

Anatomy of a Thrivent Food Pantry Action Team Project

Christ Trinity Church members have contributed numerous \$250 Thrivent Project Action Team cards to the three food pantries in South County in 2025. While I'm still working on spending several of these cards, which are good for 4 months, I thought you might be interested in knowing what's involved in completing your Action Team Project.

When a card is ready to be spent, the first step is to contact the designated food pantry manager and find out what food is needed. At the People's Pantry in Great Barrington, this can vary greatly from week to week, depending on what's been donated by others and what their clients have selected. For the two pantries in Sheffield serving the five Southern Berkshire School District towns, the food needs are more stable, as they provide a box or bag of items for each client.

Once the food items have been identified, I go looking for the best buys, which may be at Aldi for many items, or at Big Y or Price Chopper depending on their weekly circulars. I usually focus on 4-6 items and may delay buying an item until I see the price I'm looking for. I also look for no limit items, which is always the case at Aldi.

Basics such as non-sugared dry cereals, rolled oats, peanut butter, pasta, pasta sauce, canned fruits and vegetables, canned chicken and tuna, soups, and dried beans are regularly on the list. No frivolous items are ever on their lists – just real basic food.

The last few weeks have been a bonanza for shopping, as both Big Y and Price Chopper have had incredible no limit sales on 6 of these basic items. I either order by the case when the circular first comes out or just go fill a large shopping cart as carefully and high as possible with items off the shelf.

With visits to Price Chopper several times this past week, I was able to get a mix of peanut butter, canned tuna, pasta sauce, canned tomatoes, and various types of pasta at almost half-price. One basket held 193 items, for which I spent \$234 and saved \$205. These are legitimate savings; not something marked up to be marked on sale.

It truly makes my day when I can make one of your Thrivent cards go so far. I spend your Thrivent Project Team cards with great care and buy foods that are not full of additives or overly processed, in other words, food that I would like to eat and I'm sure you would too. Dennis always helps me with the deliveries. And when your card is spent, I'll notify you and thank you for making this possible. You may then go online or call Thrivent and close your project knowing that you've helped so many.

One of our colleagues is shopping for a pantry with her own card and maybe she'll share her experience. Your card is yours to shop if you wish, or if you'd like me to do the shopping, but you'd like to come with me, just let me know. Otherwise, I enjoy doing this very much and will be pleased to all the food pantry Thrivent Project Action Team cards you provide.

- Rene Wood