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## **THE INN UNVEILS ITS FIRST EVER GUEST CHOICE FOOD PANTRY SERVICE AT RIBBON CUTTING CEREMONY**

Hempstead, NY (March 6, 2012) – The INN (Interfaith Nutrition Network) serves over 400,000 meals a year to many of the approximately 10 percent of Long Islanders who utilize food pantries and soup kitchens (according to the *Hunger in America 2010* research study). The INN held a ribbon cutting ceremony to celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the Mary Brennan INN soup kitchen and to unveil a new guest choice initiative for the Mary Brennan INN food pantry. The pantry will open for guest shopping on March 9. Supported by a \$100,000 grant from the Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock, the new initiative will allow guests to select their own three-day supply of groceries from food arranged on shelves according to food group.

"We always had the desire and the space for a guest choice food pantry, but we never had the funds," explained Jean Kelly, Executive Director at The INN. "There is dignity in respecting someone's food choices and giving someone the opportunity to select what they want."



**Pictured left to right: John E. Imhof, PhD, Commissioner Nassau County DSS; Barbara Grossmark, President, Unitarian Universalist Congregation; Dorothy Goosby, Hempstead Town Councilwoman; Jean Kelly, Executive Director, The INN; Mayor Wayne Hall, Village of Hempstead Mayor.**

The ceremony was held on Sunday, March 5, 2012, from 1:00-3:00 PM at the Mary Brennan INN, located at 100 Madison Avenue in Hempstead. The ceremony celebrated The INN's receipt of the large grant and the long-time work of staff and volunteers from throughout The INN's 29-year history. On display was a mandala expressing seven different artists' visions of light and love.

About 400-500 guests come to the Mary Brennan INN each weekday. With the soup kitchen and pantry in one facility, guests will now be able to eat a nutritious meal and select food and clothing for themselves and their families. Food waste will be reduced as guests make their own food choices according to availability of working cooking appliances at home, cultural differences and personal preference. For guests in a hurry, the Mary Brennan INN will still offer bagged food supplies. The INN's staff also provides referrals for social services and WIC.

### **The INN**

The INN (Interfaith Nutrition Network) is a dynamic, not-for-profit, volunteer-based organization working to resolve Long Island's hunger and homelessness issues by providing food, shelter, long-term housing, and supportive services in a dignified and respectful manner to families and individuals seeking assistance. A dedicated staff, committed volunteers, and broad-based community support help The INN to deliver its services through 19 soup kitchens, three homeless shelters, and a Long Term Housing Program consisting of 23 housing units for families and housing for up to seven veterans. As one of Long Island's largest private social service agencies, The INN is ranked among the most cost-effective charities in the United States. For more information on The INN please visit [www.the-inn.org](http://www.the-inn.org) or call (516) 486-8506.

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