POTTSTOWN CLUSTER OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

Cluster CHRONICLES

from the Pottstown Cluster of Religious Communities

Cluster Chronicles is the newsletter of the Pottstown Cluster of Religious Communities

MARCH 2026

Pottstown Cluster
OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES
Nourishing Lives. Strengthening Families.

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Pottstown Cluster
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Celebrating Women's History Month
Empower Women. Strengthen Families. Build Community

Women's History Month is both a celebration and a call to action. It honors the extraordinary contributions women have made to our communities, culture, and history. The 2026 theme, "Leading the Change: Women Shaping a Sustainable Future," reminds us that investing in women strengthens entire communities.

This month, the Pottstown Cluster of Religious Communities is raising awareness and support to ensure women in our community have reliable access to nutritious food — food not just to survive, but to thrive.

When women have food security:

- Families are stronger
- Children are healthier
- Communities become more resilient

Throughout the month, we will spotlight the remarkable women who power our mission — volunteers, partners, and advocates whose leadership makes this work possible. These women will be honored at our upcoming event in April. Save the Date for A Toast to Table Security: Wine Tasting & Food Pairing Fundraiser on Thursday, April 16, 2026, from 5p.m. to 8 p.m.

Did You Know?
In Montgomery County, the largest demographic living in poverty is:

- Women ages 25–34
- Women ages 18–24
- Women 75 and older

Many of these women are also primary caregivers. For them, buying groceries often competes with paying rent, utilities, childcare, or medication. No one should have to choose: Do I feed my children or pay my rent? Do I feed myself or fill my prescription? In 2025 alone, we served 2,476 women-led households, ensuring they had consistent access to nutritious food. Your support makes this possible. And together, we can do even more.

Support here: Pottstowncluster.org/2026women

Event Spotlight: Toast to Table Security Wine Tasting & Food Pairing Fundraiser

Join us for a relaxing evening of wine, food, and community. Enjoy handcrafted wine (or beer) paired with delicious food selections curated for a fun tasting experience. Take in scenic vineyard views, unwind with friends, visit the alpacas, and participate in raffles featuring themed gift baskets and special prizes.

As we gather together, we'll raise a glass to something important: ensuring our neighbors have access to nourishing food. All proceeds support the Pottstown Cluster's food pantries, community meals, delivery services, and food redistribution efforts throughout Greater Pottstown and Montgomery County.

Date: Thursday, April 16, 2026
Time: 5:00 PM – 8:00 PM
Location: Terra Pacem Vineyards ("Peaceful Land"), 160 S. Grims Mill Road, Boyertown, PA 19512
Tickets: Early Bird: $45 (through April 3) and Regular: $50
Includes:

- Wine or beer tastings
- Hors d'oeuvres
- Raffles and gift baskets
- Cash bar available for additional glasses of wine or beer.

Reserve your glass and support local food security here: pottstowncluster.org/toast2026

Food Pantry Behind the Scenes: From Procurement to the Table

MYTH: The Pottstown Cluster food pantry just hands out food.
TRUTH: It takes a whole lot of planning, people, and heart to make that happen!

Running our community food pantry is a full-scale operation. From sourcing and tracking donations, managing inventory, coordinating volunteers, packing customized food orders, operating online and kiosk ordering systems, redistributing food to other locations and community food programs, delivering food to home-bound neighbors, and helping families make nutritious choices.

It's not just shelves and boxes. It's logistics. Technology. Nutrition. Dignity. And a deep commitment to our Pottstown community. This work is complex. It is constant. It is powered by people who believe no one in our community should face hunger alone.

Today, we are pulling back the curtain and sharing an exclusive behind-the-scenes look at what really goes into getting food from procurement to the table. Here is your inside look at the precision, planning, teamwork, and coordination required to transform donations into dependable meals for our Pottstown area neighbors struggling with food insecurity.

It all begins with procurement and donations. Food arrives at our Outreach Center from generous donors, regional partners, retailers, and suppliers. Every pallet is received, inspected for quality and safety, sorted by category, weighed, logged, and entered into inventory systems. Nothing simply "comes in and goes out." Every item is accounted for so we can steward resources responsibly. From there, the real choreography begins.

Our team manages inventory daily by rotating stock, monitoring expiration dates, forecasting demand, and planning distribution schedules to reduce waste and stretch resources as far as possible. This is ongoing, detailed work that requires constant oversight. Behind every distribution day are hours of preparation, coordination, and problem-solving.

