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<http://thericatholic.com/stories/as-need-skyrockets-annual-fundraiser-will-boost-assumption-parish-food-ministry,9368?>

As need skyrockets, annual fundraiser will boost Assumption Parish food ministry



Mimi Struck, a volunteer, assisted a visitor to the Assumption Parish food ministry in 2016. According to Sister Angela Daniels, the number of visitors to the West End food pantry rose by nearly 6,500 from 2016 to 2017.
FILE PHOTO: LAUREN CLEM

PROVIDENCE — The Home Loan Foundation will hold its annual fundraiser to benefit the Assumption Parish food ministry on Thursday, November 30, at Roger Williams Park Casino. This will be the sixth event in a partnership between the Foundation and the ministry that has resulted in nearly \$250,000 in donations over the years.

"We do this because of a long relationship and friendship I've had with Father Trainor and Sister Angela," said John Murphy Sr., founder and chairman of Home Loan Investment Bank. "Their enthusiasm and commitment are overwhelming. How can you say no?"

Father Daniel Trainor and Sister Angela Daniels founded the Assumption Parish food ministry in the late 1960s to serve the increasing numbers of low-income families moving into Providence's West End neighborhood. As the needs of the community grew and other pantries closed, the food ministry expanded its reach and currently serves more than 44,000 individuals in the greater Providence area. Sister Daniels continues to coordinate the day-to-day operation of the ministry.

"She knows a lot of them by name, and she cares about them. It's a feeling you get when you see her servicing the people," said Murphy.

While the annual fundraiser has supported the ministry for several years, this year's event is especially important. According to Sister Daniels, the number of visitors during the 2017 fiscal year increased by almost 6,500 from the previous year, a significant spike in the general increase she has seen over time. The sudden increase, she said, is due to problems associated with Rhode Island's new Unified Health Infrastructure Project (UHIP), which has wreaked havoc on the public benefits system since its mismanaged launch last September.

"We really attributed that to the fact that many of the people were coming in from Elmwood Avenue where the UHIP problem was going on," she said. "And they weren't getting their food stamps and they weren't getting their benefits."

For the past year, individuals eligible for public benefits such as Medicaid and SNAP have reported long waits, gaps in coverage, lost applications and general confusion following the introduction of the new computerized system by state contractor Deloitte. As recently as October, state officials were discovering large numbers of unprocessed applications and securing credits from the contractor to compensate for the system's continued errors.

"I thought by this time that problem would have been long gone because it's been a year and three months," said Sister Daniels. "For all we know, it's not long gone and we're anticipating very large numbers again this year, very close to what we did last year when many people came. It's a real challenge, but we got through it this year and by the grace of God we'll get through it again."

This year's fundraiser, "A Night of Thanks," will feature music from John Scotti, a raffle, wine and beer tastings and hors d'oeuvres prepared by Providence firefighter Jeff Andrews of JA Personal Chef Service. Murphy said the Foundation aims to raise \$50,000 for the cause.

"It's going to be a very good night and a fun night for all," he said.

Sister Daniels said that without the support of the Home Loan Foundation, she does not think the ministry would be able to continue to meet the demand. She hopes the fundraiser will allow the pantry to continue to support individuals affected by the UHIP crisis through next year.

"This fundraiser at the end of the month, that — along with other people's help — I think we're going to make it. But we're not going to have a lot left over," she said. "We'll step up and, as they say, we'll do the best we can."

For more information or to purchase tickets, please visit www.a-night-of-thanks.eventbrite.com or call 401-773-2999.