

HUNGER HERALD

FALL 2021



Feed My People
FOOD BANK



Feed My People Food Bank: Ending Hunger in West Central Wisconsin



Note from the Director

Hunger Action Month occurs throughout September. It is a nationwide awareness campaign to ask everyone to join us to close the meal gap in our community. This year's Hunger Action Day is on September 17th.

With the combined effort of Feeding America, the nationwide network of food banks, and you, this campaign will raise awareness about food insecurity

and hopefully inspire you to get involved in our mission to end hunger in west central Wisconsin.

Food shouldn't be an impossible choice. For many in our local communities, a daily meal is just a choice for dinner. But for people facing hunger, a daily meal poses a very different type of choice. It's often an impossible choice between food and other critical needs such as utilities, housing, or medicine.

I hope you will consider joining us by donating or volunteering during this year's

Hunger Action Month. On the back of this newsletter is more information on how you can get involved. I look forward to seeing you in September.

Thank you for taking action against hunger,



Nancy Renkes
Feed My People's
Executive Director

\$25,000 Donated to Hunger Action

All gifts donated this September will be matched up to \$25,000 thanks to the generosity of Orvil and Dorothy Wilsey. Their estate has gifted Feed My People Food Bank these funds as a legacy to their lifetime of giving to those in need.



Orvil and Dorothy (Scharlau) Wilsey were born and raised in Menomonie, Wisconsin. Orvil attended UW-Stout, graduating with an engineering degree in 1951 and then spent three years in the US Army, two of which in the Korea War Zone. Dorothy grew up helping her parents on "The Poor Farm of Dunn County" where they cared for impoverished people living with dementia or other mental health related diagnoses. Orvil and Dorothy were married in Menomonie in 1955. They returned to the area in retirement, with an idea that they could again take part in and give back to the communities that had nurtured them.

Orvil and Dorothy had a tremendous amount of love to share. They were beloved Uncle and Aunt, godparents, and friends. They supported organizations that cared for children and animals in need. Growing up as they did, they were keenly aware of poverty and disability. They understood the needs of the elderly. They knew that in the midst of a thriving community, it is too easy to forget our neighbors who are in need. With a parting gift, they hoped to make a difference in the lives of children and families where hunger is too well known.

Every \$1 given provides 8 meals this month for a neighbor in need, thanks to the Wilsey Estate.

give.fmpfoodbank.org/HungerAction

Who is Hungry?

Now that it is well into 2021, Feed My People (FMP) is looking at how the pandemic has shifted the dynamics of hunger in west central Wisconsin and how we've re-examined our approach.

It was a typical sunny summer morning in the cheerful town of Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin. I rolled into the parking lot of Our Saviour's Lutheran Church shortly after the Feed My People truck had arrived and headed towards the movement I heard coming from the back of it. Inside was Terry wearing a bright orange shirt and sporting an equally bright smile using a pallet jack to unload food for that morning's Pop-Up Pantry. Out came bread, mangoes, salad, ground turkey, zucchini, and an array of dry groceries. In no time at all, other volunteers joined him, a line of cars formed, and one hour later, all 1,005 pounds of food had been safely tucked away into trunks and backseats for 170 guests, including 50 children and 62 seniors.

Since March 2020, FMP's Pop-Up pantry has exploded onto the scene, considerably evolved from its early model as a way to distribute late summer produce abundantly available that time of year while it was still fresh. Today, our Pop-Up Pantries are instead a year-round staple allowing safe and efficient distribution in communities where the need is high.

But who exactly is hungry, and how are we reaching them? The demand our expanded Pop-Up Pantry program is seeing is a sign that food insecurity is far from rare. We need to continue reaching out to address the immediate need and work with other organizations and donors like you to reach into underserved areas and fight hunger at its source.

Homelessness

Perhaps our most vulnerable neighbors are those who struggle with housing for their families. FMP's dedicated partners give us a small window into the seemingly insurmountable challenges that these individuals face as we work together

to ensure there is food to eat and water to drink so that other critical issues can be addressed.

"What the people we serve need is hope," shared Pastor Mike of the Chippewa Valley Street Ministry.

“

I am disabled and a neighbor picks up food for me. If it was not for Feed My People I would not be able to make it. Now I know I will have something in the house to eat. - Barbara

Volunteers at the Chippewa Falls Pop-Up Pantry at Our Saviour's Church, July, 2021





“Lack of transportation in our rural area makes travel difficult for many people to get to competitive grocery stores with quality food. High unemployment rates and lack of skilled jobs in our area also make it difficult for people to afford their groceries. (People) are often pleasantly surprised that this fresh food is available for free, without having to prove they deserve it.” - Katy, Spooner Library Partner Representative

Food distribution in Washburn County

“Hope is an invaluable tool for individuals and groups to have to keep going. Hope for housing. Hope for employment. Hope that basic needs will be met. Without hope, there’s little willpower for anyone to make efforts for change.”

