

SHIFT STORIES

Congregational United Church of Christ, Union Grove - Monthly Community Meals

When our church saw the effects of the economic recession on our community in 2009, we prayed about how we might make a difference. That same year we were approached by the culinary professor of Shepherd's Ministries in Union Grove, which is a college degree program for developmentally disabled adults. He was seeking a church to partner with to help offset the food insecurity that is pervasive but hidden in our community. We saw a great opportunity, and after prayer and logistical planning, we began offering a free monthly evening meal in the spring of 2010.

Our church building was built in 1894. Though it has been well kept-up and remodeled through the years, our wish to upgrade the kitchen became an urgent need with the monthly use for our community meal.

We heard about the grant money offered by our Southeast Association UCC through the Mission Team, and applied for assistance to help us build a cabinet specifically for our supplies for our monthly meal to help make more space in the kitchen for food preparation.



We were delighted to receive the grant and affirmation of our meal mission last April! The grant came in the form of \$25 gift cards from Menard's and Home Depot totaling \$250. With the grant we are able to make the cabinet as well as upgrade some plumbing.

The monthly meal has evolved over the years. We host between 25 - 90 people each month. Various community groups such as the Lioness Club, Community State Bank, and other churches have joined us to provide meals. We have gotten to know many of our neighbors and made new friends and connections in our wider community.

Our church shares a hearty thank you to our Southeast Association Ministry Team for offering this grant to help grow mission work in our Association. We are honored to have received the grant, and will continue to share God's bounty and blessings with our monthly community meal.

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