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Hearing the Cry of the Poor

“Provide!” prays Sarah Heckman.



Sarah Heckman, second from left, takes a break with her pantry volunteers Karen Johnson, Bill Walters, Mena and Nichola Carter. Photo by Ed Simmons Jr.

By Ed Simmons, Jr.

[Wednesday, February 20, 2013](#)

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One of these chilly mornings you might spot her cycling furiously on the George Washington bike path, flying along like a comet. If you wave, she'll dazzle you with a smile and wave back.

If she doesn't see you, though, you may hear her cry out, "Provide! Provide!"

Working off the panicky stress of managing Rising Hope's ever-busier food pantry for the poor, Sarah Heckman, 20-something, is calling out to God to help put food on the shelves.

Located on Russell Road, just off Route 1 between Woodlawn and Hybla Valley, Rising Hope is a Methodist mission church where the Rev. Keary Kincannon is pastor, first starting the mission 16 years ago out of the back of his station wagon offering food to the homeless. Heckman has been his "Bread & Honey" Food Pantry manager since last summer. Formerly she and her husband Craig were missionaries.

"The holiday was very successful in filling our shelves," she said. "But now that the holiday season is over we still need to keep receiving food. The giving needs to keep coming."

Supplies in the Rising Hope pantry have been running "Very low," she said, and that worries her. "The emotion is my motivation to advocate for them, to let people know that the community needs their support."

The worst part comes when supplies run out. "It kills me when a mother comes in for baby food; it kills me that we don't have any to give her."

Meanwhile the numbers in need continue to rise rapidly.

"Just in the first two weeks of February we've already had 48 new families. In the cold months people need to choose if they have heat or food." The pantry is currently helping about 350 families weekly.

"I almost feel frustrated that God would allow so many people to suffer, but I definitely see God's provision and know that he will provide," Heckman said.

Assuring herself, she expresses a high opinion of the charitable givers in the Mount Vernon area. "Seeing the way the community supported us during the holiday, I've been feeling very hopeful for 2013."

But then donations seriously dwindled and crisis set in. "I'm really hoping people will be giving on a consistent basis," she said.

Donations can be brought to Rising Hope Tuesday through Fridays between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. Marked by a large white cross, the mission is located at 8220 Russell Road; the zip is 22309.

As she copes with increasing numbers and diminished supplies, "I constantly have to remind myself that I'm not the one in charge here; these are God's people and I'm here to serve them and love them to the best of my ability."

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