

Food Fridays with the Swensens

For over 10 years, Hilma and Bob Swenson have been delivering produce, breads, desserts and other goods to Project PLASE's men's and women's facilities on North Avenue. Each Friday afternoon they pull up in a white van to drop off the donated or reduced sale items that they've collected at Safeway, 7-11 or the Food Lion in Cockeysville.

When asked about how they started this delivery schedule, Hilma explained that 20 some years ago her aunt had died, leaving behind an assortment of "little cans" or canned goods that nobody in the family could use. Through their connection with Ascension Evangelical Lutheran Church, she donated these goods to residents at Manna House. After seeing the need among this population, Hilma began noticing day-old goods at a local grocery store. As she would continue to do for many years afterwards, she struck a bargain with the manager to buy the whole cart for \$5, again, delivering the purchase to Manna House.

After her husband, Bob's, retirement, he too joined the Friday "Food Run," and since the day Hilma dropped off her aunt's old canned

goods, they have dedicated their Fridays to charitable food drop offs at numerous local organizations, including Project PLASE. Hilma and Bob have never missed a day except for the rare occasion that extremely icy conditions locked their van in the driveway, and staff members say they always show up with the same sunny dispositions. By taking otherwise thrown-out food and delivering it to organizations, communities and individuals in need, the Swensens have truly improved the lives of many Baltimore residents. Project PLASE would like to extend a special thank you to Hilma and Bob for their dedication and for the charitable services they have provided to our clients for all these years.

While the need for food and the gratitude for these deliveries certainly remain high, Hilma did mention that grocery stores are giving away less and less. If you know of other grocery stores or businesses in the area that may be willing to donate food or if you too feel inspired to take an afternoon to help with food delivery at PLASE, please contact us at volunteer@projectplase.org.

