FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:
Jennifer Erbacher
812-483-5124
jennifer@lineonepr.com

Mary Rigg Neighborhood Center Celebrates Grand Opening of Expanded Food Pantry with Community Bread-Breaking Ceremony

INDIANAPOLIS (Feb. 5, 2026) – Community leaders, partners, and neighbors gathered today at the Mary Rigg Food Pantry for a celebratory bread-breaking ceremony marking the grand opening of the center's newly expanded food pantry. The enhanced space opened Jan. 28 and significantly increases the center's ability to provide fresh food, produce, meat, dairy, and shelf-stable items for families on the city's west side.

"This new pantry represents more than expanded space — it represents expanded hope," said Heather Pease, president of Mary Rigg Neighborhood Center. "With refrigeration, more service days, and a broader selection of fresh food, we can increase choice and access to healthy options. When basic needs are met, families can focus on other goals."

The new pantry operates like a grocery store and is open three days a week, up from the one-day-per-week pantry Mary Rigg Neighborhood Center was able to operate at its previous location, which served 100 people each week and over 20,000 pounds of food (about the weight of a school bus) per month.

The event featured remarks from key partners who helped make the expansion possible, including:

- **Heather Pease**, President, Mary Rigg Neighborhood Center
- **Fred Payne**, President & CEO, United Way of Central Indiana
- **Jason Eckerle**, Regional President for Central & Southern Indiana, PNC Bank
- **Fred Glass**, President & CEO, Gleaners Food Bank
- **Candy Miles,** Mary Rigg client

Following remarks, speakers joined staff and guests for a ceremonial bread-breaking, symbolizing unity, nourishment, and shared community investment.

The expanded pantry opens at a critical time, as the center continues to see rising food insecurity, increased visits, and more neighbors experiencing homelessness. The pantry currently serves 1,000 families annually. Over the last three years, pantry participation has increased year over year: by 17% in 2023, 27% in 2024, and 17% in 2025.

"Food insecurity continues to be one of the most pressing challenges facing Indianapolis families," said Fred Glass, president & CEO of Gleaners Food Bank. "Partnerships like the one we share with Mary Rigg Neighborhood Center are essential to meeting families' needs. This expanded pantry offers more fresh food, and more opportunities to serve. This will strengthen our collective impact and help more neighbors access the nourishment they deserve."

The new pantry also represents the merging of two food resources in the neighborhood: Mary Rigg Neighborhood Center and Billie's Food Pantry. Billie's closed in late January after serving the neighborhood for more than 35 years. Mary Rigg Food Pantry's expansion helps ensure USDA subsidies stay in the neighborhood.

"The pantry has been a lifeline for my family," said Candy Miles, a long-time West Indianapolis resident and Mary Rigg client. "We rely on the pantry for items like meat, milk, and eggs, and sometimes those items ran out before we could get them. The refrigerators at the new pantry mean more fresh food. It feels like a place that truly cares for my family and my neighbors."

The project was supported through major contributions from partners including **United Way of Central Indiana**, **PNC Bank**, **Elanco**, **Hatch**, **Lilly**, **Indy Hunger Network,** and **Gleaners Food Bank**, among others.

"Addressing food insecurity is one of our highest priorities, because it's foundational to stability, dignity, and opportunity," said Fred Payne, president and CEO of United Way of Central Indiana. "With this expanded pantry, we're not just increasing access to food; we're strengthening the future of this neighborhood and investing in the well-being of the families who call it home."

"At PNC, we know strong communities are built locally, by listening first and collaborating with organizations that know their neighbors best," said Jason Eckerle, PNC Bank regional president for Central & Southern Indiana. "And to the neighbors who will use this pantry: this space is for you. You belong here."

The Mary Rigg Food Pantry is open on the first Wednesday of each month from 5:30-7 p.m. and all other Wednesdays from 12:30-2 p.m. The pantry will also be open on Mondays from 10 a.m.-noon starting Feb. 16, and on Tuesdays from 1-3 p.m. starting March 2.

###

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.