

# Windham Weekly

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## Hope Restoration Church Welcomes New Ice Box for Thanksgiving

By Michael Ryan

WINDHAM - It couldn't have happened at a worse time or a better time.

"Tale of Two Cities" author Charles Dickens would appreciate the uncanny succumbing of a vital refrigerator at the Windham Food Pantry, home-based in Hope Restoration Church.

The cooler conked out "right before the delivery of 100 turkeys designated for distribution to 100 local families," Food Pantry director Dianne Bunce says, but the story does not end there.

Saving the seasonal day, a new refrigerator was purchased, funded by the Windham Foundation, arriving the Monday before Thanksgiving.

The old ice box preserved vital victuals faithfully, lasting through many of the Food Pantry's 14 years of operation and enduring several repairs, Bunce said, noting the center is run by an all-volunteer staff.

Food Pantry general manager Tom Jakubowski said the new unit measures

precisely the same size as its predecessor, 30 inches deep by 6 feet high by 8 feet wide, equipped with 3 doors.

"It's pretty big," Jakubowski said. "We went through 120 turkeys and were able to provide 120 families with Thanksgiving meals in addition to their regular groceries," availed by 100 families every month.

Hope Restoration Church had to forego its yearly community holiday dinner, due to Covid-19 restrictions, but rallied to the call anyway.

"It was hard to give up the dinner but we've kept things rolling despite the pandemic. We haven't missed a beat," Jakubowski said.

Donations and grants help sustain the program, including the efforts of the Windham Foundation. "We're proud to serve our community," Foundation member Phyllis Parrish said. "We have a lot to be thankful for."

The Foundation has been busy elsewhere, as well. In the late spring,

they granted \$4,200 to the Hensonville Hose Company for needed fire and safety equipment.

Among the items secured were Physio-Control LIFEPAK CR plus AED for children and adults and helmet lights for interior fire-fighting and rescue.

And an "MSA Altair 4XR Gas Meter Detector for Rapid ID and Response" was added to the inventory. "We worked with Hensonville fire chief Tyrel Sherman to determine their needs and priorities," Parrish said.

"They had a gas monitoring system but it was on its last legs. We try to fund things for which there is no money," Parrish said.

Leaving no firefighter out, the Foundation also contributed \$10,000 to Windham Hose Company No. 1 to help purchase an industrial-class washing machine, used for intense cleaning of turnout gear.

"Turnout gear isn't something you can just throw into a regular washer anymore," Board of Fire Commissioners member Richard Hughes said, not-



Colder than the clergyman at Hope Restoration Church, a new "ice box" has been obtained by the Windham Food Pantry, funded by the Windham Foundation. On hand to welcome the refrigerator's timely pre-Thanksgiving arrival were (left to right) Hope Restoration Pastor Cliff Cool, manager of distribution Doug Graver and general manager Tom Jakubowski.

ing the machine can be used by Hensonville Hose too.

"After our volunteers have worked a rough fire, their gear needs a thorough washing, with special detergents. This has been a big emphasis by the State, wanting to improve firefighter safety," Hughes said.

"It used to be a sign of macho courage to show up at a fire with dirtied

turnout gear. Everyone is waking up to the fact we can't do that anymore," Hughes said, due to increased risk from carcinogens and other chemicals.

"The old days are gone. Basically anytime our volunteers go into the interior of a house, they are exposed to chemicals. All of these folks, from both of our departments, need to be protected," Hughes

said. "The Foundation reached out and we told them our needs," Windham Hose Company No. 1 fire chief Gary Cook said.

"We are very, very appreciative of the Foundation," Cook said, noting the fire district was falling short of the \$15,000 needed overall for the machinery and its installation.