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**SNAP changes affect our neighbors**

The SNAP program (food stamps or LINK) is in the news again. Although benefits were cut-off in November with the government shut down; thankfully the program was quickly restored once things opened again. Now, with the new year, there are new requirements making the news. The biggest change is that **those aged 18-64 with no dependents under the age of 14 will be required to work or volunteer (or both) a minimum of 80 hrs. per month to receive benefits.**

There are exemptions.

What will be the result of this requirement? It is hard to say at this point. Many of those receiving SNAP do have children under 14 and so would not need to meet the new requirement. And, as GCFD points out, many of those receiving SNAP are already working. They just aren't making enough and need extra help.

One thing is clear; it will take a while for everyone to understand the requirements and navigate the required paperwork to meet them. At Operation Blessing, we are providing information given by GCFD to offer guidance during this transition. And, as always, our pantry stands ready to stand in the gap and help those in need.



**A kind word can be powerful**

Think you have nothing to offer as a volunteer? About 10 years ago, Stacey came to Operation Blessing for help. She was recovering from a diabetic coma and losing her sight. She was also experiencing a lot of negativity from people around her and was in a "dark place". When she came in, one of our intake volunteers took time to talk to her, was friendly, and prayed for her. The volunteer treated her kindly and gave her encouragement, and that was just what she needed. Since that time, her health has improved immensely, and she has found many situations in which "the Lord makes a way where there is no way".

Even when she lost a job, she was always able to pay her bills. She likes to tell the story of how the Lord enabled her to get the very car she wanted, even when she was told it wasn't available.

When she saw an email that we needed volunteers, she decided to come and give back. Now, she is the one greeting people and sharing a kind word of encouragement.

**Need Prayer?**

Life can be full of difficulties and hard times. But we believe God wants us to pray and ask for His help. If you "are in the thick of it" and would like prayer, we are available. You can email a prayer request to us at [prayer@opblessing.org](mailto:prayer@opblessing.org). Or you can also leave a phone message at 708-597-6326. Please give your first name and let us know how we can pray for you.



**January Statistics**

Heads of Households	652
Individuals	2017
Prayed with	553
Professions of Faith	12