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—For section.....Voices/Letters from readers  
—Format.....LETTERS - Opinions - Letters to the Editor  
—Dateline.....Athens  
—Article Number:.....42719

**Notes from editor (not for publication):**

HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

Athens couple models how to care for neighbors

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TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

Many initiatives, small and large, individual and collective, have ramped up across the state and the country to combat the sudden hunger crisis caused by the loss of SNAP benefits at the start of November.

Here in Athens, Krista Gay and her husband, Christian Rogerson, started their own Free Food Pantry at the bottom of their driveway. Athens doesn't have a food pantry, and Krista knew that many of her neighbors who are struggling with food

12 insecurity would also have a difficult time getting to the food  
13 pantries in neighboring towns.

14         Having seen all the news about food benefits being cut  
15 off due to the government shutdown, and being a progressive  
16 Christian, Krista searched for a way that she could care for  
17 neighbors who were struggling. Learning about a simple method  
18 using totes gave them a plan they could immediately put into  
19 action.

20         Incorporating an ethos of “Take what you need, leave  
21 what you can,” the Free Food Pantry offers food and dignity to  
22 those making use of the pantry.

23         Krista shared their efforts on social media, creating a  
24 TikTok about their #littlefreepantry adventures, with lots of great  
25 tips on managing and restocking their pantry. Her video went  
26 viral, gaining over 4 million views and bringing national media  
27 attention from *Newsweek*, NBC, and *People* magazine.

28         Krista’s Free Food Pantry initiative has helped to inspire  
29 others across the country to start their own little food pantry.  
30 Neighbors also want to know they can contribute and expand the  
31 pantry.

32         Our town has now approved relocating it by the town  
33 garage, and Krista and Christian are working on a more durable  
34 design as winter approaches.

35         While the 3SquareVT/SNAP benefits have resumed for  
36 now, harmful cuts and changes from H.R. 1, signed into law on  
37 July 4, are already impacting our neighbors, meaning many  
38 people in our town, in our state, and from across the country  
39 have already lost or seen significant cuts to their food benefits.

40         Bravo to Krista for stepping up and showing how we can  
41 all lend a hand to care for our neighbors.

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BIO/COATTAIL:

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*LAST ISSUE IN WHICH THIS FILE CAN BE RUN:*

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LINKS:

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VIDEO:

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LOGLINE (SOCIAL MEDIA):

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