

A pet food pantry serving pet owners and their animals in Rogers Park and Uptown

AniMeals is a community outreach program of St. Paul's Church by-the-Lake of the Episcopal Diocese of Chicago.

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The Beginning

During the summer of 2001, an animal shelter in Chicago announced with little warning that it would no longer operate its pet food pantry site at St. Paul's Church By-The-Lake in Rogers Park.

Realizing that clients of the pantry might arrive at St. Paul's, the Church's Rector contacted a parishioner and one of her friends who had attended services at St. Paul's. Both had supported and volunteered for pet food pantries in the

past. Additionally, both participated in organizing St. Paul's annual Blessing of Pets and Animals in 1999 and 2000.

They purchased food and donated it to St. Paul's, where, in fact, on the third Saturday of that month, clients did arrive for food as they had done for well over a year in the past.

Eventually, the Rector and the two volunteers also learned that the shelter had discontinued its site at



Chicago Uptown Ministry. This site had always been the larger of the two and operated in cooperation with the Ministry's food pantry.

By August 2001, St. Paul's had received two unsolicited donations to support the program. With these two gifts, AniMeals, the pet food pantry operated by St. Paul's Church by-the-Lake, was officially born.

Making a Difference

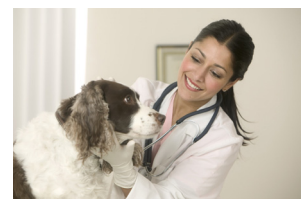
Since its inception, volunteers for AniMeals have faithfully fulfilled their commitment on behalf of St. Paul's parish to make sure seniors and low-income pet-owners who seek the services of AniMeals are treated with dignity and compassion and that they do not have to choose between feeding themselves and feeding their pets.

Members of the parish and friends offer their support to the pet food pantry by

making monetary gifts, purchasing food, and attending small parish-based fundraising activities at the Church. Additionally, the manager of a pet store donates food and litter to AniMeals.

Each Christmas, clients' pets receive special treats and toys to celebrate the holiday season. Clients also receive something for themselves, from holiday candies to tote bags and calendars – all provided by volunteers and donors.

Additionally, AniMeals' clients have received free neutering and spaying of their pets by the PAWS Chicago Lurie Family Spay/Neuter Clinic and by the Anti-Cruelty Society.





"There is little that separates humans from other sentient beings - we all feel joy, we all deeply crave to be alive and live freely, and we all share this planet together."

- Gandhi

How does AniMeals work?

AniMeals operates at two locations:

- St. Paul's Church by-the-Lake in Rogers Park on the third Saturday of each month 12:00 – 1:00pm.
- Chicago Uptown Ministry in Uptown on the third Wednesday of each month, 9:00 – 10:30am.

Arrangements to deliver food to clients' homes

have been made under special circumstances.

When a client has qualified for AniMeals, she can receive each month:

- an average of 3 pounds of dry food and 2 cans of wet food per cat;
- a month's supply of dry food according to recommended feeding guidelines and 2 cans of

wet food per dog; and

- a month's supply of food for fish, birds, and exotic pets according to feeding recommendations.
- And, if supplies allow, dry food for those caring for feral cat colonies.

Food is provided for up to four pets, but exceptions have been made for additional pets.

How do clients qualify for AniMeals?

Clients at St. Paul's are asked to provide proof of limited income, which may include, but is not limited to, Social Security Income, disability income, or unemployment.

Clients at Chicago Uptown Ministry automatically qualify for AniMeals if they qualify for the Ministry's food pantry.

All clients must agree to have their pets neutered or

spayed if the opportunity to do so is available to them at no cost.

Volunteers for AniMeals understand that the same logistical barriers that prevent pet owners from affording food for their pets – insufficient resources, lack of transportation, and limited life management skills – are also the barriers that prevent them from seeking neuter/spay services.

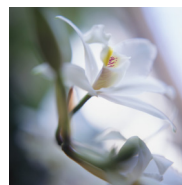
Therefore, arrangements have been made to provide neuter/spay services free of charge, along with transportation, in cooperation the Anti-Cruelty Society and PAWS Chicago.



A close community of compassion

In 2004, only days after volunteering for the pantry at Chicago Uptown Ministry and only days before Christmas, Joyce, who initially was a client at St. Paul's and became a faithful volunteer, died in her sleep at home. The loss

of Joyce was felt deeply by all who had come to know her.



A memorial service for Joyce was held at the Ministry. Jane, one of many clients who attended the service, said the animals that passed before Joyce had a new mom looking out for them. Peace be with them all.