



SHOW NOTES & TRANSCRIPT

EPISODE SHOW NOTES

Episode Title: Mini Pantries of San Mateo

Episode # & Date: Episode #38 – July 16, 2020

About this Episode: Judy showcases neighborhood Mini Pantries and uncovers the true heart of San Mateo.

Episode Web Page: <https://sanmateofocus.com/mini-pantries/>

EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

I'm Judy Gordon, and *this* is San Mateo Focus. As long-term residents who have raised six kids here, we thought it was high time someone shined a light on the good things in San Mateo to enrich the lives of those living here, and the businesses that serve them. Right now, we need your help to make San Mateo Focus even better by answering a few survey questions. Please visit our website at sanmateofocus.com and click the "Take Our Online Survey" button. Then, listen to this week's episode, and come back every Thursday for new episodes. And please be sure to click the 'subscribe' button on your favorite podcast app. Now, onto this week's episode.

Last week, I headed over to the B Street Laundromat with a bag of non-perishables, canned food, pasta, and rice to add to the pop-up food pantry that was started by local resident Carole Wilson. Almost every time I put the food on the shelves, someone in the laundromat will take the time to walk over and thank me. Frequently, I'll send Carole a text and ask her what is running low, so I can pick it up if I'm heading out to the grocery. On Monday morning this week, the B Street pantry was full, and there was another woman looking at the shelves. She knew that the Fremont Street pantry was low and was going to take some of the surplus food there. I told her I'd head over to the Quince Street pantry with my donation. The very thing that makes this easy for people to participate in—both those donating the food, and people who use the food to feed their families—is the simplicity of the organization. Founders of the five pantries here in San Mateo started their pantries because they heard about the other pantries. They posted on Nextdoor, and their neighborhood community got behind the idea and started thinking of the pantry as their own. They watch out for what's needed, and stock it without the need for a lot of communication between each other.

Carole introduced me to Damaris Avila who started the first small pantry in her front yard soon after she heard about the job losses that were happening as Covid started to spread in March. Damaris had come across a post on social media of a neighborhood library box that had been converted into a pantry for families in need. She then heard that the demand at the local food banks had increased exponentially. So, she thought that she could alleviate some of the responsibility of the local food banks by providing food to her neighbors. Damaris says It's about helping others in their hour of need. At some point we may all need that help. She says that her young family was impacted by the financial crisis in 2008, and she understands what that can do to people. Damaris doesn't think that the need for this type of assistance in a community will go away. Like the 'Little Free Libraries' that you see as you walk around neighborhoods in San Mateo, she hopes that they are here to stay. Job loss, sickness, family loss, and general difficulties in life are not exclusively a pandemic issue.



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The pantry led to other community ideas. On Mother's Day, Damaris wanted to create flower bouquets for anyone who wanted to give one to their mother. Whole Foods and Mollie Stones donated flowers, and she promoted the bouquets through Nextdoor, Downtown San Mateo, at Beresford Park, and a few other places. On Sunday morning of Mother's Day there was a line that went around the corner of people who took advantage of the flowers. For Father's Day she had a lunch for fathers and families which the other pantry owners promoted with flyers she provided them.

Damaris says she has met the most amazing neighbors when they come and donate. People come from all over San Mateo and from all walks of life. She met one neighbor who was picking up food from the pantry weekly and delivering it to three people that were homebound. She says her pantry could not have been successful without the community. It's amazing to see a small idea like putting a few items outside in a pantry taken over by the neighborhood. She likes to watch the flow of people dropping off and picking up food. Some people will package their products with care. One family printed out labels for their donations, so the two rolls of toilet paper inside the paper bag seemed special. The pantry has become something different for each person. For many people, things have slowed down in a lot of ways. Damaris says that there is an opportunity during this time that we might not get again to let children understand that there are people in need, and how easy it is to live in the space where you are able to help. Otherwise you can quickly fall into anxiety.

Carole Wilson wants to stress that the food at the pantry at the laundromat on B Street is going faster and faster, and they do share food between pantries. She said that she has received monetary donations from people who can't get to the pantry, and she will shop for the food. Carole agrees with Damaris that the need for food pantries will extend beyond the Covid crisis. The location of the five San Mateo Food pantries, are:

- 1844 Randall Road
- 113 South B Street Laundry (on the East side of B Street between 11th and 12th)
- 28th Avenue between Flores and Garfield (look for the house with the canopy out front)
- 7 South Fremont Street (please leave items on the porch in the box labeled 'donations')
- And 1218 Quince Street

A link to the website littlefreepantry.org is included on our episode page. The website gives all kinds of information about starting a pantry, and some guidelines to consider from experienced pantry founders around the country. Look for updates from the San Mateo pantry founders on Nextdoor.com. Wondering what type of food to bring to one of the pantries here in San Mateo? *Here's the Deal:* Damaris says dried goods go quickly: things like pasta and beans, as well as granola bars, canned tuna and chicken, and canned fruits. Toiletries also go quickly: toilet paper, hand-sanitizer, paper towels, soap, and diapers. Toothbrushes and toothpaste are appreciated.

Okay, that's all the time we have for this episode. Have a great week. Don't forget to subscribe to San Mateo Focus on your favorite Podcast app. As always, if you'd like more information about the topics in today's episode or any of our sponsors, visit sanmateofocus.com.



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HELPFUL LINKS:

[Instagram: Damaris U. Avila](#)

[Website: Nextdoor.com community](#)

[Website: Mini Pantry Movement](#)

[Article: "How one woman accidentally launched a global movement"](#)

[Website: Second Harvest Food Bank](#)

[Webpage: News article index about the Mini Pantry Movement](#)

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— end of episode information > podcast show notes below —

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PODCAST SHOW NOTES

Podcast Name: San Mateo Focus

Logo:



Description: Whether you're new to San Mateo, California, or a long time resident, the San Mateo Focus Podcast is the place to learn about local history, good eats, and things to do.

Website: <http://www.sanmateofocus.com>

Email: info@sanmateofocus.com

Host & Founder: Judy Gordon

Producer/Co-host: Peter Radsliff

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