

HUNGER HERALD

SPRING 2021



Feed My People
FOOD BANK



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

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Note from the Director

Prior to the start of the pandemic there was a serious childhood hunger issue in our country as almost 10 million children were food insecure. Since the pandemic that number has increased to an estimated 17 million at the end of last year.¹

We know some of the issues that children who do not get enough food to eat face: higher risk of health conditions, developmental impairments, and/or social and behavioral issues.

Our team at Feed My People (FMP) has increased outreach in the counties we serve by working with local schools and community partners to ensure we have a resource for any family who is having trouble putting food on the table, including of course their children.

Here are a few examples of the additional programs we have implemented in the past year:

- Began weekly distribution out of the Feed My People warehouse to feed more families.
- Provided safe method of distribution for our volunteers, staff, and the kids by purchasing prepackaged items for our Weekend Kids' Meals program

so we could continue to serve these meals for the weekend.

- Worked strategically with our schools on how to best serve them beyond the Weekend Kids' Meal program in Eau Claire and Chippewa Falls. We have opened three new school food pantries, and more are in development. There are now pantries at every academic level.

Additionally, our hunger-relief partners have increased their programs for feeding hungry children in their local communities. Feed My People continues to work side by side with them to support that work and to also celebrate all that they are doing.

We could not have met the need in our communities without the generosity of you, our donors, and volunteers.

We hope you will continue to partner with us as we work towards making sure that no child worries about when they might eat again.

With thanks,



Nancy Renkes
Feed My People's
Executive Director

¹ Feeding America

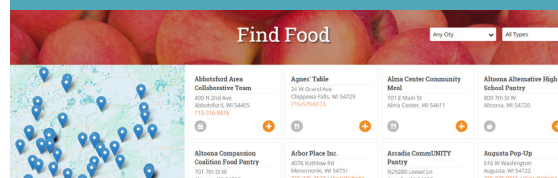
More Food in 2020



8,359,886

pounds of food were distributed through FMP in 2020, which is 1,759,951 more pounds than in 2019.

New FMP Website



At the start of this year our website (fmpfoodbank.org) received a new design with tools like a 'Find Food' feature that helps families locate nearby hunger-relief organizations using an interactive map.

We are so grateful for our continued partnership with FirstNet Impressions for our website and other services for 15 years.



Learning Curve

School Pantries filling needs of students at school and at home

Food ready to go at the brand-new Flynn Elementary Family Pantry

The Blair Backpack program has been a Feed My People (FMP) partner since 2014. When elementary students went back to school amid the pandemic this fall, the number of students needing food more than doubled. When the middle and high school counselors came asking for backpacks for their students too, Judy Peters and Gerda Anderson knew they needed to help provide food for a school food pantry. When one of the counselors shared his concern about a student they suspected was homeless, Judy and Gerda immediately made more food available so the students had what they needed. And so, the Blair School Pantry was created.

In 2021 Feeding American projects that 1 in 5 children will face food insecurity in FMP's 14-county service area, and so the work this program and others like it are doing is crucial to the health of children and youth in our local communities. When asked why it was important to expand the program during this difficult time, Judy simply said, "These kids need food."

Before the COVID-19 crisis began, data from Feeding America showed the lowest food insecurity rates in more than 20 years, but the current crisis has reversed these improvements. This is particularly troubling for our students in need. Experiencing persistent periods of insubstantial food affects a child's mental and physical health, which in turn affects their education and future opportunities.

42%
According to Feeding America, this is the projected increase of childhood food insecurity in Feed My People's service area from 2018-2020.

During the 2020-2021 school year, three new elementary school pantries in the Eau Claire School District were created to help meet the needs of students and their families at Flynn, Manz, and Locust Lane. All these schools continue to offer Weekend Kids' Meals, but a school pantry helps feed the whole family.

"When the pandemic hit, school staff across our service area tried to do more for families they knew were struggling, many for the first time. While most schools have backpack programs in place, a school pantry provides resources for the whole family in addition to the child. Both programs offer a crucial resource during a difficult time," shared Tami Syverson, FMP Program Specialist.

School pantries also allow for the flexibility to order perishable food like frozen ground beef, fresh produce, yogurt and cheese. Chippewa Falls High School started their pantry in 2017. The addition of a new freezer and cooler last year allows them

“We have one family that utilizes the pantry on a weekly basis. This family has been homeless and recently found housing. Mom is a single mom trying to support three children and keep a roof over their head. The food pantry helps to provide the additional support so that her paycheck can pay the rent, and she can keep food in her children’s bellies.”

