Meijer Simply Give Supports Increased Need in Rapidly Growing Community

In the span of about 35 years, the city of Westfield, Indiana, has grown 17 times over. According to a 2023 report, Westfield is the sixth-fastest growing city in the United States – and Open Doors of Washington Township has grown right alongside it.

Established in 1990, Open Doors aims to improve the quality of life for all Washington Township residents through food and clothing assistance, referral to community services, and more. With Westfield's rapid growth, its residents also need support.

"We added on to our newest location within the first three years of opening, and we haven't slowed down since," said Carrie Larrison, Vice President of Special Projects at Open Doors. "We are an all-volunteer-run organization, and we serve anyone who lives in Washington Township or who is referred to us by one of our member churches."

Larrison says volunteers used to drive to another city's Meijer to shop, but now they can shop at Westfield's own Meijer, located 10 minutes down the road. The location's opening in 2021 was timely, as it lined up with Open Doors' newest location.

"The Meijer here in town opened right around when we started a Weekend Food Bag project with our local schools," Larrison said. "This program provides food for the weekend to middle and elementary school students who normally eat free or reduced-cost breakfasts and lunches at school during the week. We use a large amount of Meijer Simply Give gift cards to buy kid-friendly foods for the program."

Items include mac and cheese, granola bars, snacks, oatmeal, and other items that can easily be bagged and taken home. The bags are handed out each Friday to ensure the students have enough food when they're not at school.

"Westfield has a great school system, so the population growth of families is no surprise," said Larrison. "This also means we have more families with children and multigenerational households coming to Open Doors for assistance."

Meijer Simply Give provides flexibility for Open Doors to buy a variety of food items to suit families' needs and preferences.

"We're so blessed to have a very caring community that donates a lot of food and hosts food drives, but we tend to get a lot of the same things. That's where we most utilize Meijer Simply Give," Larrison said. "We want to offer more than just canned green beans or corn as an option. We want visitors to be able to choose from different veggies and fruits."

Variety is what led to a shift in how Open Doors provides food for the holidays. They love to see families come in and pick up food, knowing they can go home and fix a traditional meal for their families.

"That is a big impact on the families and their dignity," said Larrison.

But traditional meals aren't the same for all families.

"We used to order bulk perishable goods for our holiday programs, but we've learned families celebrate holidays differently. Instead of providing everyone with the same perishable food, we started giving Food-Only Gift Cards from Meijer Simply Give instead," Larrion explained. "This gives families more flexibility to serve a meal that reflects the winter holiday they celebrate culturally."

Additional assets available online: Photos (1)

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