hills

Jim had worked at a local hospital for nearly ten years when his job was eliminated. Months of part-time work while searching for a position with a similar income left him living on his savings. As that quickly depleted, he struggled to keep the bills paid and his children fed. That's when he turned to SHIM's food pantry.

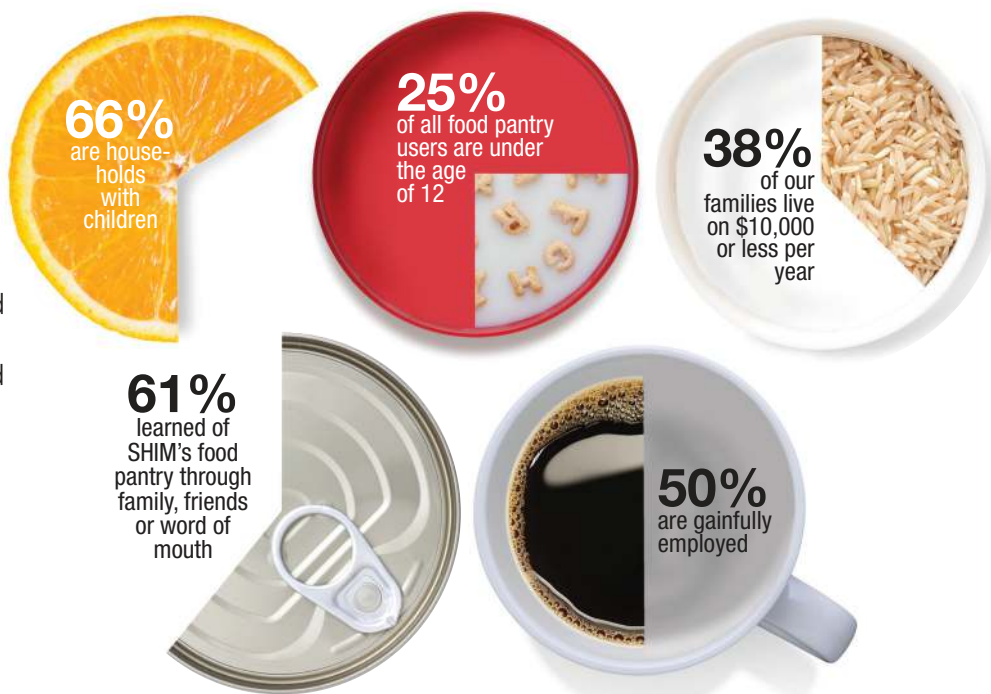
When Elaine's husband passed away, she was doing a pretty good job of managing her expenses on a fixed income. But an unexpected medical bill left her having to choose between her prescriptions or food. She needed a local place to turn for help.

For Meena and Rajen, 17 years of living in a refugee camp in Nepal was hard. Now living in the South Hills, they feel blessed, though learning a new language, finding jobs, and helping their two children assimilate are daily challenges. He's working as a custodian and she in retail while they pursue an education, reimagine their careers and slowly rebuild their lives.

Every person who walks through the doors of our food pantries has a story.

Here at SHIM, we're helping meet their basic needs and moving them toward achieving self-sufficiency.

Here's a snapshot of SHIM's food pantry families by the numbers:



Your generous donations put food on the tables for these families and hundreds more. In fact, your donations of dollars work even harder than your gifts of food thanks to the 5X buying power we get as a partner agency with the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank. By stretching every generous donation, we can ensure the shelves are always stocked.

You fuel our pantry operations—as food drive holders, canned good donators, generous gift-makers, volunteers, and most importantly, caring members of the community who spread the word that SHIM is the South Hills' local place to turn for help—so thank you.

Thanks for being neighbors helping neighbors. As always, if you know someone who could use our support, please spread the word about SHIM.

Budget Building: Making the most of each dollar

Here at SHIM, we help local women and families who are faced with a difficult life event or situation get back on their feet. Financial planning, career counseling and other supports are all part of the process in reaching self-sufficiency again.

