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Mary Rigg Neighborhood Center Hosts Second Annual Un-Gala to Support Expanded Food Access in West Indianapolis

INDIANAPOLIS (May 1, 2026) – Mary Rigg Neighborhood Center (MRNC) is celebrating $36,300 dollars raised today from its second annual Un-Gala, reflecting strong support from community members and corporate partners committed to strengthening west Indianapolis families. The dollars raised support the newly expanded Mary Rigg Food Pantry's annual operating costs of $48,918, ensuring expanded access to west Indianapolis neighbors. Since it opened on Jan. 28, 2026, Mary Rigg Food Pantry has already served more people than during all of 2025.

The annual Un-Gala is a community-centered fundraising event that breaks from tradition while uplifting the stories, strength and resilience of west Indianapolis families. It celebrates impact over formality and centers around neighbors, donors and partners working together to create opportunity.

"This event reminds us that philanthropy doesn't have to look one way to be meaningful," said Heather Pease, president of Mary Rigg Neighborhood Center. "Our new pantry represents more than expanded space — it represents expanded hope. Our Un-gala event allows us to deliver on our promise of increased choice, greater access to healthy options and the dignity of choice."

The program featured remarks from Mary Rigg volunteers, team members and clients whose lives have been impacted by the center's services. In an onstage interview, April Barnes, a single parent of twin boys enrolled in Summer Day Camp and a financial and employment coaching client, said, **"**The youth programs gave my boys more than something to do — they gave them confidence, leadership and a place to belong. And the food pantry? That was often the lifeline that helped me breathe, save money and keep moving forward."

"When the right supports meet intentional action, stability becomes possible. I am proof that what Mary Rigg is doing works," said Tiarra LaRhae, a single parent of three children and a financial coaching client whose child participates in the afterschool program.

“What starts as volunteering quickly becomes a sense of family. Our volunteers don’t just help stock shelves — they build connections with neighbors and one another that truly change lives,” said Cindy Miers, Mary Rigg Neighborhood Center’s director of operations.

Mary Rigg extends special thanks to this year’s Harvest Heroes, **OmniSource** and **Merchants Bank,** who were the leading supporters and whose investments help ensure Mary Rigg remains a stable, trusted resource in the community. Other 2026 Un-Gala sponsors include CC Brandt Construction, ESI Electric, FDS, Hall Render, Lilly, Line One, LISC Indianapolis, Nine13, Pile CPAs, PNC, Reworld, United Way of Central Indiana, West Indianapolis Development Corporation and Wolsozyn Healthcare.

Nicole Niezer, Mary Rigg board president and employee of OmniSource, encouraged people to get involved by donating, volunteering or hosting a food drive. “Food costs are on the rise. This causes an increase in three things at Mary Rigg: the number of people needing services, the cost to provide those services and time from the people who provide the services.”

Community members who want to **learn more, donate, volunteer or sign up to host a food drive** in support of Mary Rigg Neighborhood Center can visit **maryrigg.org/un-gala**.

The Mary Rigg Food Pantry is open on Mondays from 10:30 a.m.-noon, Tuesdays from 1-3 p.m., the first Wednesday of each month from 5:30-7 p.m. and all other Wednesdays from 12:30-2 p.m.

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About Mary Rigg Neighborhood Center
For more than 110 years, Mary Rigg Neighborhood Center has partnered to provide help, hope, and new opportunities to neighbors in West Indianapolis. Each year, more than 8,000 clients and families are provided personalized services and empowerment through youth and family support, workforce training, and basic needs assistance. To learn more about Mary Rigg Neighborhood Center, visit: maryrigg.org.