

PBMR and the pandemic

I think it is safe to say that everyone here in Illinois is struggling to keep their spirits up during this pandemic crisis. The isolation brought on by the stay at home orders of the governor can become depressing.

Now, imagine that you are trying to cope with all of the above while also living in a neighborhood that is devoid of many of the services we take for granted like grocery stores, restaurants and walking paths. Imagine that staying at home means you are cramped in a small apartment with several other people. Imagine you are laid off from your job and the rent is due. This is a reality for many families in the Back of the Yards where PBMR operates.

Like most businesses and non-profits, PBMR has had to reinvent itself in order to minister to the people they serve. In an effort to keep their staff safe, they like others now hold virtual meetings via Zoom. But this can become a challenge in an area where technology is limited. Recently they were able to hold their monthly mothers circle meeting via Zoom. It took quite a bit of doing and some coaching but 20 mothers joined in.

The high unemployment in the area has left many families in need. So PBMR is asking for donations of food and supplies to help these people. They have also enlisted the youth in the neighborhood to help deliver the food and supplies (sometimes on a daily basis) all while maintaining a safe social distance. The youth, accompanied by an adult mentor, bring the food to the door, ring the bell, and retreat to the sidewalk. Then move on to the next house.

Maintaining contact with the people is a key aspect of these times. Sister Donna regularly calls over 70 people just to let them know they have not been forgotten. Father Dave still goes to the Juvenile Detention Center every day to talk to the young men incarcerated there. Since they can't have visitors, he is their only contact with the outside world.

There is hope. Soon the PBMR garden will be planted and fresh produce will be available to distribute throughout the neighborhood.

If you would like to donate money, food or supplies to PBMR visit their website (pbmr.org) or Facebook page.