

FALL 2024



Hunger Herald

Creating Equitable Access to Food for Healthier Communities

Partnering for Change

How Schools, Communities, and Feed My People are Fighting Childhood Hunger

Last school year, Manz Elementary in Eau Claire organized a cereal food drive, collecting 276 boxes for their community pantry. The entire school gathered to witness the excitement as cereal boxes were lined up and knocked down like a giant domino set. Students were pumped to give back and eagerly discussed their favorite cereals (it also happened to be pajama day, which made it even more fun). Feed My People (FMP) was invited to speak to the kids, sharing the impact of their efforts as part of our Project FEED program, which also educates children about food insecurity.

Hunger is a harsh reality for too many kids in our region. Across West Central Wisconsin, at least 1 in 6 children face food insecurity, according to Feeding America's latest Map the Meal Gap data. Access to healthy meals is crucial for children's happiness, learning,

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A volunteer for a local hunger relief organization receives potatoes from FMP staff at our produce hub near Withee, Wisconsin.



In West Central Wisconsin, at least 1 in 6 children do not have enough consistent access to food.

...continued from front.

and growth. Without proper nutrition, kids are more likely to experience anxiety, behavioral issues, and difficulties in learning, all of which can negatively impact their physical and mental development.

Through Project FEED, our child hunger program, we work closely with school districts and community resources to ensure every child can receive the nutrition needed. We supply food to community pantries to meet the increasing demand from families with young children. We also partner extensively with schools to strengthen nutrition programs and connect families to vital food resources.

Now entering its second school year, Project FEED—focused on food, education, equity, and dignity—continues to seek and implement innovative solutions to childhood hunger. Our collaboration with Manz Elementary and other schools in our service area has led to encouraging developments, such as adopting school market models that uphold student dignity by offering choices in the food taken home.

Ensuring continuous nutrition for our youngest students has been a particular focus. Since 2007, our Weekend Kid's Meals provided food when school meals weren't available. During the pandemic, we adapted with pre-packed bags that, while essential, were costly and offered limited variety. Now, as part of Project FEED, we're pleased to launch A Brighter Childhood (ABC) Food program. This initiative is designed to provide sustainable, nutritious options for pre-K and elementary students during weekends and school breaks.

ABC Food will offer Kwik Trip vouchers for fresh produce, milk, and eggs to support entire families, ready-to-eat, kid-friendly items, and an online ordering option for schools, allowing families to choose groceries that best meet their needs.

We believe that together, these resources will empower students to grow, learn, and thrive. With your continued support, we can expand and sustain more programming like ABC Food to reach every child in need.

Fresh Free Fridays

We often talk about our service area: 14 counties in West Central Wisconsin. But did you know that means we're responsible for over 15,000 square miles? This large area proves challenging for transporting food in time to hundreds of our partner programs sprinkled across many small communities. Because our distribution center is in Eau Claire, our more far-flung partners rely on our trucks to bring food to them on delivery routes once or twice a month. While non-perishable foods can reach our partners quickly, delivering fresh produce is challenging due to its limited shelf life and required refrigeration.

We recently launched a pilot produce hub called Fresh Free Fridays to reduce this barrier. It allows our truck to load up on freshly harvested produce from the Central Wisconsin Produce Auction in Withee, and instead of driving back to our food bank, it stays in the area so that local partners can pick it up from us on the same day. In one distribution alone, they picked up nearly 3,000 pounds of melons, onions, peppers, tomatoes, potatoes, cauliflower, and more.

Ensuring top-quality produce gets to our partners fast means everyone wins. Less transportation is better for the environment, and fresher produce means less food waste. Supporting local farmers is better for our economy, and ultimately, it means more good food can reach our neighbors.

Consider sponsoring a school market or ABC Food program
Directly support local children and families by providing essential food resources within our community.

Contact the development team at FMP today to get started.
Brit Heymans, Development Director
brit@fmpfoodbank.org | (715) 708-2414

Volunteers at a Pop-Up at the food bank this summer helped distribute cantaloupe and salad dressing into waiting vehicles.



Start Volunteering During Hunger Action Month

During Hunger Action Month this September, volunteer with Feed My People to contribute to the 75,000 actions we're taking against food insecurity in our region. Your efforts will directly support local families and strengthen our community. Volunteers are at the heart of everything we do and make our mission possible.

OPPORTUNITIES

Pop-Up Pantries

Help pack and distribute groceries at the food bank to our neighbors. 2nd & 4th Fridays (8:30-10 am, 9:45 am-12:30 pm)
2nd & 4th Mondays (3:30-5 pm, 4:45-7 pm) | Sept. 9, 13, 23, 27

Cheers to Charity

Start by packing in our clean room, then drive over to River Bend Winery in Chippewa Falls for a private tour and wine tasting.
Wed. Sept. 4 | Volunteer 4-5 pm | Winery Tour 5:15 pm

Hunger Action Day Pack-a-Thon

Take action against hunger by wearing orange and volunteering at the food bank on Hunger Action Day, joining a nationwide movement.
Tues Sept. 10 | 9 am-12 pm

Applepalooza

Help pack thousands of apples donated by local orchards. Your support will help this fresh produce reach our neighbors quickly.
Sept. 23-26 | Morning and afternoon shifts available

More details and signups located at give.fmpfoodbank.org/HungerAction

A Note From the Director

My mother and father-in-law both grew up on farms in rural Wisconsin. As someone who grew up in the city, part of my appreciation of farmers and what they do for our communities comes from the stories they tell – funny, heartwarming, and proud. My appreciation grows when I think of the relationships we have formed with growers in our region through our Farm to Food Bank initiative. This has resulted in a 124% increase in fresh produce distributed to our neighbors and friends facing food insecurity. These are nutritious fruits and vegetables grown right here in West Central Wisconsin ensuring freshness and a win-win solution for farmers and those we serve.

As we celebrate Hunger Action Month in September, we are proud and energized to include farmers in our diverse partner network. It takes a community to solve hunger. As part of that community, we are reaching out to you to help us generate 75,000 actions, reflecting the number of folks who rely on our services annually. Actions include volunteer hours, dollars donated, likes and shares on our social media platforms, donated produce, and much more. Let's work together to reach our goal and then take those actions beyond Hunger Action Month to make an impact all year long. Let's make a difference together in the lives of children, seniors, and families who struggle to have enough nutritious food to thrive.

In gratitude,

Suzanne Becker

Suzanne Becker, Feed My People's
Executive Director



The Kitchen Sink

Podcast by Feed My People Food Bank

Because food brings us all together, we're gathering stories from around our community about what brings us all to the messy kitchen sink after a good meal for the real conversation. Find new episodes on Eau Claire Hometown Media, Spotify, or iHeart.



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Hunger Action Month

1 in 10 people in West Central Wisconsin face hunger.

Let's do
something BIG
about that.

75,000 Actions, Together



VOLUNTEER



GIVE



& MORE

Get involved at give.fmpfoodbank.org/HungerAction

Go orange during Hunger Action Month, a nationwide movement.

