

This article is from the Des Moines Register

DMARC (Des Moines Area Religious Council) Executive Director Sarai Schnucker Rice said monetary donations are needed more than food contributions. DMARC can buy two to six times more food through wholesalers than can be purchased through retailers. “This is an unprecedented time and yet I’m confident that our community will rise to the need,” Rice said.

HOW TO DONATE

The Des Moines Area Religious Council (DMARC) network is accepting CASH donations, which can be donated at:

www.dmreligious.org or www.movethefood.org

OR, can be mailed to:

DMARC
3816 36th St, Suite 202
Des Moines, IA 50310

For additional information call: 515-277-6969

Families will receive fewer canned and boxed food items from area food pantries beginning next week, raising concerns about the impact hunger will have on people. The Des Moines Area Religious Council (DMARC) will decrease by two-fifths the amount of food provided in weekly food boxes to families. The boxes are handed out at local food pantries. A family of four had received 55 items in a box each month; beginning Monday there will be 33 items in the box.

Officials said contributions to the pantries have not kept pace with demand. Last year, 12 Des Moines-area pantries handed out food boxes to 9,216 families; that’s jumped by more than a third this year to 12,650. “This is not a seasonal need,” said Executive Director Sarai Schnucker Rice. “There are just as many people hungry in July.”

Last year, the 12 area food pantries assisted about 30,000 people. This year requests are up 7 percent and on pace to be the highest ever, officials said. Feeding families is the most fundamental assistance people can receive — if they are not getting the proper nutrition or are hungry, they are not healthy in other aspects of their lives, Rice said. Urbandale Food Pantry Director Eileen Boggess said she learned about the cutbacks during a meeting this week. “I think people are going to be upset,” Boggess said. “Hunger is an immediate issue. When people are hungry they’re not very pleasant.”

The Urbandale pantry has seen an 80 percent increase in use this year over last, Boggess said. “It’s going to be very tough. I’ve sensed an urgency from people who haven’t been there before.” The pantry gets about five new clients a day, Boggess said. In November, the Urbandale pantry handed out nearly 1,000 food bags. If the Urbandale pantry runs out of food during a week, it won’t be able to place emergency orders with DMARC, Boggess said. Instead, beans and rice will be handed out. Rice said pantries will always provide beans, rice and Meals from the Heartland. Families can get those as often as they need them. “People will not be starving, they just won’t be getting the same nutritional value,” Rice said.

Rice said donations come primarily from the 137-member congregations of DMARC, businesses, private donations and some grants. Rice said DMARC has had to use its reserve funds to meet the need. She would not disclose the amount. “We can’t continue to do that if we don’t want to lose the organization,” she said. Last year the monthly cost to feed families was \$20,000 — this year it is \$22,500.