

SPRING 2022



Feed My People
FOOD BANK
feeding healthy futures

HUNGER HERALD

Ending Hunger in West Central Wisconsin



Ken Sitzman, volunteer lead at Feed My People, holds up two Blizzard Packs for Meals on Wheels routes.



A Note From the Director

2022 marks the 40th anniversary of Feed My People Food Bank (FMP). During those 40 years, FMP has worked alongside our community to ensure no one goes hungry. In 2022 we will recognize our founding churches, past and present board members, and all our hunger-relief partners, volunteers, and donors past and present, who made the commitment to feed everyone who has stood in our lines these past four decades.

We are proud to announce that in 2022 we will expand our building to include space for a Hunger Action Center. This 3600 square foot addition will provide capacity for our programming team to address root causes of food insecurity with the goal of shortening the hunger line in our community. In addition, this space will act as an emergency response center in the event of a community disaster.

The goals for the Hunger Action Center include programming and partnerships that will address specific food insecurity issues stemming

from health, financial, and housing challenges. Our plans also include promoting inclusion within our organization, as well as our partners, to bring down barriers for food insecure people. Our final goal is to implement comprehensive nutrition ranking systems to better understand our inventory's nutritional quality and then make strategic decisions within and across our food categories as we strive to enhance food equity.

Together we will continue to work towards eliminating hunger in the communities we serve. This work is not possible without each one of you.

Thank you,

Nancy Renkes | Feed My People's Executive Director



Gearing up for Empty Bowls

What's new this year for our largest annual fundraiser?

We are so pleased to offer our signature fundraiser, Empty Bowls, once again. Every year, we are amazed at the outpouring of support our generous community responds with to help us reach our neighbors in need of food.

This year's event will be a hybrid offering both a drive-thru opportunity on March 2 to pick up bowl gift boxes, as well as limited in-person Choose-Your-Own-Bowl Experience packages. These ticket holders will be able to visit the food bank on March 1 or 3 for a tour, select a locally handcrafted bowl, and help us pack some food bags.

A new component of the bowl gift boxes includes a collaboration made possible by our culinary sponsors, Pablo Center and Silver Spring Foods. In addition to a handcrafted ceramic or wooden bowl, each gift box will contain two new recipes by Chef Steve Knowlton and a link to a video with him and some FMP staff bringing the meal to life. Ticket holders will also get a Silver Spring Foods soup ingredient featured in the recipes.

And finally, be sure to check out our online silent auction open to anyone to bid on from February 22 to noon on March 4. Packages range from local treats to fine art. Visit our website for details.

We appreciate your enduring support. Last year, well over \$100,000 was raised through our sponsors and ticket holders for hunger relief. [Reserve your bowl gift box today at give.fmpfoodbank.org/emptybowlsweek.](https://give.fmpfoodbank.org/emptybowlsweek)

Blizzard Packs are Blazing the Way for Uninterrupted Meals

We've partnered with Meals on Wheels in three counties to ensure weather never impacts food availability for those relying on its meal service.

According to Meals on Wheels America, half of seniors living alone lack the financial resources to pay for basic needs. Many rely on the daily hot meal that this program provides. However, weather in Wisconsin means there are days when delivery is impossible. That's why last month Feed My People packed nearly 600 Blizzard Packs through our partnership with the Meals on Wheels programs in Eau Claire, Chippewa, and Dunn Counties.

These food bags, which volunteer drivers delivered, included single serving, balanced items to ensure seniors always have food in their cupboards. "Many of our older friends struggle with limited budgets and no transportation," shared Tami Syverson, the program coordinator at Feed My People. "Providing a supplementary food bag means they have food in their house no matter what the weather. The bags put a smile on their face."



Greta is one of many seniors served by this program. With no family living locally, she relies on her daily delivery. When receiving a Blizzard Pack, she experienced immediate relief. She was so grateful to have the additional food for her shelves.

Meet Our Staff

Please join us in welcoming two new staff members to the office team at Feed My People.

Jeremy Gilbert started with us in December 2021 as an Outreach Specialist. He works to help promote FoodShare and engage with existing and potential donors.

"I'm excited to be part of the FMP team because I'll be helping make a positive contribution in my community and those in need of FoodShare assistance," shared Jeremy.

Outside of working hours, you might find him out on the trails as one of his favorite thing to do is hiking and visiting Wisconsin State Parks with his family.

Tina Lurndal started with us in October 2021 as an Agency & Program Coordinator, working directly with agency partners and direct programs, tracking statistics, fostering relationships with retail donors for food rescue, and everyday communication between FMP and our partners. A fun fact about Tina is that she speaks Spanish.



Jeremy Gilbert
Outreach Specialist
jeremy@fmpfoodbank.org



Tina Lurndal
Agency & Program Coordinator
tina@fmpfoodbank.org

"I wear many hats but love what I get to do here at FMP! I'm excited to be part of the team because I strongly believe in our mission and love being able to see the impact that the various programs and pantries are making throughout our 14-county service area," said Tina.

Learning from the Pains of the Pandemic

“Many people who have been most impacted by the pandemic were food insecure or at risk of food insecurity before COVID-19 and are facing greater hardship since the pandemic began.”

The Impact of the Coronavirus on Food Insecurity in 2020 & 2021, Feeding America



Unexpected challenges pave the way for new opportunities to serve.

