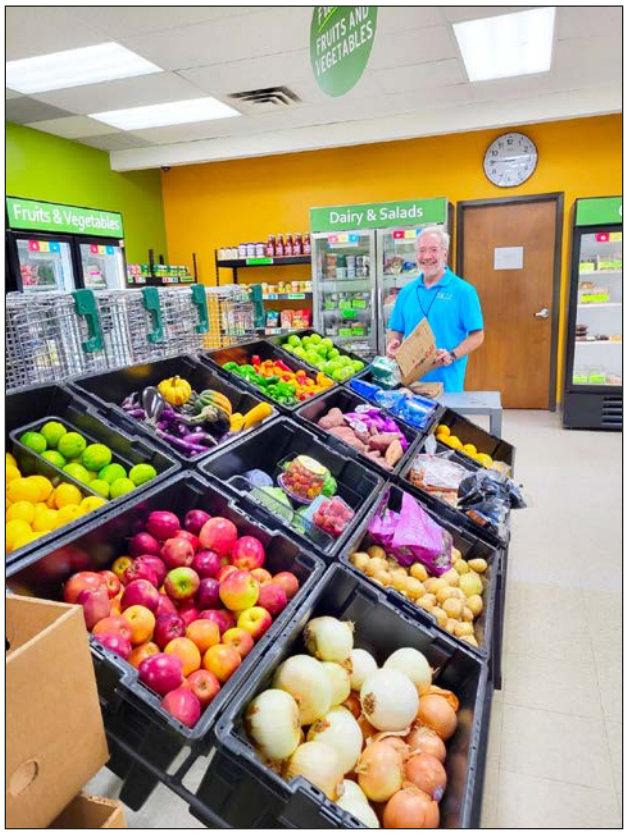
PROP unveils remodeled SuperShelf Food Mart at Sept. 25 open house

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(SUBMITTED PHOTOS)

LEFT: A PROP volunteer restocks the produce at the SuperShelf Food Mart. **RIGHT**: PROP volunteers labeling grocery items at the SuperShelf Food Mart.

People Reaching out to People (PROP) Food Shelf is bringing fresh produce to families at its newly remodeled SuperShelf Food Mart.

PROP Food Shelf is hosting an open house to showcase the newly remodeled SuperShelf Food Mart from 4-6 p.m. on Thursday, Sept. 25 at 14700 Martin Drive, Eden Prairie.

The open house will be the first large-scale event hosted at its facility since it first opened to the public in 2009. Tours of the venue, including the SuperShelf Food Mart, will be available to guests who will have the opportunity to learn more about how to help PROP fulfill its mission.

The University of Minnesota Extension program is a main contributor to PROP's Food Mart, regularly appearing on-site to help assemble the mart and prepare for its grand opening. Together, they designed the mart's layout; obtained new equipment, like its three-door meat freezer; updated the mart's signage; and created categorization standards for the food.

Prima Sisinni, PROP's director of development and communications, explained that the mart was intentionally designed to provide clients with a dignified shopping experience through freedom of selection.

"What makes it a Super Shelf is that we have refrigerators and freezers that are fully stocked," Sisinni said. "So clients get to self-select their meats and their dairy products as well as frozen and ready-to-go refrigerated items."

The layout of the mart is designed like a standard grocery store, including freezer and refrigerator aisles, a produce section, a non-perishable section and more.

At the open house, guests also have the opportunity to discover PROP's wrap-around services. These services include everything from short-term financial assistance to mental health counseling and career counseling. PROP also offers additional food programs such as emergency boxes, curbside services and food delivery for clients with mobility challenges.

"We prioritize our clients and we want to make sure that we have access to anything that is going to help them on that pathway towards stability and self-sufficiency," Sisinni said. "We found that these additional wrap-around services are extremely important."

PROP partners with Relate Counseling to provide clients with free mental health counseling services. A licensed therapist is on-site two times a week, hosting 45- to 60-minute counseling sessions. Virtual and phone call sessions are also available for those who can't attend in-person meetings.

PROP's employment counselor can assist clients with career-related assistance. They offer one-on-one counseling sessions, resume reviews and job searching assistance.

Over 1,200 families and 5,000 neighbors in need are supported in some capacity by PROP's services. The open house is also an opportunity to highlight the outstanding work that over 160 volunteers do to fulfill the organization's mission of compassionately providing neighbors in need with food and financial assistance and to provide support toward self-sufficiency.

Sisinni explained that volunteers complete a variety of tasks on a regular basis to ensure the food shelf is running smoothly. Some are drivers who wake up at 7 a.m. to go pick up food from the organization's grocery store partners. Other volunteers weigh, sort and stock food onto shelves in the mart. There are also volunteers who take on resource assistant roles and are responsible for scheduling appointments for clients and explaining the various services available to them through PROP.

For those interested in becoming involved in PROP's work, Sisinni recommends hosting a food drive to collect non-perishable items for PROP, purchasing basic hygiene products for donation or donating financially if possible.

The UMN Extension program will return to PROP's facility in October to certify the mart as a Super Shelf.

Visit propfood.org to learn more about PROP Food Shelf and ways to fulfill its mission.



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