SHIM's new Money Matters program, which started this September, is a series of workshops for women to build camaraderie, explore creative ways to make the most of their families' budgets, and learn money management skills.

Jennifer LaRosa, our family assistance caseworker, along with food pantry mom, April Khodayarinezhad, came up with the initial idea to help more women find resourceful ways to stretch their budgets.

The first three workshops focus on how to make healthy, delicious, budget-friendly meals using food available at SHIM's pantries. At the first session in September, participants used items found on SHIM pantry shelves to make a full dinner to take home and serve to their families. Participants also discuss where to get the best grocery deals and share recipe ideas.

"People don't necessarily stop and think about it, but you can make a decent meal on a budget for your whole family if you plan before your trip to the grocery store or pantry," April said.

During future workshops, women will make holiday gifts, explore the process of filing a tax return and where to find



help, and how to conserve energy throughout the winter. More sessions will be developed based on participants' requests and needs.

The program is open to the entire community and free of charge. The next Money Matters class is scheduled for Nov. 16 from 10 – 11 a.m. Check SHIM's website at www.shimcares.org for information on future classes.

To sign up or learn how you can help, contact Jennifer at jarosa@shimcares.org.



New Angel Emporium Takes Flight

Over the past several years, the need for basics – from food to clothing to critical community services – has significantly grown. It became an increasing challenge

for us to serve all families through Angel Emporium under the previous structure, and without a change to the program, we'd be unable to serve all of our families this year. We had to reimagine the program to meet increasing need, ensuring every family has the opportunity to provide a joyful holiday for their children.

This year, SHIM is collecting gift cards to select retailers in lieu of physical gifts. Gift cards to Giant Eagle, Target, Wal-Mart, Amazon, Visa or MasterCard will allow families the opportunity to experience the joy of holiday shopping — and bargain hunting — while choosing the most meaningful gifts for their children. Families now have the opportunity to take advantage of both in-store and online holiday sales, allowing them to stretch their budgets. Plus, they can put to use the planning and budgeting skills they've been learning at SHIM. Moreover, local congregations, schools and organizations can take advantage of their existing gift card programs.

How can I spread the joy?

- ☐ You can purchase gifts cards in \$25 increments to Giant Eagle, Target, Wal-Mart, Amazon, Visa or MasterCard.
- ☐ The gift cards can be dropped off at any Brentwood Bank location or at SHIM Center in Bethel Park.
- ☐ You can also make a financial contribution to SHIM at shimcares.org/angel-emporium2.0, and we will purchase the gift cards on your behalf.

Gift cards and donations will be accepted through November 21. The gift cards will be distributed to SHIM pantry families with children at holiday celebrations in late November.

Our families are deeply grateful to be able to personally shop for their children this year. As many face numerous struggles to make ends meet all year long, providing them with gift cards to ensure their children have a joyous holiday is a gift beyond measure.

To learn more, visit shimcares.org/angelemporium.

Growing Goodness: SHIM's community gardens take root across the South Hills

If you drive through the South Hills, you've likely noticed that SHIM Community Gardens are sprouting up in more places than ever before. This year, we've added six new gardens, for a total of 14. More than 60 hard-working volunteers keep the gardens vibrantly growing and harvested all season long.

So far, SHIM's community gardens have harvested more than 11,000 lbs. of fresh produce to stock our three food pantries, giving families access to fresh, healthy choices in their meal planning. These three food pantries serve more than 1,700 people each month. This year, we've welcomed 100 new families to the pantries, so the addition of six new gardens helps to ensure that every person who comes to us can get fresh produce with their groceries twice a month.

This year, the new Whitehall Peace and Community Garden at Whitehall Presbyterian Church was an exciting place to be. It was established — and is lovingly cultivated — by the residents of Whitehall Place who engaged in SHIM programs. Many of these volunteers were resettled as refugees and have since become U.S. citizens. In addition, the 129 children who participated in SHIM's summer camp made regular visits to learn about and taste the different vegetables — even making salads to accompany their lunches.