FMP recognizes that most of the product that comes through our warehouse doesn’t work if you sleep outside or on someone’s couch with limited cooking facilities. To address this, we have begun sourcing appropriate food that we can pack in Ready-to-Eat bags that can be easily distributed along with water and other items.

Feeding everyone in line is only the first step to solving the problem of food insecurity. Identifying the barriers that people face (in addition to food insecurity) and removing those barriers is key to shortening the line. We applaud the efforts of our partners and are committed to supporting them in any way we can.

Seniors

Older residents 60 and above consistently fall in the category of food insecurity likelihood in high proportions because of factors like limited income, high medical bills, and transportation barriers. Moreover, due to higher instances of isolation, reaching them is crucial.

Partners like Meals on Wheels are addressing all of this. By delivering hot, nutritious, ready-to-eat meals on a schedule, seniors receive a check-in and a healthy

meal. Additionally, resident food pantries inside low-income apartment buildings are offering an alternative to the stress of navigating a grocery store with limited funds.

Families

Most of the communities FMP serves are rural, meaning fewer groceries are available to hardworking families who face long commutes for jobs, scarcer resources, and fewer options. Those experiencing hunger in rural areas benefits from hunger-relief resources that offer a variety of healthy options. Our Pop-Up program is committed to rural areas to help support existing pantries and providing additional options through our targeted Pop-Up Pantry events.

Youth

The staff and volunteers at Feed My People recognize that the stakes are high for students as they go back to school this fall. After a challenging year, it is critical that hunger not stand in the way of their ability to learn and develop. We remain committed to working with the schools and our partners throughout our service area to identify and implement programming addressing childhood hunger, including Weekend Kids’ Meals and Backpack programs, School Pantries at all levels, and Pop-Up pantries to fill the gaps for children, youth, and their families.

10.9%



Of residents in Feed My People’s 14 county service area are food insecure*

17.8%



Of kids in Feed My People’s 14 county service area are food insecure*

* According to Feeding America

THANK YOU

We are thankful for the commitment of our partner pantries, backpack programs, meal sites, and more who are dedicated to helping everyone in need in west central Wisconsin.



Little moments at a recent Pop-Up

One little girl about 7-years old quickly grabbed a two-pound package of beautiful strawberries and hugged them tightly. Her eyes gleaming with excitement, she would not let them be put into a bag. They were better than candy!

When a set of grandparents eyed the blueberries and strawberries, a plan for them was quickly created. Because they were gearing up to be full-time babysitters to their grandkids this summer, they shared that they were going to make the perfect smoothies for them.



Community Perspective Letter



Michael Johnson, Superintendent of the Eau Claire School District, shared the District's commitment with us to ensure every child receives the food they need to learn and grow.

Feed My People Food Bank has supported the students of the Eau Claire Area School District for many years through their Weekend Kids' Meal Program. This program is vital to the wellbeing of many students who may not otherwise have food to eat on the weekends. It eliminates barriers for families who may not have easy access to visit a food pantry by allowing students to bring food home directly from school.

Every day our dedicated teachers, partnership coordinators, and other staff work to foster an environment where learning and development thrive. We know that in our school district where over 40% of our population is economically disadvantaged, our most vulnerable learners are our youngest students and those at a lower socio-economic level. Providing food stability has a huge impact in the lives of all of our students and their academic success. As a community, we are proud to partner with Feed My People supporting the creation of food pantries at many of our schools including Memorial and North High Schools, McKinley Charter School, Northstar and South Middle Schools, and Flynn, Longfellow, Manz, Lakeshore, and Locust Lane Elementary Schools. These new school-based food pantries provide yet another opportunity for families to access much needed food and reduce or eliminate barriers to accessing the food.

In the ECASD, we know it truly takes an entire community to support our students every day. With the help of Feed My People Food Bank and the Weekend Kids' Meal Program, we show our families and students that we are also there for them outside of the classroom. Partnerships like the one we share with Feed My People are crucial to student success and our District values those partnerships all year long.



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STAND AGAINST LOCAL HUNGER



LEARN.



GIVE.



TELL.

TAKE THE STAND TODAY.

Go orange to support Hunger Action Month.
During September all gifts will be matched \$1 for \$1 up to \$25,000.

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