

# The Perry News

## Harvest for the Hungry will pick your fruit while you get a tax credit

With 67 percent of adult Iowans overweight or obese, fresh fruits and vegetables now nutritional necessities

By [Jim Caufield](#) -  
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If the apples from your trees all fall to the ground and feed only the worms, if your raspberries wither on the vine for daws to peck at, if your lettuce and tomatoes make salads only for the rabbits, then Harvest for the Hungry wants your unwanted fruits and vegetables.

A new program initiative of the Perry-area Food Pantry, Harvest for the Hungry is the outreach version of the home-grown idea behind this year's Opportunity Garden, the Food Pantry's vegetable garden behind Crossroads Church in Perry.

Harvest for the Hungry will come to your yard, with your permission, and take your unharvested fruit or garden produce to the pantry for free distribution to low-income families in northern Dallas County. Knights from the Woodward Academy will do the picking, and you will get an Iowa tax credit for any produce you donated to the Food Pantry.

"We want to encourage people with fruit trees or any vegetable produce to donate to us," said Karen Ventura, director of the New Opportunities Dallas County Family Development Center, which runs the Perry Food Pantry.

"We would have volunteers — probably boys from the Woodward Academy — help pick the fruit, and the donors could get what they want and give us the rest," Ventura said. "Donors could potentially get a credit, too, on their taxes."

As an incentive for donors, the state of Iowa has offered a [Farm to Food Donation Tax Credit](#) program since last year. The donor tax receipt form is available [here](#).

"Volunteers would only go out to get it if it is a lot of produce," Ventura said, "otherwise, we ask that donors still come and drop it off if it is only a little amount."

Gene Grell of Woodward, a longtime Food Pantry volunteer and veteran gardener, is leading the Harvest for the Hungry project.

"We're looking for anyone who has apples, pears, whatever it may be that just fall on the ground, and there are a ton of them around the Perry area," Grell said. "We will schedule an appointment, come out and pick them. All we ask is that people give us permission to come on their property, obviously, and second of all that if they've got any pets, that those pets are inside on the day that we would come."

Grell has been harvesting informally in this way for about three years, he said, collecting as much as 100 pounds of pears and 35 pounds of apples from the trees of people in his congregation or from neighbors' trees in Woodward.

"The pantry is always in need of fresh produce," Grell said. He noted the paradox of Iowa's obesity rate, which seems to imply overeating but more truly is a sign of ill-eating or malnutrition.

"We have a lot of overweight people in this state," he said, "but they've determined that a lot of this overweight problem is actually being caused by people being undernourished. What's happening is they're going out and buying cheap meals or inexpensive food that has tons of calories, but it has no nutritional value. So even though we have many people who are overweight — and most people's impression would be, 'Well, they're getting plenty to eat' —

well, actually they're not. They're not getting the nutrients they need. They're just getting something that fills them full of calories, and that's what puts the weight on."

Recent data show 67 percent of adult Iowans are either overweight or obese. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Iowa's 2013 adult obesity rate was 31.3 percent, up from 23.4 percent in 2004 and 12.2 percent in 1990. The portion of the population of non-pregnant adult Iowans who were overweight was 35.7 percent.

The latest Food Pantry program is just ramping up, and Grell said he has reached out to several local churches and charity groups for help in launching Harvest for the Hungry.

"I've met with the Perry Ministerial Association," he said, "but there's not a lot of churches included in that, so what we're doing now is Karen is getting a letter ready, and I have a PR statement that explains what it is, and that went out to the Ministerial Association churches. What we're hoping to do is either take that around or mail it around to each of those additional congregations in the area. You would hope that this would be an aim for a lot of congregations to get involved in. Feeding the less fortunate should be a Christian value, I would think, that they would all prize, but I don't want to go preaching there."

If you have garden produce or fruit you wish to donate, call New Opportunities at 515-465-5185 or Harvest for the Hungry Coordinator Gene Grell at 515-438-4804 to schedule a harvest appointment.

Volunteers are also welcome to join this and other New Opportunities projects. Fruit pickers are needed, and buckets to deliver the produce would also be welcome. For more information or to volunteer or make a donation, drop in to the New Opportunities office at 2814 First Ave. in Perry or call 515-465-5185.

<http://theperrynews.com/harvest-for-the-hungry-will-pick-your-fruit-while-you-get-a-tax-credit/>