

# 2025 Grow Clinton

## Value Spotlight Community Impact Award

Presented to: Information, Referral, and Assistance Services



Grow Clinton is proud to announce Information, Referral, and Assistance Services (IRAS) as the 2025 VALUE Spotlight Community Impact Award recipient.

Founded in 1979 through a council of social service organizations, IRAS began as a referral agency and quickly became a cornerstone of Clinton, Iowa's social support system. In 1982 the agency was formally registered as a nonprofit and renamed Pantries United.

Under this new identity, Pantries United coordinated six church-run food pantries, offering client referrals and overseeing distribution to prevent duplication of services. In addition to administrative oversight, they collected statistical data and provided financial assistance to ensure each pantry's sustainability.

Pantries United evolved into Information, Referral, and Assistance Services (IRAS) as its mission grew. In 2021, IRAS merged with the Associate Benevolent Society, a charitable agency with a 130-year history of distributing food and essentials to the public. This merger led to purchasing the former Salvation Army building at 219 First Avenue in Downtown Clinton, consolidating all programs under one roof.

Today, IRAS operates the largest food pantry in Clinton. Over the past three years, food requests have surged by 137%. The organization now provides monthly food boxes to individuals and families in need, and also runs a monthly mobile drive-through food pantry, sponsored by ADM.

Beyond food distribution, IRAS offers a wide range of services, including:

- Rental assistance
- Hotel sheltering
- Utility assistance
- Birth certificate retrieval
- Iowa ID establishment



- The Med Tree program

Collaboration is at the heart of IRAS's mission. The agency partners with:

- *Zion Lutheran Church* to distribute lunches on the second Monday of each month
- *The DART Outreach Program* for weekly community engagement
- *The Salvation Army Life 360 Center*
- *United Way*

IRAS directly impacts more than 6,500 individuals annually. Between October 2020 and May 2023, it provided 5,177 nights of hotel shelter to 950 individuals, funded through county and government reimbursements totaling \$236,575. In 2023, an outdoor food pantry was also launched to serve those in need on weekends.

The agency works with the Clinton Community School District on the Backpack Buddy Program, which supplies food packages to around 200 students each month, identified by teachers and counselors as food insecure.

Despite its wide-reaching impact, IRAS receives no federal funding. The agency relies entirely on support from local churches, businesses, community fundraisers, and grants.

To support IRAS, contact Regan Michaelsen at [irasmichaelsen@gmail.com](mailto:irasmichaelsen@gmail.com), (563) 243-5818, or visit the office at 219 First Avenue, Downtown Clinton.

