

15 minutes

By Ann Potter
Photography by
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Kendall Grant, director
of social concerns,
St. Cletus Parish



KENDALL GRANT

Rising grocery-store prices bring elevated food insecurities around the country. But locally, the St. Cletus Food Pantry is doing its best to keep up with demand, and help those in need. Kendall Grant has been leading the charge at the pantry for the last eight years.

“We served 50 percent more families in 2023 than the previous year,” Grant said. “More people are looking to stretch a dollar these days. Grocery prices are going up, but wages are not changing.”

Grant said the church food pantry in La Grange has been serving local families for nearly 40 years, but numbers are at a record high. On average, the pantry provides weekly groceries to 125 families from 18 municipalities in Lyons Township.

“We are so lucky to have overwhelming support from the community that makes this place happen,” she said. “Whenever we have a new opportunity arise, I have so many volunteers I can depend on. People want to help and serve. Our volunteers have a strong sense of justice.”

For years, the food pantry operated in the church basement. But in 2022, Grant, who is the director of social concerns at St. Cletus, partnered with the school and parish to transform two school classrooms into a new food pantry.

“It’s open; it’s colorful and bright,” she said. “It’s a welcoming, beautiful space.”

Food donations come from the Greater Chicago Food Depository, the community and local retailers. St. Cletus was awarded a grant last June to be a food rescue hub. Twice a week, a pantry volunteer drives a refrigerated truck to Jewel, Walmart, Tony’s and other local retailers to collect surplus dry goods and fresh foods that are nearing their expiration date. St. Cletus shares those items with two neighboring pantries.

“It’s a win-win all around,” Grant said. “Food is not wasted, and it goes directly to our community. We’re very proud to be a food rescue hub.”

More about Kendall

What is your background that brought you into this line of work? I studied theology and pastoral ministry at St. Mary’s University of Minnesota. Then I received a master’s degree in organizational leadership and non-profit management. This work is a good fit for my faith and choosing to live that out. **Outside of work, what do you enjoy?** Most of the time, my husband and I are playing referee or Uber driver to our three young boys, who are 8, 6 and 2. **Any St. Patrick’s Day plans?** We always go to Chicago’s South Side Irish Parade with my in-laws. It’s a high holy day for the Grants! ■