

Open Door pantry opens arms to give neighbors food, faith

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FREEHOLD — The young mother had just lost her job and arrived at the Freehold Area Open Door Inc. yesterday to try to get food for her family.

She left with a bag of groceries.

For poor families dependent on public assistance or low-paying jobs for grocery money, the new food pantry at 2 E. Main St. may be the only way to put food on the table.

"You see them passing on the street and you really wouldn't know that they need help," said Sharon Moffitt, a volunteer from Freehold Township. "But there's still the hurt and the hunger and the lack of knowing where to go and how to get help."

The Open Door serves primarily as a food pantry, but it also provides clothing through St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Freehold, and refers people to local social service agencies.

The Open Door was reborn on

May 26 with a new location and a new board of trustees after the organization of the same name lost its South Street headquarters in 1986 and was forced to go out of business.

Organizers say the new Open Door has a broader support base. The organization is incorporated, with a board of trustees made up of representatives from local churches and synagogues.

"We're excited," said the Rev. Edwin Hann, pastor of the United Methodist Church in Freehold and the clergy adviser to the group. "It's still new, it's still growing. There's an exciting response from various groups — Jewish, Roman Catholic, Protestant.

"We're coming out of a faith perspective. We don't want to be ashamed of that," he said. "God has cared for us and we want to care for people to show God also cares for them."

Church leaders began meeting last fall to discuss the problems of the

poor and the possibility of reviving the Open Door.

The group wanted to find a location in Freehold and searched for months before choosing the East Main Street site, Hann said.

"Particularly in this county, as rents are higher and food costs are going up, it's a struggle for them (low-income people) to make ends meet," said Penny George of Freehold, vice president of the board of trustees.

Organizers said they plan to join the food bank run by the United Way of Monmouth County. They are also negotiating with local motels and coffee shops to provide emergency shelter and meals, Ms. George said.

And they hope to attract more volunteers so the group can expand its hours.

The Open Door is open from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday through Friday. Prospective volunteers or people in need of food or other services can call 780-1089 for more information.