

Souper Bowl party gathers food for those in need

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On the one day in the United States where the majority of Americans are huddled around their TVs watching the big game, the commercials or the halftime show, a different kind of party was going on at KidsWork Children's Museum.

Before all the beer and wings, their first Souper Bowl party brought families together for hours of fun for a good cause.

Each attendee at the party was asked to bring a non-perishable food donation to the museum to help stock the shelves at the Frankfort Township Food Pantry.

Nicole Underwood, executive director of KidsWork Children's Museum, estimates 70 families stopped by the event, and some brought more than 1 item.

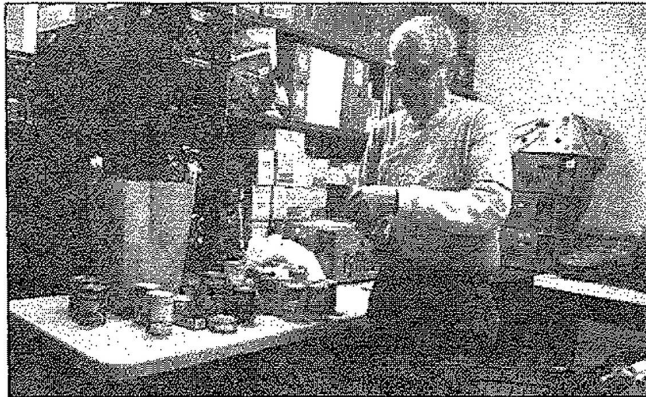
For those who forgot or didn't have a food item to bring, there were some pre-purchased items they could donate \$3 to "buy" and put in the donation bin.

Underwood said the idea was popular with parents who had their hands full with children, strollers and diaper bags but still wanted to contribute to the cause.

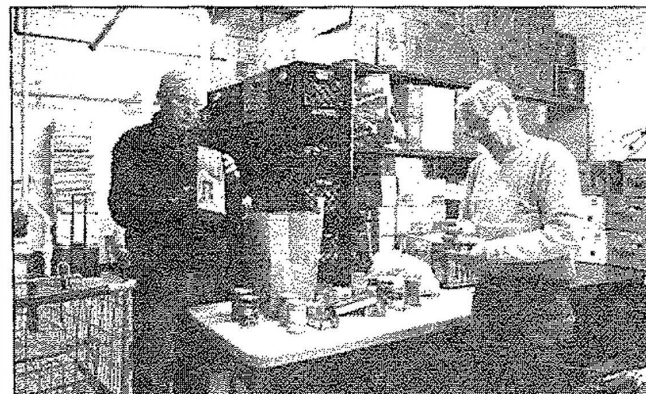
KidsWork Children's Museum is a nonprofit organization and Underwood said it is nice to see one nonprofit be able to help out another.

"We feel so fortunate at the museum with people helping us out," she said. "We get donations daily — craft stuff or toys or even monetary donations. We always feel so grateful for it."

Jeannine Hetfleisch, director of the Frankfort Township Food Pantry, said they receive their donations from a variety of sources, but much of the food on the shelves comes from citizens who drop off food once in a while as well as scouts and



Volunteers Ken Wurtz (left) and Ralph Madsen sort food donated from the KidsWork Children's Museum Souper Bowl Party. Volunteers check the dates and the condition of the packaging on each item before it is stocked on the food pantry shelves.



Volunteer Ralph Madsen, of Frankfort, explains how a dent in a can may compromise the seal on the lid and how to tell the difference between a superficial dent and one that could be potentially dangerous.

other organizations, such as KidsWorks, who do food drives.

During the growing season, she said many people bring in their extra produce from their gardens, which is always a nice treat for people who come to pick up food from the pantry.

Still, others donate their time or their money to the pantry, which Hetfleisch said makes a difference because the pantry only has herself and Mike Hilton, the food harvester, as employees.

Hilton visits area grocery stores each day to pick up food donations from them, and some of the volunteers spend their time shopping sales and picking up items

that the pantry needs as well.

Hetfleisch said over the years she has seen a lot of faces come in and out of the food pantry, but certain cases seem to stick with her the most.

She said she tries to talk to everyone who comes through the door personally to find out what they're going through and how she and the pantry can help.

"It's hard to share that kind of information, too, because who wants to admit that?"

The people and families in the community who are in the most need of basic food and supplies are not always the people some might expect, and she said it just goes



Volunteer Ken Wurtz, of Mokena, unloads food donated from KidsWork Children's Museum's Souper Bowl Party on Wednesday, Feb. 7. The party on SuperBowl Sunday collected food and raised awareness for the Frankfort Township Food Pantry. PHOTOS BY AMANDA STOLL/22ND CENTURY MEDIA



Nicole Underwood, executive director of KidsWorks Children's Museum, stands among the shelves of donated food at the Frankfort Township Food Pantry. After being sorted, the donation from the children's museum was added to the shelves and could then be selected by people visiting the food pantry to pick up food.

to show that you can never be sure what someone is going through.

The pantry serves 325 families per month, which each of those families eligible to come in once a week for staples like meat, milk, fresh produce, refrigerated items and bakery items as well as once a month to shop

for non-perishable foods.

Underwood said the food drive at KidsWork was a great learning opportunity for many of the children and an opportunity to learn about having empathy for others who don't have as much as they might have. Many of the parents got on board with the message as well, which

Underwood said helped the message sink in.

"You heard the parents talk about where this [donation] was going," Underwood said. "...I wanted to get the younger [children] understanding about food and how some do not have food, and I think the parents really drove that home."