

For Immediate Release:

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Taylorville, Illinois: As a community bank, Peoples Bank & Trust recognizes the value of volunteerism in our communities. To recognize, commend and promote volunteerism, Peoples Bank & Trust has established a program to recognize outstanding community volunteers who personally exhibit outstanding volunteerism and promote the improvement of our communities.

Karen Wilson has been chosen as our Volunteer of the Quarter for her work as the director of the Blue Mound food pantry. The food pantry, which serves Blue Mound, Boody, Stonington, and Macon, is currently located in the basement of the United Methodist Church of Blue Mound. They will be moving to a new location in the former intermediate school building at 100 S. Lincoln in Blue Mound beginning March 12, 2016. The outstanding feature of this location is that there are no stairs. At present they are preparing the new location by repainting all the walls and setting up shelving, tables, and storage areas. A walk-in freezer was donated to them and they are looking for a walk-in refrigerator unit. They will begin moving the food on Saturday, March 5th in the late morning.

The Blue Mound Food Pantry is open every Saturday from 8:00 to 10:10 am and serves an average of 60 families each week. Less than 40% of these families are getting government assistance (SNAP). We average about 18 volunteers each Saturday to help set up and distribute food and to help carry boxes of food out to vehicles. Eight of these volunteers consistently come every week and make Karen's job much easier. An average of 20 items are offered each week and these items change weekly.

As director, Karen is responsible for ordering or purchasing all food items from the Central Illinois Food bank or from area stores. She supervises the monthly delivery of food from the Central Illinois Food Bank and completes all the required paperwork in order to receive USDA commodities. She decides which items will be distributed each week and supervises the distribution of these items. She checks refrigerators and freezers to make sure food is safe. She often donates items that are picked up on sale and items she grows in her garden. She is available to receive donated food items from groups/ individuals. Her other duties include sending a monthly newsletter to board members and other interested parties informing them of ongoing projects, food items in short supply, and volunteer information and prepares quarterly reports to the Interchurch Council that oversees the food pantry. Once she held a bake sale, which included dozens of jars of her homemade jam, as a fundraiser. They have no janitor, so that is one of her jobs too. Karen said she spends, on average, at least 20 hours each week just on food pantry business. This varies due to seasonal changes, holidays, summer produce, etc.

Karen is a retired teacher, having spent 36 years teaching in special education classrooms. She still does some substitute teaching. She is married to Bruce Wilson and they have 2 grown

children – a daughter, Caitlin and a son, Garrett and his wife, Tori. She has lived in the country south of Stonington for 30 years. Karen has volunteered at the pantry in some capacity weekly for at least 8 of those years and has been the director for the last 3 years. She said, “There is no compensation for working at the pantry except the satisfaction that I know I am helping people in need.”

In honor of Karen’s volunteer services, Peoples Bank & Trust made a donation to the Interchurch Council of Blue Mound to benefit the Blue Mound Food Pantry on Karen’s behalf. Her name has been placed on a plaque displayed in the bank's lobby.

Peoples Bank & Trust is an independent Community Bank with ten offices located in Pana, Taylorville, Altamont, Charleston, Tower Hill, Springfield, Morrisonville, Palmyra, Waverly and White Hall. Peoples is a full service bank offering outstanding customer service to consumers, small business, and farmers in Central Illinois. People First Bancshares, Inc., with corporate offices in Pana, Illinois, is the holding company for Peoples Bank & Trust.