It's been two years since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, and Feed My People (FMP) has become adept at hurdling challenges like rising costs and weaving through extra safety precautions. As a leader in our community, relied upon to provide food to anyone in need within 14 mostly rural Wisconsin counties, we strive to meet the demand. But along the way, we've been taking steps to not only defend the ground we've gained but also to rise to the challenge through whatever comes our way next.

The Effect of Inflation

Inflation rose 7.5% in 2021 in the Midwest, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' Consumer Price Index, which is the most significant increase since 1982. Inflation has a disproportionate effect on lower-income households. As costs for essentials like groceries, transportation, and housing continue to rise, already stretched household budgets have little

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Every day we are finding creative solutions to combat higher costs, transportation, and staff challenges to ensure we never compromise our mission of serving the hungry.

- Rick Sorensen,
FMP Operations Manager

ability to accommodate the climbing cost of living. As fuel and food prices continue to surge, the same increased prices affecting those we serve are also hitting the food bank. It is simply getting more expensive.

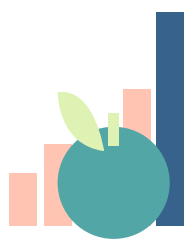


Increased Costs Across Sectors

- In 2021 -

Inflation rose 7.5%
Energy costs up 29.3%
Food prices up 6.3%

Additionally, supply chain issues linked to the shortage of drivers, dock workers, and warehouse workers are causing ordered items to sit in warehouses instead of reaching households. Bulk oatmeal we ordered in October 2021 sat in a warehouse in Colorado waiting for an available driver to bring it to FMP, arriving six weeks later than promised. However, fresh produce, vital to good nutrition, can't sit in warehouses for that long. We are working within the network of food banks across the country to be very intentional about ordering perishable items with reliable transportation.



More Diverse Partnerships

162.5% increase in direct programming from 2019 – 2021

Partnering for Immediate Impact

FMP and our 200+ hunger-relief partners strive to fill the hunger gap to make an impact today. Partners like Abbotsford Food Pantry on the edge of our service area in Clark County and Stepping Stones in Dunn County directly serve large, underserved populations in rural areas.

Our Pop-Up Pantry program, once a short-term outreach targeting high-need neighborhoods, has expanded into a year-round program that serves both rural areas and more populated areas like Eau Claire and Chippewa Falls. Its impact is far greater than the short-term needs it addresses. By being there for our neighbors in need, we're giving back hope by providing a safety net.

Another greatly expanded outreach is our school pantry program. Since this initiative started in 2017, a few pantries have been added every year. In 2021, however, nine school pantries were added, nearly doubling the total, going from 12 to 21 pantries in a single year. More school pantries mean more students and their families are being

empowered with a choice to decide what food to take home for their families in a space that's safe and familiar.

Shortening the Hunger Line in the Future

We are learning that one size does not fit all, however. Rather than solely counting our success by the number of people served and pounds of food distributed, measuring outcomes by the diversity of needs we're meeting is at the heart of everything we're doing now and in the years ahead. Examples include improving nutritional and dietary requirements and culturally sensitive foods. These programs also help to ensure less food waste. As an organization crucially linked to food rescue, saving good food that would otherwise be destined for the trash, improving measures to do so is part of what will best serve our world and our community. Creating a new Hunger Action Center later in 2022 links both criteria together to sustain and build us for the next 40 years.

This 3600 square foot addition will help FMP identify and address the barriers people face that contribute to food insecurity through targeted programming and partnerships. In addition, the space will provide storage for food boxes, hygiene items, and cleaning supplies so FMP can respond to natural, health, or other disasters quickly, so there is no delay in our neighbors receiving help. It will also provide the space to immediately open our doors and feed people out of the food bank during times of crisis.

As a strong leader in the community, FMP cannot take for granted the progress we have made so far. We've covered a lot of ground during the past 40 years, and we're now reimagining how we will serve for the next 40. The bottom line is that we cannot do what we do without the support of our faithful donors, engaged volunteers, dynamic staff, and our resilient network of hunger relief partners.

As a reader of this newsletter, we're grateful for your support and interest in helping us reach everyone in need of food in west central Wisconsin. Please stay connected with us this year and consider renewing your impact as a donor, volunteer, or both. We're in this together.

2022 Board of Directors

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Sandy Winrich*
Retired, Chippewa County, Pantry Coordinator

Shannon Young
Northwest Regional Community Coordinator, Wisconsin Literacy

* New this year



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SUPPORT LOCAL HUNGER RELIEF

EMPTY BOWLS WEEK ~ MARCH 1-3

Feed My People Food Bank's largest annual fundraiser to support our neighbors in need one bowl at a time.

Learn more and purchase your Bowl Gift Box today at:
give.fmpfoodbank.org/EmptyBowlsWeek

Ticket packages range from \$20 - \$40

- **Drive-thru** to pick up your Bowl Gift Box on March 2.
- **Online Silent Auction** featuring artwork, experience packages & more
- **Limited Choose-Your-Own-Bowl experience** packages available to reserve for March 1 & 3.

EMPTY BOWLS FEEDING OUR NEIGHBORS

Thank You Sponsors
Drive-Thru Culinary



Keith & Debby Brunett

