

## **TCCA's LITTLE FREE PANTRY**

It may surprise you that the Town Center Community Association (TCCA) has a few of our neighbors who are food insecure and unable to afford some of the essentials we take for granted. We learned about Free Pantries in the Spring of 2019 from an article in the Washington Post and subsequently found one of these pantries in Columbia just outside of the Owen Brown Village Interfaith Center. We drove over there and checked it out by talking with a lady who generously shared her experiences with us.

Additionally, we contacted "little pantry.org", and met with community outreach staff of the Kittamaquendi Community Church. Our next step was to find a suitable location for a pantry and get one built. As it turned out, the spouse of a TCCA employee volunteered to construct a pantry for us. He used one of the little pantry.org plans to carry this out. Finally, we had a grand opening dedication one sunny day in September of 2019.

Our LITTLE FREE PANTRY's existence has been quite helpful to residents whose disposable income has declined since the COVID-19 pandemic arrived, and more so since the COVID variants have joined the scene. The County Executive arranged for the donation of several hundred COVID KN95 masks and COVID rapid test kits. Individuals monitor the pantry, and passersby walking their dogs pass the word out to the community about the existence of the LITTLE FREE PANTRY.

We have our ups and downs of the available stock, but somehow the members of the COVID-19 Pantry Team see to it that the supply deficiencies get resolved. We cannot say thank you enough times for their support of this community effort.

\* Many donors ask us to recommend items that are most appropriate and desired by the LITTLE FREE PANTRY. The age and food choices vary markedly, there are several items that move in and out of the PANTRY very rapidly such as cans of meat and fish, preferably with pull off tops; ramen and cup noodle soups, protein bars, drinks with straws for the thirsty, and boxes of cold cereal. Less desirable items are canned soup, dry beans, rice, and hot cereal. Cans of many varieties of beans, vegetables, boxes of pasta, jars of peanut butter and jelly are donated frequently but rarely taken. We make it a practice not to accept food items that are packed in "breakable" glass containers.



*By Joel Broida*

Editor: I talked with Joel on my walk day before Ian brought us rain. He had just picked up broken glass off the brick. This happens too frequently.