- Holly, Longfellow Elementary School Food Pantry Coordinator

to focus on healthy, fresh food for families.

FMP is also partnered with middle and high school in Eau Claire and Chippewa Falls. School pantries at these higher grade levels have the added benefit of providing a discreet environment for older students who typically experience more peer pressure than students in younger grades.

Through Helping Hands in the Minong School District, students can receive a monthly 50-pound box of food for their family along with a weekly 4-pound backpack meal. For families who are working and are unable to pick it up, volunteers deliver the food to them.

“We all have a heart for these families and these kids,” shared Elaine Bailey, Helping Hands Coordinator.

Just a couple of years ago, school pantries were considered a more novel approach. Now, spurred on by the increased needs of students and their families during the tumultuous past year, FMP is pleased to be working with so many passionate teachers and partner coordinators at schools in every grade level. Everyone needs food to succeed, and we are hopeful that the growing school pantry program will be one more resource for students and families struggling with food insecurity.

FMP is thankful for The United Way of the Greater Chippewa Valley’s support of our school pantry programs.

Learn more about our programs serving children and youth at fmpfoodbank.org



“I had a student share with me that the pantry has made it possible for her to focus more on her schoolwork. Before, she felt she needed to get a job to help her family, but she was very concerned about adding these hours during the school year because she also helps care for her younger sister. Now she plans on working during the summer months. She and her mom are so grateful and so appreciative of the pantry.”

- Val, Memorial High School Food Pantry Coordinator

Why We Give

We are thankful for enduring donors like Bruce and Heidi Olson

Many people are surprised to learn that Feed My People's main core of donors are local families who simply give consistently. For over 15 years, the Olson's have been doing just that. Read on to find out why.

"While there are many wonderful causes to support, few have the same immediate impact as helping to ensure our neighbors and community have enough food. FMP has made it so easy for us to give with wonderful programs, like Weekend Kids' Meals, that tug at our hearts.

"FMP has shown year after year that they can adapt and adapt well to meet the challenges of the growing demand for their services. They seem to do so with a smile and a 'we can do this together' attitude.

"Plus, we have been a big fan of their annual Empty Bowls fundraiser. We knew we had passed down the essence of Empty Bowls to our boys when one would ask to bring a friend or girlfriend with and then explain over the meal what it was all about."

"I actually get a little choked up thinking about how meaningful Empty Bowls and our connection to FMP has been since our start with it at Trinity when our boys were in Sunday school. Our boys both took a collection of bowls from the event with them to college!" - Heidi Olson

The Olson Family



Every \$1 given provides 4 meals for a neighbor in need.

Honor Someone Special TODAY

Memorials and Honorariums now listed online at fmpfoodbank.org



Drive-Thru Fundraiser at Feed My People March 1-6

Empty Bowls will look different this year, but the mission remains the same!

Empty Bowls is Feed My People's largest annual fundraiser, but to keep everyone safe and healthy, the event is shifting gears to a drive-thru and at-home experience.

When you purchase tickets online at give.fmpfoodbank.org/emptybowlsweek, you are invited to select a traditional gift bag (pictured) to receive a randomly selected bowl created by a local artist or community member, or the signature gift bag, which has a specially designed bowl by Scheelhouse Pottery.

You will also receive a one-of-a-kind booklet with a variety of local chef recipes and coupons from past event food vendors so you can bring the soup meal experience home with you. Plus, don't forget to browse our online silent auction open February 25 - March 6.





Feed My People
FOOD BANK

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715.835.9415 • fmpfoodbank.org



FEED MY PEOPLE'S LARGEST ANNUAL FUNDRAISER

EMPTY BOWLS WEEK

MARCH 1 - 6, 2021

All proceeds help feed our neighbors in need in west central Wisconsin.

BOWL TICKETS ON SALE TODAY AT

give.fmpfoodbank.org/EmptyBowlsWeek

\$20 Traditional Bowl Gift Bag | \$25 Signature Bowl Gift Bag | \$10 Bowl with a Bow

WE'RE DOING SOMETHING DIFFERENT THIS YEAR.

Peak inside this newsletter to learn more!

