

# AmpleHarvest.org<sup>(SM)</sup>

*"Sharing your garden bounty with Neighbors in Need"*

Note: You can view or download this online report at:  
[www.AmpleHarvest.org/downloads/FoodPantryLetter-Nov09.pdf](http://www.AmpleHarvest.org/downloads/FoodPantryLetter-Nov09.pdf)

## An open letter to AmpleHarvest.org food pantries\*

Dear Food Pantry Manager:

On October 16, World Food Day, the AmpleHarvest.org campaign celebrated the 150<sup>th</sup> day since its initial rollout. It also registered its 1,000<sup>th</sup> food pantry ("Rosies Place" in Boston) early that morning.

AmpleHarvest.org was created to enable millions of backyard gardeners across America to easily find a neighborhood food pantry eager for their extra produce. Our initial goal has been to invite as many food pantries as possible to register on AmpleHarvest.org, and thanks to the assistance of many food banks, faith organizations, social networking, countless media writers and bloggers and many others, more than 1,100 food pantries have now registered and more are signing up every day.

At the same time, we've been working hard to reach out to gardeners across America, encouraging them to reach into their backyards to help their neighborhood food pantry. We've been able to do this thanks to a generous grant from Google.com, support from the USDA, the National Gardening Association, Rotary International, VFW, and Master Gardeners across the country, and many others.

*\* We recognize that in different parts of the country, the term "food pantry" is also referred to as food bank, food cupboard, food shelf, food share and food closet. For the sake of simplicity, we use the term "food pantry" regardless of the local name commonly used.*



## Six month report card

Feedback from food pantries, gardeners, writers, bloggers (actually pretty much everyone) has been that AmpleHarvest.org is a great idea and was badly needed. People liked the design of the site, its ease of use, and its overall "friendly" look and feel. Those who read the **Frequently Asked Questions** (or FAQ) page as well as the Hunger write-up found it informative and helpful.

One question has come up a number of times... how much food has been donated so far.

The answer is "we don't know". AmpleHarvest.org does not have a formal structure for receiving information from gardeners or pantries about the volume of donated food. This was a deliberate decision based upon our hope that initially forgoing a reporting function would encourage more gardeners to donate, and more pantries to register. In short, it would help more fresh garden produce get to more pantry clients.

Some food pantries have informally reported that they received substantial donations of produce from local gardeners, some only modest amounts, and some have yet to receive any. There are several reasons for the uneven donations in 2009:

1. AmpleHarvest.org rolled out on May 18, 2009. Many gardeners did not learn about it until later in the season, and in some cases, had no produce left in their gardens to donate.
2. Many pantries did not learn about AmpleHarvest.org until relatively late in their local growing area and therefore registered after the local harvest had been largely completed.
3. Many gardeners in the East, yours truly included, had their tomato and potato crops destroyed by a blight (a fungus) literally over night. Many others simply suffered through an unusually bad growing season. These gardeners who would have been donating generously from their gardens found that there was little or nothing to harvest for themselves, much less for a pantry.

As mentioned in the AmpleHarvest.org FAQ, gardeners know that some years they are overwhelmed with garden crops while some years are very lean. Food pantries should expect that the donations will closely follow the success (or lack thereof) that the local gardeners experience.

In the next growing season (and in those to come in the future), many more gardeners will have learned about the AmpleHarvest.org campaign, and with that increased awareness will come a larger volume of garden bounty to neighborhood food pantries.

## More than just garden produce

While AmpleHarvest.org was originally conceived of as a tool for helping gardeners find a neighborhood food pantry for produce donations, some pantries started using the site to inform their local community about store bought items they are most in need of.

It's a great idea! AmpleHarvest.org makes it easy, and you can do it too.

Log into your AmpleHarvest.org page (*select the "Register a Pantry" button, enter your user name and password on the left side and then log in*). You can then update/change the information in the "Additional Information" box on the right. Enter as much information as you like, and change/update it as often as needed.

