

HELPING THE RIVER FOOD PANTRY

HELP OTHERS

The River Food Pantry - photo by Matt Kirk

THE GENEROSITY OF
DOOR CREEK CHURCH ATTENDEES
IN THE ADVENT CONSPIRACY
CAMPAIGN LAST DECEMBER
ALLOWED US TO DONATE \$12,000
TO THE RIVER FOOD PANTRY,
WHICH WILL BUY ENOUGH
FOOD TO FEED 600 FAMILIES
FOR FIVE WEEKS.



The River Food Pantry is an amazing faith-based organization that helps feed about 600 Dane County families each week. Here is a close look at how the River is impacting one of those families, in excerpts from *After the 99 Weeks: A Client Profile* by Jim Carrier.

Before the Great Recession, Mike Ries was earning \$70,000 and considered himself comfortably middle class. Today, like so many new clients at the River, Ries stands in line for meat and pasta so that he can feed his children.

"The hardest thing is to actually admit that you need some help," he said on a recent Tuesday after shopping at the pantry. "Coming in that first time was harder than one would think. I've always provided for my family. I remember waiting in line, and all the people standing in line were just like me." Mike Ries (pronounced Reese) is a college graduate, a father of four, with special skills in telephone company operations. When the company he was working for eliminated his division in 2009, Mike began drawing \$363 a week, the maximum unemployment

benefit, and looking for work. But he ran into the old cliche that he was "over qualified." Factories turned him down, telling him that he'd "get bored and leave."

After 99 weeks of unemployment checks, Mike faced another barrier—a two-year gap in his resume. "They don't even want to look at you. They assume something is wrong, even though there's not." While drawing unemployment, and his wife's military disability pay, the Ries family paid off their car debt, never used credit cards, and used Quicken software to watch their budget. They applied for food stamps and found the benefit only \$16 a month. "That's what started me looking. I said, there's got to be something out there."

"I can't even tell you how wonderful it was to find the River. I can tell you—because I looked for this interview (Feb. 7)—that from now until the end of February I've got about 80 bucks in the food budget. I can't tell you the number of meals I sit down to eat and think that all but one item in this meal was from the River. Without the River I don't know how we would put together meals to feed our kids."

Before he walked into the River, Mike Ries said, "I had this World War II bread-and-soup-line vision in my head. I got here, and it's been totally different than that. Everyone made me feel so welcome. I've never had anyone judge me for being here. You can tell that everyone cares—and that's as important as the food that you get. Some of the best times are when the lines are long and you get to wait in line and talk to folks." If you are interested in volunteering at The River, visit our website or contact Randy Olson at rolson@doorcreekchurch.org. ●

ANOTHER KIND OF HUNGRY

BY MARY SCHEY

I've always wanted to read through the Bible, or at least read it on a daily basis, but in truth, I've been overwhelmed at the mere thought of it. Where does one begin? The Eat This Book series is exactly what I've needed all these years. I knew I wanted and needed to read through the Bible, but every time I tried, it was overwhelming and discouraging. I know we're still in the early stages and there's a long way to go, but I feel so comforted to know that there will be all this structure, help and clarification along the way. I truly feel confident that I can do it this time. I so appreciate the recurring message that the goal is not to keep up with the reading plan, but to be in God's Word each day. ●

