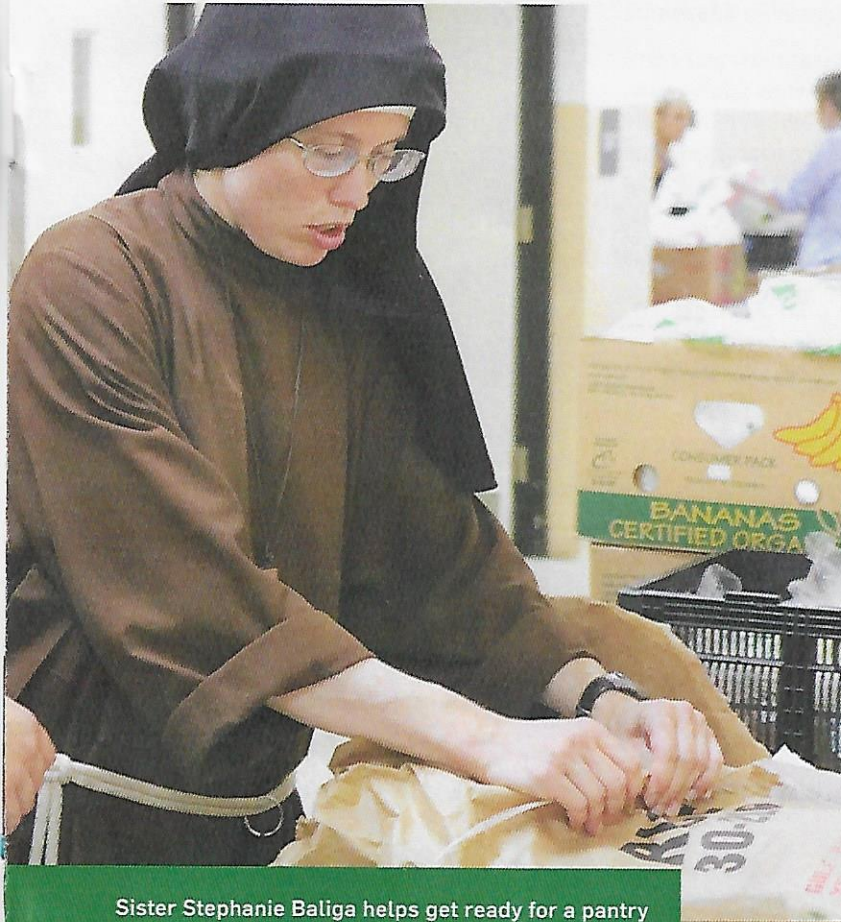


West Humboldt Park agency poised to make transition to client choice model



Sister Stephanie Baliga helps get ready for a pantry distribution at Our Lady of Angels.



A young nun draped in brown robes and a black habit lifts a megaphone to her mouth at Mission of Our Lady of Angels' food pantry on a recent Tuesday.

"Hello everyone! It's a great day at the pantry," she intones.

The voice belongs to Sister Stephanie Baliga, who manages the West Humboldt Park pantry – just one job in an eclectic list of duties which also includes being the convent's business manager, maintenance, teaching, "and a bunch of other random stuff."

Sister Stephanie has managed the pantry for five years. It serves more than 150 families per week and she has seen the need growing in her community.

"Many of the pantries in this area have closed, so there's just not a lot of access to fresh produce," she said.

To meet that growing need, the pantry is getting a renovation as part of a larger project to transform the current facility into a community outreach center. The update also coincides with the pantry's transition to full client choice.

"We are currently a partial-choice model," Sister Stephanie said. "But I know food is being wasted. Some of the clients don't like the more obscure produce in the bags. When there's choice, we'll be able to get the right produce to the right people."

Sister Stephanie expects the renovation – and the transition to client choice – to be done by the holidays.

"I can't even imagine how it's going to help. With full client choice, the pantry is going to be even better than it was."

The Food Depository continues to work with network pantries to transition them to the client choice model. If you have any questions, please contact your member operations coordinator.