We will be starting to inform the public at large (i.e. not just gardeners) about AmpleHarvest.org in the upcoming months thereby increasing the likelihood that non-gardeners will also use the site to help your pantry and donate the store bought items you request.

AmpleHarvest.org

HOME CONTACT SITEMAP

Home About Us Find A Pantry Register A Pantry FAQs Hunger in America In The News Links Contact Us

Register/Update A Pantry

Existing Pantries Log In Here:

Username: HometownPantry

Password: \*\*\*\*\*

Forgot your password?

Log In

New Pantries Register Here:

Required Information

Username: HometownPantry

Password: \*\*\*\*\*

Confirm Password: \*\*\*\*\*

Pantry Name: HometownPantry

Contact Name: Sam Smith

Address: 123 Main St

City: Anytown

State: NJ Zip: 07480

Phone Number: 973-111-2345

Optional Information

Email Address: am@hometownpantry.org

Fax Number: 973-444-1234

Pantry Website: www.hometownpantry.org

Donation Days/Times: Mondays from 9 to noon

Additional Information: He need canned goods, baby food, and diapers. Thank you for your generous support.

Food for Thought

Optionally uploading a photo of your pantry can make it easier to find.

Images must be .jpg files up to 1000 X 1000 pixels

Please see the Pantry section of the [FAQ page](#) for valuable information

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After entering the required and optional food pantry information, please type in the above four characters (no spaces) then click the "Register" button.

If you experience any problem registering your pantry, please send your name and phone number to: [info@AmpleHarvest.org](mailto:info@AmpleHarvest.org) and a customer service representative will contact you promptly.

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## Your comments and thoughts

AmpleHarvest.org is only six months old. We're off to a great start, but we also know that there is always room for improvement in any endeavor. We'd like to hear from you.... what do you like about AmpleHarvest.org, what needs to be improved, and what new features/options you would like to see on the site.

We'd also like to get some idea of how much fresh local produce your pantry received in the past six months. Lastly, we'd like your thoughts on how we might be able to gather information on the deliveries you get in the future without significantly adding to your work load.

We are already working on enhancing AmpleHarvest.org. We currently have an iPhone app under development to help gardeners (and other donors) more easily locate your food pantry. We are taking a close look at enhancing AmpleHarvest.org with a forum for food pantries and gardeners to exchange ideas, as well as a possible nationwide listing of gleaning organizations to help gardeners donate produce that they themselves can't harvest, etc.

What ideas do you have?

Please send your comments to [info@AmpleHarvest.org](mailto:info@AmpleHarvest.org) or fax them to 888-243-9861.

### **Closing thoughts**

A remarkable team of very talented and dedicated people are working with AmpleHarvest.org to help it better reach its goal of diminishing hunger in America.

You can help too.

1. Please inform other food pantries in your area about AmpleHarvest.org and encourage them to register. Remind them that while they usually can't offer fresh produce to their clients, local gardeners growing vegetables, fruit and herbs (even indoors!) are usually eager to share their garden bounty. Also remind them that **AmpleHarvest.org is totally free**. A PowerPoint slide show exploring the story behind AmpleHarvest.org is available at [www.AmpleHarvest.org/downloads/TheStory.pps](http://www.AmpleHarvest.org/downloads/TheStory.pps)
2. Help us inform gardeners in your community about the opportunity to share their garden bounty. Please encourage your staff and clients (and friends across the country too) to visit [www.AmpleHarvest.org/InformingTheGardener.php](http://www.AmpleHarvest.org/InformingTheGardener.php) for more information.
3. Make sure that you have informed the local media about your participation in the AmpleHarvest.org campaign. A sample press release is available for your use at [www.AmpleHarvest.org/downloads/Pantry-Public-Announcement-Letter.doc](http://www.AmpleHarvest.org/downloads/Pantry-Public-Announcement-Letter.doc)

Lastly, please know that although the growing season in much of the country has come to a stop, we have not. We're working very hard to enable more gardeners to help more food pantries across the country the next year.

Sincerely,

Gary Oppenheimer

AmpleHarvest.org Founder

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