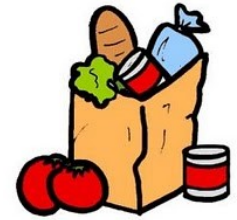# Food Pantry, LAX

A Client Story: Stephene Kabogoza

Stephene Kabogoza usually arrives well before Food Pantry, LAX starts distributing food. As our volunteers are setting up for the day, Stephene helps out by flattening cartons after the food has been removed from them and stacking them – meticulously neatly -- near the dumpster to be recycled.

It's a sign of how willing he says he is to work. But Stephene says he has not been able to find work since his last job, as a limousine drive, evaporated in May, leaving him homeless. He has been depending on Food Pantry, LAX to help get through what he hopes will be a temporary period of joblessness and homelessness.

"As long as I'm working, I'm okay,'' he says.

Stephene, who is 48, is from Uganda. He initially came to the United States more than 20 years ago as an employee of an import-export company, to buy shoes and other goods to ship back to his country. But he eventually ended up staying, first in New York and Massachusetts, then in California, where he had a friend.

Stephene Kabogoza in front of Food Pantry, LAX.

Stephene says he has held various jobs, such as personal care attendant. He was an Uber driver but his car broke down and he could not afford to repair it, so he became a limousine driver. When the limousine broke down earlier this year, the owner could not afford to replace it and Stephene was out of work. He says he has been looking ever since for jobs in delivery, cleaning, dishwashing, or construction without success.

Stephene sleeps in a park and walks to the food pantry. Sometimes he takes buses, if the driver lets him ride without paying. He has a 12-year-old daughter who lives with her mother in Georgia and whom he never sees.

Despite this arduous life, he is invariably clean and neatly dressed when he comes to the pantry. He says he sometimes goes to the beach to bathe in the ocean, and he washes his clothes using a can of water.

"I'm trying to keep up so that if any work comes up, I'm still presentable,'' he said.

While Food Pantry, LAX provides enough food to last a couple of days, Stephene says he stretches the supply to last all week. "It means a lot to me,'' he said, saying that before he found the pantry he had once gone three weeks with barely any food. He says he doesn't have the will or desire to ask strangers for money.

"I don't want to beg,'' he said. "I want to work." ♦

Article and photo by Andrew Pollack.

Food distribution at 355 E. Beach Avenue, Inglewood, CA 90302
Open for distribution on Tuesdays and Fridays from 10am-12pm
Contact us! (310) 677-5597 or via email at FoodPantryLAX@gmail.com
For more information visit FoodPantryLAX.org

We are very grateful to all who so generously donate to Food Pantry, LAX. Here are just a few of the donations we have received in the past few months.

Left: Art Johnson with a large box of toiletries he donated for our clients.

Above: Members of the Road 2 Damascus Church in Carson CA with their monthly donation.

Right: A grateful former client with a pallet of toys she donated for the children whose families come to Food Pantry, LAX each week.

Left: Jasmine Hui from Chinese Bible Church with their October donation to the Food Pantry.

There are a few simple ways that you too can support Food Pantry, LAX:

1. Participate in the annual Food Pantry, LAX Bag-It-Up Campaign to provide holiday meals to those who would otherwise go without.

2. Sign up to support Food Pantry, LAX on Amazon Smile (Smile.Amazon.com) and Amazon will donate 0.5% of every purchase made on Amazon Smile to Food Pantry, LAX. Already a Ralphs Club or Food 4 Less Club member? Make Food Pantry, LAX your Community Rewards beneficiary via Ralphs.com and Ralphs will donate a percentage of every purchase you make to Food Pantry, LAX.

3. Monetary donations to help us feed the hungry are always welcome! Donate via PayPal on our website FoodPantryLAx.org or send checks to our mailing address: Food Pantry, LAX, 8726 S. Sepulveda Blvd. Suite D PMB 741, Westchester, CA 90045. As a 501c3 organization all donations are 100% tax deductible.