

The Food Pantry at Asheville Terrace Apartments – A Recipe for Success (continued)
by Hope Warshaw

ATA, a 248-apartment complex, is Housing and Urban Development housing supported by Section 8 Subsidized Elderly Housing managed by the City of Asheville Housing Authority. The residents pay 30% of their adjusted gross income as rent. Ninety percent of the residents are 62 years or older; 15 percent have disabilities.

The food pantry, modeled after one at Battery Park Apartments, has operated on the second and fourth Monday afternoon of each month for just over a year. According to Steers, it supplies nearly 90 ATA residents with supplemental foods. MANNA Food Bank and the Haywood Street Church donate most of the food, with each entity supplying about half.

A host of volunteers set up the pantry like a mini-supermarket. Residents come and choose certain amounts of fresh fruits, vegetables, dairy foods, grains and some sweet treats. For residents too elderly or infirm to come, a bag of groceries is delivered to their apartment by volunteers.

OLLI volunteers began supporting this effort in August 2017 in response to a United Way call. “OLLI’s Civic Engagement Committee contacted me because I had worked with Catholic Charities’ food pantry,” says Kathleen Mainardi, OLLI’s first volunteer team leader. “When we advertised in the *OLLI Observer*, response was overwhelmingly positive. Sixteen OLLI members now volunteer. I cannot tell you how much I love the food pantry. I’ve gotten to know many of the residents and feel a connection to them all.”

OLLI Volunteer John Staatz suggested a donation jar just outside the Reuter Center Café for members to drop in spare change. These extra dollars allow the program to buy additional meats, cereals, eggs and juice. John was a Michigan State University agriculture professor; part of his career focused on food insecurity. He has stepped up his commitment to the food pantry by taking the reins from Kathleen, now Civic Engagement Committee Chair.

“OLLI volunteers are critical to the success of this food pantry,” notes Steers. “This dependable group offers invaluable guidance and physical labor. Our residents are very appreciative of the OLLI volunteers.”

Want to volunteer at the ATA pantry? The commitment is a couple hours twice a month but you don’t have to be there for every food pantry. “There are no meetings or agendas,” says Kathleen. “You just come, deliver food and feel good about helping people in need. Can’t volunteer? Then simply support the food pantry by dropping your extra change into the donation jar at the Reuter Café. It will be put to good use!”