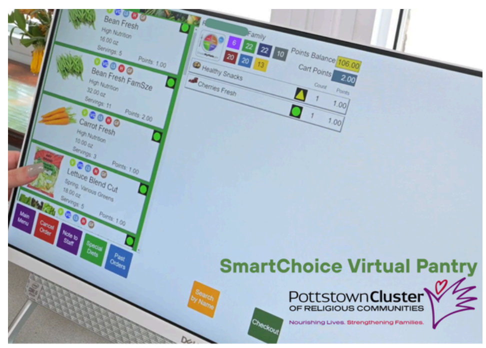
Our operation does not stop at our pantry doors. We are proud to help power Pottstown's Community Meals Program, which has been serving residents for over 50 years. Supplying food for meal sites and ensuring consistent supply so that every location can reliably welcome guests. These meals are made possible through collaboration with congregations and organizations across the Pottstown area. We work diligently behind the scenes to help keep those tables full. Everyone is welcome.

In addition, we serve as the largest food redistribution organization in Montgomery County, supplying food to localized food pantries throughout the county. Redistribution at this scale requires capacity, transportation coordination, partner communication, compliance standards, and logistical planning. By moving large quantities of food efficiently and equitably, we strengthen the entire hunger-relief network across Montgomery County.

We, in response to growing concerns about food insecurity and limited access to nutritious food, have improved access to healthy food by working with partners to develop additional satellite pantries in the greater Pottstown area. Establishing these access points requires planning to ensure families can access nutritious food closer to home.

At our Outreach Center location, one of the ways we serve individuals directly is through our open pantry Kiosk Ordering system in the Outreach Center lobby. Guests place orders in person, and behind the scenes our team reviews selections, checks inventory availability, and packs each order according to household size and nutritional balance.

We also operate Remote Online Shopping to remove barriers for families. This requires technology management, order monitoring, scheduling coordination, and organized pickup systems to ensure efficiency and accuracy.



Choice is **POWERFUL**

For neighbors who are house-bound or facing transportation challenges, we coordinate delivery routes, prepare specialized food boxes, and ensure timely drop-offs. This involves route planning, packaging standards, and consistent communication.

Powering all of this is our SmartChoice Virtual Pantry ordering system, aligned with ChooseMyPlate guidelines. This system is not only about choice. It requires inventory integration, point tracking, and nutritional planning. It allows us to promote balanced meals while responsibly managing thousands of food items with minimal waste.

Finally, and most importantly we welcome our guests. Whether in person, online, through community meal sites, satellite pantries, redistribution partners, or delivery, every interaction reflects careful preparation and a deep respect for dignity. In 2025 we distributed more than 594,812 pounds of food through our pantry, community meals, and by supplying smaller local food pantries. We also served 14,515 households through our Outreach Center food pantry.

This work is complex and it is constant. It is powered by people who believe no one in our community should face hunger alone. If you believe that too, we invite you to be part of our mission by supporting our work.

Make a gift here: Donate – Pottstown Cluster of Religious Communities

Thank you to our donors, volunteers, community partners, and supporters for sustaining our work. Not just occasionally, but every single day.

Become a Hunger Hero
Help Keep Our Shelves Stocked

Food Security

- Food Pantries
- Food Delivery Service
- Food Redistribution
- Summer Student Lunches
- Community Meals
- Holiday Meals

WHEN A COMMUNITY IS FED AND NOURISHED IT WILL
flourish and thrive!

DONATE FOOD OR HOST A DRIVE

Call 610-970-5995 to schedule. Accepted Mon–Thu, 9am–3pm at 57 N. Franklin St., Pottstown, PA. Please use the back door.

Most Needed Food Products

- Canned Oranges in Juice
- Canned Pineapples in Juice
- Individual Shelf Stable Milk
- Dry Milk
- Fruit Juice
- Jelly
- Pancake Syrup
- Broth
- Beef Stew
- Chili
- Pork n Beans
- Canned Ham
- Spam
- Crackers
- Ready to Eat Meals (Hormel)

Food Drive

SUPPORT OUR VIRTUAL FOOD DRIVE!

pottstowncluster.org/virtualfooddrive

Questions or help with the virtual food drive? Contact Communications@pottstowncluster.org

Donate

A DONATED DOLLAR DOES MORE!

pottstowncluster.org/donate

Every **$1** donated TODAY can buy **$17** of food and can help the Pottstown Cluster provide **5 meals** to families facing hunger in our community.

