

Hope Ministries of McKeesport takes over for Intersections Food Pantry



By [Shaylah Brown](#) | TribLive | Tuesday, Jan. 21, 2025 3:47 p.m.



Hope Ministries board members Julia Cubakovic, David Cubakovic, Jerry Kuhn, Judy Kunes, Judy Confer and Darlene Colvin, with two community members (back), on Jan. 14.



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Intersections Food Pantry and Soup Kitchen in McKeesport has closed its doors after serving the community since 1973. However, because of the interconnectedness of the McKeesport community, service to the population will not be interrupted.

The building at 115 7th St. in McKeesport is still a soup kitchen and food bank, now under the direction of Hope Ministries. It saw 80 people on its first day, Jan. 9.

“Intersections had been here for a long time in the community. We are starting out small, though. Intersections did Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday lunches, and right now we are just doing Tuesday lunch and Thursday dinner,” said Judy Kunes, board member of Hope Ministries.

The goal is to add a Wednesday meal when it becomes possible, Kunes said.

Initial offerings include a lunch on Tuesdays from 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. and a dinner on Thursdays, with Bible study from 3:30 p.m. to 4:15 p.m. followed by dinner from 4:15 p.m. to 5:15 p.m. They also offer a food bank once a month on the second Thursday and provide personal care support. The personal care program allows them to help with short-term needs, such as one-time utility or rent support.

“A lot of people were very upset about Intersections closing, but we are glad we could continue. However, it is ongoing donations that will have to sustain us,” Kunes said.

On Jan. 14, the crowd was much lighter, but attendance fluctuates daily. The people who were there are regulars and have formed a bond. Kunes came out immediately when she saw Phillip Brown.

“Phillip! We haven’t seen you in a while,” she said as the two embraced.

“There are really nice people here,” Brown, 63, said. “I usually do takeout, but it is nice to come and sit down.”

Hope Ministries provides limited delivery services, only if absolutely necessary and if a person cannot come to the building.

All the members of the Hope Ministries board are also volunteers.

Intersections was a partner of the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank. Hope Ministries will be too, which means they will have access to Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank’s food supply.

“They all know me here. I’ve been coming for the past four years. It’s really a blessing. So many people are homeless and hungry. I just like coming down here ... it’s more of a community,” said Troy Petroski, 62.

Hope Ministries previously operated as The 9th Street Community Kitchen, providing Thursday dinners at Lighthouse City Church on Shaw Avenue in McKeesport.

Kunes, who was involved with The 9th Street Community Kitchen, has been doing ministry in McKeesport for most of her life. She started cooking at what is now called the Pittsburgh Dream Center in McKeesport, then at the 9th Street Clinic until a gas explosion forced them to relocate. They later began cooking out of Lighthouse City Church on Shaw Avenue.

Kunes is also closely connected to Karen Supansic, the manager of Intersections Food Pantry. The two crossed paths frequently in their ministries. When Supansic decided they could no longer continue, the offer was made for Hope Ministries to take over the building and continue operations, according to Jerry Kuhn, chief operating officer of Hope Ministries.

“We spent a good deal of time praying about it and trying to figure out how we could do it, and that is where I got involved,” Kuhn said.

“The group previously doing the meals at Lighthouse did not have the extra time to take on the responsibilities of this job. I offered myself, I just recently retired, so my role now is to be the point person and coordinate everything,” said Kuhn. His wife, Julie Kuhn, also volunteers with the ministry as treasurer.

The biggest challenge is fundraising.

“We are acting on faith that we will find the donors and the people willing to support this ministry.”

Although not directly tied to a church, Hope Ministries is a faith-based initiative. Some volunteers from Intersections Food Pantry have agreed to stay on. Volunteer David Cubakovic, 65, recently retired and joined the ministry. His wife, Linda Cubakovic, originally ran a ministry called “Hope and a Hotdog,” where she would take a hot dog cart around McKeesport, giving out hot dogs and praying for people.

They had been praying for ways to reach more people, and like other volunteers, that is how they found Hope Ministries.

To reach Hope Ministries, call 412-678-3773