

# Indiana Couple Delivers the Goods

by Stacey Shannon



Bill and Carrol Hirons in the food pantry

Just over 16 years ago, Bill Hirons agreed to help the Presbyterian women's group at his church with its collections for the Salvation Army Food Pantry in Muncie, Ind. When the group leader was unable to continue working, Bill agreed to take over.

For the past 16 years, Bill and his wife of 63 years, Carrol, have been working in the food pantry. Bill, 84, and Carrol, 85, spend about 45 minutes shopping each day to keep the pantry stocked. They deliver the groceries, unload them, stock shelves, and keep track of inventory.

Every six weeks, the couple works in the pantry when their church is in charge. But it's not uncommon to find

them helping at other times as well.

"We do whatever is needed," Carrol says. "We don't have a job description, so to speak."

The Hirons make sure the pantry has paper goods and other items clients cannot purchase with food stamps, such as toilet paper, toothpaste, soap, and shampoo. Inspired by the Hirons, their church has gotten heavily involved in the pantry.

## A '50<sup>th</sup>' present

For the couple's 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, the church started the Bill and Carrol Hirons Salvation Army Pantry Fund to help with operations. About half the time, the Hirons turn in grocery bills to

their church, and the other half, to The Salvation Army. When the Army ran short of funds last fall, the Hirons' church footed the entire bill.

"[The Salvation Army] just couldn't buy any more," Bill says. "I told the caseworker, 'We'll do what we can, keeping the shelves full.'"

Becky Norris, the social-service coordinator for the Salvation Army Muncie Division, said the Hirons' dedication to stocking the food pantry is a blessing. In 2006, for example, the pantry served 30 percent more clients than it served in 2005. In November alone, the pantry handled 370 cases, representing 972 people.

## Big hearts

"They have the biggest heart of any couple," Norris says. "They have taken on a burden that they've kept up. A lot of people who would take on the calling [would] get tired of it, and they have not."

Bill insists on loading and unloading items himself. He will seldom accept help from others; he feels it's his job.

The Hirons plan to continue working in the pantry

as long as they are able. To stay in shape, they do water aerobics twice a week and visit a gym three times a week. Both receive blessings from working with the people they meet. Bill recalls being touched by a woman who came to the pantry because she is raising seven grandchildren while their mothers are in jail. Carrol remembers one woman hugging her in gratitude.

"It's not a job to us because we get so much love," Carrol says. "You just want to do everything you can."

When they aren't working for the pantry, the Hirons are involved with their church, deliver food for Meals on Wheels, and spend time with their two sons, seven grandchildren, and their great-granddaughter.

They have passed on their giving spirits. One granddaughter volunteers at a children's hospital and two grandsons have been Big Brothers.

The Hirons' hearts ache with wanting to do more.

"It makes you grateful for what you have," Carrol said.

Bill is quick to add: "The Lord's been generous to us."