

Tuesday's Table | Our Volunteers Are Key



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It began with a set of lost keys.

Susan, a volunteer, arrived at the pantry on Monday, admitting she couldn't find them.

"It was likely an honest mistake, but we knew it was neither smart nor safe for a set of church keys to be floating around out there," said Huntersville United Methodist Church pantry coordinator Pam Elsass.

So commenced the sleuthing.

They narrowed down when Susan had most recently volunteered, then which families she had helped shop the pantry on those days.

It was bitterly cold for Charlotte — in the teens that week — so on the day in question, as Susan left home for the pantry, she put on an old coat. She presumed she would likely meet a neighbor that day who needed it.

She was right.

A woman and her four children arrived. None of them were dressed adequately for the cold weather, but especially the mother. Susan knew she had found her recipient, and she had no qualms about giving that coat away.

“It all came from her heart,” Pam said.

Susan’s warm coat went home with that mama, and we were now thinking it was very likely so did the keys to the church in its pocket. Now we just needed to find her — and them.

Pam called “downtown” — aka Nourish Up — to identify who had had appointments at Huntersville that day. Eventually honing in on three Spanish-speaking families, one of our bilingual Nourish Up customer service teammates called the family and made the connection.

“Si,” the woman answered. “Si, tengo el abrigo. Y las claves también están aquí.”

“This client has your keys to the church,” Rachel explained, sharing a name and address.

They exchanged information and arranged for Pam to go to the woman’s home that afternoon. “She hesitantly cracked the door. I could tell she recognized me,” Pam said. Sliding the keys through a narrow opening, she then asked, “¿El abrigo es para mí?”

“Is the coat for me?”

"She thought she had to give that back as well. Be still my heart. Those of us who can choose from more than one jacket from the coat closets of our comfortable homes don't give it another thought," Pam continued. "I just assumed she knew that coat was always hers to keep."

This experience serves as a humble reminder to us all that – alongside food insecurity – many of our neighbors carry additional emotional burdens of doubt, despair, fear, and more.

It also reminds that there are many gracious volunteer Susans, supported by teams of devoted detectives, in our midst.

Thankfully, both keys and coat landed safely back where they needed to be.

And that day, that mama who found herself at a Nourish Up pantry was also right where *she* needed to be.

“There are little angels everywhere,” Pam added, grateful for the compassion and dedication of Susan and her army of volunteers. “I wish the public could see what we do every day — it’s about food...

...but it’s really about compassion.”

SOLD OUT!



It's our 50th Anniversary Golden Gala in the Hub

featuring The Right to Party Band
(and our own Jay Gillard)
Saturday, March 22, 2025
6 p.m.
901 Carrier Drive
Charlotte, North Carolina 28216

Wait list.

**It is our mission to nourish our neighbors
with food and compassion.**

Nourish Up provides groceries, meals, and hope through a network of food pantries, grocery home delivery, and as the primary Meals on Wheels program for Mecklenburg County.

Volunteer

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www.nourishup.org



Nourish Up | 901 Carrier Drive | Charlotte, NC 28216 US

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