In the Driver’s Seat

Four years ago, when Rivka Goldstein became managing director of the Kosher Food Pantry, she didn’t know that driving a 14-foot truck was part of the job description.

But she hit the ground running and now expertly steers the KFP truck to the Greater Cleveland Food Bank on South Waterloo Road twice a week to shop for food and pick up the KFP order. “Our pantry distributes close to a million pounds of food yearly, so these runs are critical to putting food on the table for the 4,000 hungry men, women and children we feed monthly,” says the Deborah Drive resident.

Driving the KFP truck is just part of Rivka’s typical day. She organizes the 100 volunteers that keep the nonprofit running smoothly, applies for grants, processes donations, makes preparations for the monthly outdoor food produce distribution at Green Road Synagogue, and arranges for the packing of 1,300 bags of food that are delivered monthly to the homes of the elderly and shut-ins. She also ensures that everything is in place for the twice-weekly open pantry at the KFP’s compact South Euclid location, and fields calls from clients who have empty cabinets and need immediate help.

“Last week at 7:30 pm, a South Euclid resident called me because she had nothing to give her children for breakfast, lunch, or dinner the next day,” says Rivka. “I stopped at our Green Road pantry, packed a substantial box of groceries and delivered it within the hour.”

That call to action is not unusual for KFP staff or volunteers. “The whole reason for our organization’s existence is to help people in need, and be responsive to our fellow human beings,” says Rivka. “No one will ever go hungry under our watch. Our loyal volunteers, many of whom are skilled professionals from all walks of life, feel the same way or else they wouldn’t be devoting so many of their valuable hours to our organization.”

Even in a good economy, the number of food-insecure people continues to grow, and Rivka works to raise awareness of KFP services. “We provide food to everyone without regard to his or her religion or race,” she says. In recognition of the KFP’s Herculean efforts, which the Greater Cleveland Food Bank ranks as the second largest food distributor of its 750 agencies in Northeast Ohio, the organization will be awarded a new, state-of-the-art, outdoor refrigerated trailer donated by Wal-Mart.

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Rivka Goldstein gets ready to drive the KFP truck to the Greater Cleveland Food Bank to shop for food and pick up the KFP order.

“Our next goal is to have enough funding and good fortune to find a larger home for the KFP. We have outgrown our current space.”

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“The KFP is not the only thing on Rivka’s plate. A single mother of 10 and grandmother of 7, she is busy with her active family. She moved to Beachwood from New Jersey ten years ago because of her close relationship with Chabad’s Devorah Alevsky, the exceptional schools, and our warm, welcoming community.

“Beachwood is everything I hoped for and more,” says Rivka. “I have a son and daughter with special needs and the Beachwood schools have been with them every step of the way. Moving to this area was one of the best decisions I ever made. And having a meaningful job that lets me give back to my community in such a tangible, purposeful way is a real gift.”

To volunteer, donate or learn more about the KFP, visit www.kosherfb.org or contact the organization at info@kosherfb.org or 216.382.7202. KFP is located at 2004 South Green Road, in South Euclid.