



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pete Harckham

Harckham Holds Holiday Food Drive in Carmel

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Carmel, NY - New York State Senator Pete Harckham held a holiday food drive over the weekend in Carmel, where 30 volunteers collected about 8,000 pounds of donated food and \$600 in contributions for the food pantries of the Gilead Presbyterian Church in Carmel Hamlet and the Putnam Community Action Program, both of which will help feed members of the community, including many seniors.

The food drive, which was held on Saturday, Dec. 12 at Drew United Methodist Church and lasted around two hours, resulted in over 250 packed boxes of food, which included oatmeal, peanut butter, vegetable oil, rice, cold cereal, tuna, beans, canned soup, pasta, tomato sauce and other staples. Diapers, feminine products and reusable grocery bags were donated as well.

“The economic problems caused by the Covid-19 pandemic have resulted in widespread food insecurity beyond existing levels, and it is on all of us to help as we can,” said Harckham. “The food drive in Carmel was yet another gratifying example of how community members look out for each other. A big thank you to the hundreds who donated food and to the volunteers at the food drive as well.”

Harckham had held seven other food drives in the past few months—one each in Sleepy Hollow, Peekskill, Mount Kisco, Mohegan Lake, Brewster, Bedford and Pleasantville—and collected over 30,000 pounds of food items and \$10,000 in cash donations so far. Hundreds of residents from the 40th Senate District have volunteered to help at the food drives as well—“a real grassroots show of support,”

said Harckham.

The food drive in Carmel, like the others Harckham has hosted, was a “Drive-Thru, Drop Off” event, with volunteers wearing face masks and collecting food from vehicles in the church’s parking lot.

Reverend Martha E. Vink, rector at Drew United Methodist Church and the First United Methodist Church of Brewster, said, “I think holding food drives is important to do, especially now with winter here and the economic challenges many are facing because of the pandemic. I am pleased to have been able to partner with Senator Harckham in order to provide help for the local food pantries.”

Reverend Martin McGeachy, pastor of Gilead Presbyterian Church, said, “This outpouring of generosity here at the food drive is what helps keep our community going. With the pandemic, our food pantry does not have much access to people wanting to donate food. This is so appreciated!”

Putnam for Black Lives, a local organization, dropped off several carloads of food. One of the group’s members, Erick Boustead, said, “We know these are tough times for a lot of people, and we just wanted to show our support.”

Dehisy Jimenez-Vazquez, services coordinator for the Putnam Community Action Program, said, “Because of the pandemic, some people in the community have not had much work and they are hurting financially. This effort will benefit in a big way people who utilize the food pantry.”

Marisa O’Leary, assistant director of the Putnam Community Action Program, added, “We are so fortunate to live in such a generous community. The food collected today will be distributed to low-income families through Putnam county—and just in time for the holidays, which can be stressful enough on their own. I am sincerely grateful to this community for their donations.”