

Open Arms Mission and State Bank of the Lakes offer financial counseling

Open Arms Mission and State Bank of the Lakes have joined together to offer a free budgeting program to help lower-income families.

OAM Food Pantry director Rev. Scott Keenan said the program, initiated by bank vice president Bob Kaiser, will help individuals and families clean up past debts and design and implement a monthly budget.

“It is a very basic meat and potatoes program to help ensure financial stability and peace of mind,” said Rev. Keenan.

The program was the idea of Kaiser, vice president of compliance for the bank, who acted on a request in a recent OAM newsletter asking for help in starting a credit counseling program.

“After I read that I contacted the mission and we got the ball rolling,” said Kaiser, who said the families participating in the new program so far are making great progress.

Counseling is being done at two of five State Bank of the Lakes facilities, in Antioch and Lindenhurst. “I would like to potentially see this work done with other food pantries and bring in our other branches in Lake Villa, Grayslake and Spring Grove,” said Kaiser.

“Since we started this program three months ago we have experienced some phenomenal success with participants,” Rev. Keenan said. “Many of the problems that we encountered were easily solved.”

Participants are required to meet weekly for as long as needed with two financial representatives from the bank and a representative from OAM, said Rev. Keenan. “They have to be honest and up front with their financial information and be willing to live within a budget.”

To enroll in the program contact the OAM office, 847-395-0309 and ask for Rev. Keenan, who will do a short phone or in-person interview to outline the guidelines of the program.