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Bon Secours Virginia helps food pantry to recover

A food pantry in East Ocean View, Va., that was shut down by a severe storm last year has recovered, renovated and reopened with the help of Bon Secours Virginia Health System and local charity groups and volunteers.

A Nor'easter storm caused by Hurricane Ida flooded East Ocean View in November and filled the Store House pantry with six inches of water, rendering the building unusable. The food pantry was serving about 400 people when the storm hit, and the need for food has since remained high in the impoverished area the pantry serves.

While the pantry was able to sustain some of its food outreach through its mobile kitchen, it took a group effort to restore the facility to its pre-storm level of service.

Bon Secours Virginia joined with New Life Christian Center and Operation Blessing International to coordinate a team of volunteers to clean up and restore the pantry. New Life's outreach center started the pantry 23 years ago with the help of Operation Blessing, an aid organization run by the Christian Broadcasting Network in Virginia Beach, Va.

Over the last several months, volunteers have spent hundreds of hours renovating and expanding the pantry, and adding a deck.

Bon Secours Virginia donated \$10,000 to the pantry and filled it with 40,000 pounds of food. Operation Blessing also helped to restock the pantry.

Bon Secours Virginia's assistance to the Store House is part of a Healthy Communities community-betterment project the system is undertaking in East Ocean View. Since the system identified the community two years ago as an area in need of help, Bon Secours Virginia has implemented an employment program and sponsored sports teams. It is developing a computer training program for residents, among other efforts.

Bon Secours Virginia also provided other aid in East Ocean View immediately after the storm, serving hot meals to the neighborhood and helping a clothing donation agency to relocate.



Sr. Katherine Anne Durney, CBS, a former board member of the Bon Secours system in Virginia, and Steve Zollos, executive director of Bon Secours' Health Communities program, help to stock the food pantry during a mid-February reopening celebration.

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