

## **My Personal Ministry**

a testimony by Angela Chesser

Name >> *Angela Chesser*

Connection >> *the sharing center volunteer*

Medium >> *testimony*

The Christian Sharing Center has long been part of my church missions program, and I'd been bringing my bag of food on "Food Sunday" each month for years before ever visiting the center to learn where the food goes.

Each year, members would sign up to work a day at the thrift store. One year the timing was perfect: spring break, and my son needed service hours for his Boy Scout badge. He was too young to work alone, so I signed us both up for a day, and we went to work. We hung up clothes, dusted shelves, swept the floor inside and sidewalk outside, emptied garbage cans and picked up trash around the building. There was a lot to do! My son loved it, and we continued volunteering together for nearly a year.

We became involved with other things, though, and eventually moved to downtown Orlando. Now both my boys were in high school and didn't need a stay-at-home mom so much. I was at a loss! One day, I drove to The Sharing Center to drop off a donation. Everyone was so kind and grateful! After a tour of the thrift store and pantry, I was so impressed with the growth and changes that I knew I had found the place God wanted me to be. That was five years ago, and I'm still here every Wednesday in the pantry. I love the work and the people I meet!

Sometimes I am filling an order for a family with, say, two adults and six children, who have checked only a few items on their form. When I call their name, I might mention that they didn't request many items and ask if they could use a bit more. I am humbled by their humble response, "Oh, I didn't want to ask for too much . . . someone else might need it more."

God has blessed our pantry so many times -- and at just the right time! One day we had given out our last loaf of bread. The next truck that stopped outside to deliver food was loaded with bread. *God provides.* We depend on basics like peanut butter, jelly, canned meats, soup, cereal and powdered milk. One week we ran out of peanut butter. In came 12 cases of peanut butter! *God provides.*

Supplying the food people need is such a wonderful blessing in my life. Many are only a paycheck or two away from being able to pay bills and buy food. It takes great courage to admit that they need a helping hand and to walk into our center and ask for assistance. These are hard-working people who are proud and have always taken care of the needs of their families. I had always thought a food pantry helped only the homeless, but I have found out that families and the elderly have great needs, too.

Our special form lets clients indicate what they need so that we can fill specific dietary needs and not give things they could not use. If we have the appropriate items in stock, we can help a diabetic who needs low-sugar foods or someone whose diet requires low-salt. Perhaps a homeless person needs a sleeping bag, a can opener or bug spray. We pack tote bags instead of paper or plastic bags for people who are walking. My favorite

items to give out are toiletries . . . toilet paper, deodorant, soap, toothpaste or a toothbrush. Feeling fresh and clean brings dignity to a person and, in turn, earns respect from others. I'm so proud to be a part of that.

I love being able to tell a client "God bless you" or "I'm praying for you." How many people are able to say those words in their workplace? But the greatest blessing I receive working in the pantry is that, while we have guidelines on what food to distribute, we also have freedom to give as we feel the need from God. I know God will continue to bless our pantry as we follow His will to be merciful and give generously because *God provides*.

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