We thank all of our garden partners, including: Hamilton



Presbyterian Church in Bethel Park; St. David's Episcopal Church in Peters Township; St. Thomas More Parish in Bethel Park; Bower Hill Community Church in Mt. Lebanon; KinderCare in Mt. Lebanon; John McMillan Presbyterian Church in Bethel Park; Temple Emanuel in Mt. Lebanon; Girl Scout Troop #52621 in Bethel Park; Nick Devlin's Eagle Scout Project in Boyce Gardens; Whitehall Presbyterian Church; St. Joan of Arc Parish in South Park; Beth El in Scott Township; St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Mt. Lebanon; and the garden at SHIM Center in Bethel Park.

AmeriCorps members dedicate a year of service to SHIM

When you stop by SHIM, expect to see some new faces. SHIM is excited to welcome three Compass AmeriCorps members to the team. The program places passionate, dedicated individuals with local organizations that provide social services support to immigrants and refugees.

At SHIM's Prospect Park Family Center, George Eke is the community services assistant.

The Family Center is a vital part of SHIM's operation. George helps clients who drop-in daily with finding jobs, enrolling in school, filling out documents, making phone calls and other critical services. Originally from Nigeria, George attended the University of Pittsburgh and decided to stick around to support people in the South Hills community. He is working toward a degree in immigration law.

"I got involved with Compass AmeriCorps because I wanted to help refugees and immigrants," George said. "I hope I can alleviate any constraints or stress people may have when they come into the Family Center."

Talia Landerman is the new ISAC program navigator where she helps link refugees and immigrants to various resources and



Compass AmeriCorps members commit to one year of service with an organization. Many AmeriCorps members have joined the SHIM staff after their year of service. Diya, Talia and George will spend their year serving SHIM families.

services throughout the community. Through the WorkAble program, Talia also helps them with resumes and job applications so they can find jobs suitable to their skill levels. She will also volunteer in SHIM's Youth Mentoring program. Talia is also a graduate of the University of Pittsburgh.

"Before starting with SHIM, I didn't really know much about the South Hills or this community," Talia said.

"The work we are doing at SHIM is very needed."

A Mt. Lebanon alumna, Diya Nagaraj will help with SHIM's food pantry operations as a basic needs coordinator, where she'll stock pantry shelves, sign people up for the pantry and assist with the community gardens. She's also looking forward to participating as a mentor in SHIM's Youth Mentoring Program.





"My parents are immigrants, and when they came here, they didn't have a support system," Diya said. "It was important to me to help provide that to refugees and immigrants who might be experiencing some of the same things my parents did."

George, Talia and Diya started working with SHIM at the beginning of September and will be with us through July.



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SHIMKIDS by the numbers

237



kids age 0 – 17
enrolled in SHIM
educational
programming

591



kids under 18
served by the
food pantry

700



backpacks
distributed this
summer

looking forward:

**save
the
dates**

Money Matters

Wed., November 16, 10 a.m.

SHIM Center in Bethel Park
Prepare a healthy, cost-effective meal
to take home to your family. Open to
the public; register by contacting
Jennifer LaRosa, jlrosa@shimcares.org

Mitzvah Day

**Fri., December 23,
9:30 a.m. – Noon**

SHIM Center in Bethel Park

Sack Hunger, Pack Hope

Kickoff Mon., February 13, 2017

Volunteers Needed!

Pantry Stocking - Group/Family Activity

Baldwin location. November 7 and December 12. Flexible hours.

Crush Hunger Distribution Driver

Be a HERO to South Hills neighbors by distributing food from SHIM's
largest community donors. Multiple pick-up locations. Flexible schedule.

Mentors

Be a role model to local middle and high school students by planning
weekly, fun, learning experiences in a group mentoring setting. Weekday
evenings, 6:00 – 8:00 p.m., at our Prospect Park location. Must be 18 or
older and complete mandated reporter training to qualify.

Clothing Sorters - Community Project

Sort and process clothing donations. RSVP required.
November 15 and December 6, 4:30 – 6:30 p.m.

Group volunteer activities are ongoing. Contact Becca, bcornell@shimcares.org, to schedule an activity, RSVP, or attend orientation.
For more information, visit shimcares.org/volunteer