



2025 Impact Report - Deerfield Free Store at Holy Cross (DFS)

In the spring, after much discussion, DFS pivoted to connect directly with local townships and agencies working with families that mirrored and overlapped our mission. We continue to support RCC volunteers working with newly settled households; however we added partnerships with Niles Township, West Deerfield Township, Refugee One, World Relief, Highwood Community Center, A Safe Place and Zion Woods. In each of those situations, the household is connected with DFS by the caseworker or RCC volunteer. Although our numbers have decreased to 6 weekly appointments, each household has been very grateful to fill in most of their specific household needs. Our wins are an appointment at a time.

Wednesday volunteers sort, test, replenish and reorganize donated items. Shoppers regularly share their appreciation and amazement at the organization of the store. It facilitates their ability to make the most of their appointment hour. The top 5 targeted requests usually include key furniture items, household goods and children's needs. Individual requests direct the appointment priorities across the 6 shopping rooms. Each household may select a new small appliance that is in inventory as well as all the other donated items.

Members of Holy Cross, Makom Solel Lakeside, BJBE, North Shore Unitarian Church and community friends host and support each appointment making suggestions based on the household dynamics. 2025 special shoutouts of thanks go to the following:

- DWF Claims (USA) LLC assembled purchased first aid kits and enhanced them with ointment and a thermometer. Fifty of our shoppers can now add this to the bathroom cabinet.
- Winnetka-Northfield Rotary Club offered once again new winter coats supported by their fundraising and partnering with Operation Warm. This offers choice for shoppers and fills in several high demand sizes.
- New pillows donated weekly by a dedicated donor.
- Bombas Socks, facilitated by GivenKind, ensures unisex options for each appointment for all family members.
- NSUC's Giving Tree which donated 50 new appliances.
- Winnetka-Northfield Rotary Club for a grant allowing us to purchase 30 new vacuums for families to select as their new appliance choice at their appointment.
- Unrestricted grants and collections from Christ Church Highland Park, Makom Solel Lakeside, NSUC Rummage, the Interfaith Thanksgiving Service and many other individuals to allow us to fill in inventory gaps as needed be it toiletries, small appliances or underwear.

We couldn't do this work without the ongoing generosity of Holy Cross for the DFS space and providing utilities as well as administrative and accounting support. Our rotating teams that host our 6 appointments each week, the Wednesday Volunteers that sort, clean and test the viability of donations and the leadership team that handles the rest and keeps DFS focused on our mission is the foundation for success. It is only with members of the community and groups that donate to the store that our volunteers can offer quality items to those shopping at DFS.

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