Pottstown Cluster OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES pottstowncluster.org

Did you know we serve over 450 families every month? Food insecurity is more than an empty plate. It's the difference between uncertainty and stability, stress and security, simply surviving and thriving. Right here in our Pottstown community, you have the power to change that by becoming a Hunger Hero today! Help keep our shelves stocked. Check out our most-needed items and make an immediate impact for local Pottstown area families.

Food Donation Drop-Off Location:
57 N. Franklin Street, Pottstown
Hours: Monday–Thursday
9 AM–3 PM

Every can, every box, every dollar makes an immediate and meaningful impact.

Learn more or donate goods:
pottstowncluster.org/donategoods
Prefer to give financially?
Donate online here:
pottstowncluster.org/donate

Business Leaders: Join Us in Building a Stronger Community

Local businesses play a vital role in building strong communities. The Pottstown Cluster invites businesses to join our Partners for Community Impact Program, supporting food security, housing stability, and essential resources for local families. When your business invests in our mission, you help ensure neighbors facing hardship have access to meals, safe housing support, and compassionate care.

Partnership Levels:
Community Champion: $10,000+
Neighborhood Partner: $5,000–$9,999
Helping Hand: $1,000–$4,999

Each partnership includes:

- Recognition on our website
- Social media acknowledgment
- Volunteer opportunities for employees
- Guided tours of our community food pantry

Community Supporter: gifts under $1,000. Every act of generosity matters. Your partnership demonstrates leadership and shows that your business stands for compassion, stability, and hope.

Learn more or become a Partner for Community Impact here: pottstowncluster.org/businessgiving

Or email development@pottstowncluster.org or donate by mail:
Pottstown Cluster of Religious Communities
57 N. Franklin Street
Pottstown, PA 19464
Attn: Business Giving Partnership Program

Together, we can build a stronger community — one gift, one meal, one neighbor at a time!

Community Shout-Out

The Pottstown Cluster of Religious Communities extends a heartfelt thank you to everyone who supported the community food drive on Saturday, March 7, 2026, at Grocery Outlet on State Street. Thanks to the generosity of residents, the drive collected 963 pounds of food and hygiene items along with $120 in monetary donations. These contributions will help keep local food pantries stocked and support neighbors in need throughout the Pottstown area.

We are especially grateful to Pottstown Mayor Stephanie Henrick for helping coordinate the event and to Grocery Outlet owners Dan and Kira Schwalenberg for their partnership and support. The store made donating easy by placing pallets of high-demand items outside for shoppers to quickly add to their carts, and by offering discounts on several products to make giving more affordable.

We also thank the many volunteers who helped throughout the day and the shoppers whose generosity made the drive a success. Your support continues to make a meaningful difference in our community. Thank you for helping care for our neighbors.

Volunteer Spotlight: Pottsgrove FLITE Program

We are proud to partner with Pottsgrove School District's FLITE Program.

FLITE stands for:
Falcons
Learning
Inclusive
Transition
Employment

Through hands-on volunteer experiences at our food pantry, students are building valuable job skills, gaining confidence, and making a meaningful difference in the community. A special shout-out to Julius, one of our amazing volunteers participating in the FLITE Work Experience Program.

Volunteer Program Announcement

We are grateful for the incredible outpouring of support from our community! We have recently received an overwhelming number of volunteer applications. We are truly humbled and deeply grateful for the outpouring of support, generosity, and willingness to help.

At this time, we are grateful to share that our volunteer team is fully staffed. While we are not currently adding new volunteers to the schedule, we would still love to hear from you. If you reach out, we will keep your information on file and contact you as opportunities become available. You are also welcome to check back in with us during the summer months, when additional needs may arise. Email volunteer@pottstowncluster.org.

Join the Mission

You can help ensure no one in our community faces hunger alone.

Current ways to get involved:

- Celebrate Women's History Month with a gift here: pottstowncluster.org/2026women
- Donate food: pottstowncluster.org/donategoods
- Attend our April fundraiser: pottstowncluster.org/toast2026
- Make a financial gift towards our greatest need online here: pottstowncluster.org/donate
- Learn more or become a Partner for Community Impact here: pottstowncluster.org/businessgiving

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