

# Super Cupboards Break Chain Of Dependency

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LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.)

— "Giving a bag of food is only a bandage to cover up a bigger problem," said Heather Wilson, director of Social Services for the Salvation Army.

Wilson was discussing the frustration she and many social service workers feel as they try to differentiate between the needy and those who abuse the welfare system.

Now she is ecstatic that she has found a way to help people break the chain of dependency.

With the help of Brenda Stallman, Expanded Food Nutrition Education Program with Lancaster County Extension, Wilson has implemented a program called Super Cupboard.

"I believe in being a good steward of the food that is given to us to distribute to the needy," Wilson said.

"When I first began working here, I thought there were only one or two food banks in the area. But I found out that there are 20 food banks. I was appalled to find people abusing the system by making their rounds to all the food banks. Some continually needed to rely on food banks because they ran out of funds at the end of the month.

Her efforts to consolidate food banks so that the system could not be abused became a territorial issue. Organizations that receive

state and federal monies cannot put stipulations on food handouts.

"But," said Wilson, "since the Salvation Army relies completely on donations, we can request that a food recipient attend the Super Cupboard classes in exchange for food.

"Super Cupboard enables recipients to learn how to plan and cook so they don't need to go hungry at the end of the month."

The Super Cupboard concept teaches users basic nutrition and skills for planning, buying, and preparing nutritious meals on a limited budget.

A six-week program held at the Salvation Army in Lancaster and taught by extension personnel is in session now.

"Many have never been taught how to cook or eat properly. If they did not see their mother do anything but open cans, they continue the cycle," she said. "In the classes, they learn to compare the price of opening a can of spaghetti that costs \$4.95 with homemade spaghetti that costs \$1.

"We have a duty to change people's lives, not just hand out food," Wilson said.

At the end of the day-long sessions, the participants are given all the ingredients and recipes needed to take home and prepare the same meal that they made in class.

"Repeating the food preparation in their home reinforces skills that they have learned in class," Wilson said.



Heather Wilson, social services director for Salvation Army, kneels to ask the children how they are enjoying the food prepared by Super Cupboard participants.

A nutrition lesson is taught each morning for one hour and a life-skills program is planned for one hour each afternoon during the 6-week session.

"You can't take care of your family if you are sick," Chris George, a nutrition education adviser for the extension, told class members while emphasizing the need to eat healthy foods.

She explained the need to plan meals, write a grocery list, and stick to it.

"Stores want to entice buyers," she said as she explained how grocery money can quickly disappear if shoppers practice impulse buying.

Many class members said they threw leftover food away. George taught them how to store food properly to maintain flavor and how to incorporate leftovers into other meals.

After each teaching session, class members prepare the day's menu. They eat the food and serve it to their children who are being cared for during the classes at the Salvation Army.

"I never thought my children would eat the food, but they love it," a participant said of foods such as quiche and a carrot salad.

During the sessions, participants often ask questions or comment on the teacher's instruction.

The camaraderie enables them to glimpse a different lifestyle, one that shows them how to cope with problems.

One participant asked how she could get her kids to eat food she had prepared.

Brenda Stallman, an EFNEP advisor, suggested that she allow the child to choose what he would like to eat with the understanding that he would help make it and clean up afterward. The next week, the participant reported that the method had ideal results and has helped ease her workload.

Although this is the first session at the Lancaster location, the Salvation Army in York has been holding Super Cupboard classes for several years.

Wilson said that they find the program really works. Those who attend are open and teachable. Recipients are enthusiastic about the program and many become child-care providers, junior advisors, or mentors for other Super Cupboards scheduled.

The classes are held twice weekly from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Classes are most functional with 10 or less persons.

Many Super Cupboards involve help from public, private, and church organizations.

Wilson estimates that it cost about \$75 a person for the six-week class. Some food donations are from the food banks with the remainder funded by the Salvation Army.

Wilson would like persons with extra garden produce to donate the food to the Super Cupboard program.

"We are open until 5:30 every evening if someone wants to drop it off or we will gladly pick up the produce if desired," Wilson said.

A guide on how to develop and organize a Super Cupboard is available from the Pennsylvania Coalition on Food and Nutrition (PCFN), 208 N. Third St., Suite 200, Harrisburg, PA 17101 or call (717) 233-6705 and ask for Tina Pherribo.

Here are some of the recipes that a Super Cupboard class prepared recently.

## CHICKEN ALA KING

1 large chicken breast, cooked with seasonings  
1 rib celery  
1 small onion  
Salt and pepper, if desired  
1 box frozen peas, cooked and drained

1 small can mushrooms, drained  
1½ cups Magic Mix  
2 cups broth and seasonings  
1 bouillon cube

In a saucepan, combine cooked chicken, cut into small pieces, cooked and drained peas, and mushrooms.

In another saucepan, cook:

Magic mix\*

Broth with seasonings

Cook the Magic mix and broth over medium heat, stirring constantly until it comes to a boil. Add this to the other ingredients and serve over biscuits, waffles or toast points.

## MAGIC MIX\*

4 cups instant nonfat dry milk powder

1 cup flour OR ½ cup cornstarch  
1 cup margarine

Combine dry milk, flour or cornstarch, and margarine in a large bowl. Use two knives to cut margarine into small bits. Continue to cut margarine into dry ingredients until mixture resembles cornmeal. Keep mix in tightly covered container in refrigerator.

## MAGIC SAUCE FROM MAGIC MIX\*

½ cup Magic Mix\*  
1 cup water

Cooked meat, cheese, or vegetables

Combine Magic Mix and water in saucepan. Stir over medium heat until it starts to bubble. Add cooked meat, cheese, or vegetables to the hot sauce. Continue cooking until ingredients are heated through. Season to taste. Serve.

## MAGIC CREAM SOUPS FROM MAGIC MIX\*

4 cups water  
2 cups Magic Mix  
1 bouillon cube

One of the following: 3 cooked carrots, mashed; 3 potatoes cooked and chopped with 1 tablespoon chopped onion; 1 package chopped cooked spinach; 1 package chopped cooked broccoli; 1 can cream-style corn and 1 tablespoon chopped onion

Combine Magic Mix\* (see recipe), water, and bouillon cube in saucepan. Stir over medium heat until slightly thick. Add one of the above vegetable choices. Continue cooking until vegetables are heated through. Season to taste. Serve.

## MAGIC PUDDING FROM MAGIC MIX\*

½ cup sugar  
2 cups Magic Mix\*  
2 cups water  
1 teaspoon vanilla

Combine Magic Mix\* (see recipe), sugar, and water in saucepan. Stir over medium heat until pudding bubbles. Add vanilla and stir. Cover and cool. Serve when cool.

For chocolate pudding, add 2 tablespoons cocoa to sugar and follow directions above.

## CARROT, ORANGE, AND RAISIN SALAD

1½ cups carrots, cleaned and finely chopped or shredded  
1½ cups oranges, sliced  
½ cup raisins

½ cup low-fat vanilla yogurt

Toss carrots, oranges, and raisins together lightly with two forks. Mix in yogurt. Chill. Serve on lettuce or chopped cabbage (optional).



Brenda Stallman, EFNEP advisor, left, who has helped establish several Super Cupboards throughout the county, consults with Chris George, nutrition education advisor.



After Chris George teaches nutrition, participants prepare a meal. At the end of the day, they receive a food package and recipes to prepare the same meal at home. Repeating the food preparation in their home reinforces skills that they have learned in class. The program's goal is to enable participants to break the cycle of dependency and move toward self-reliance.