

Tzu Chi Opens Vegetarian Food Pantry in New Jersey

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation

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The foundation's branch in New Jersey in the eastern United States has established a vegetarian food pantry to provide free supplies two days a week.

On September 11, the foundation opened the pantry in Cedar Grove, stocked with thousands of pounds of food. It is the first in the town to be run by a charity and the first to serve only vegetarian food. Mr. O'Toole, mayor of Cedar Grove, joined volunteers at a news conference to announce the new service. They have converted a large room into a food warehouse and will closely monitor its humidity and temperature.



"The pantry will operate from noon to four o'clock Friday and Saturday every week," said Chen Jihong, vice executive director of Tzu Chi USA. "It will only provide canned and dried food containing vegetarian products. This is very different from other pantries. This is a big step forward into the community for all the brothers and sisters. It will let people here learn more about us." It took the volunteers months of planning to set up the new facility; they had to buy and install the equipment and learn to use a new computer system to keep track of inventory and deliveries.

Mayor O'Toole toured the facility with representatives from the food bank. He had already seen them in action during the town's environmental activities: "The spirit you people have is really commendable. We have a town clean-up once a year and you come out in large groups to clean the town of Cedar Grove. I see you out there along Route 23 and stuff like that once a year." Now that Tzu Chi will play a more important role in the town by providing food to families in need, the mayor promised to help it raise more donations, so that more people will benefit. The chief of the town's fire brigade, named Mr Young, said that he wished to contribute fresh fruit and vegetables from his own farm to the pantry.