



# North Country Food Bank, Inc.

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**PRESS RELEASE: North Country Food Bank, Inc. is filling a void.**

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North Country Food Bank, Inc. is focused on fighting hunger throughout northwest Minnesota. From modest beginnings in 1983, North Country has grown to reach thousands of people in big cities, small towns and rural areas. North Country's reach in northwest Minnesota covers 21 counties, excluding Clay County, which is served by Great Plains Food Bank. North Country's service area extends from the Canadian border south to Browns Valley, from the North Dakota border east to Bemidji and Osakis, and everywhere in between. North Country has responded wherever the need to alleviate hunger exists.

"The demand for services is increasing," said North Country's executive director, Susie Novak. As a result of the increased demand, North Country aims to extend the reach of its services through existing and new, creative methods," Novak said. "We need to be able to provide food for the towns and cities in our service area, while still being able to reach even the smallest communities in the most rural areas. We can do this through our existing channels and by creating new methods and programs. This includes our mobile food pantries and Backpack programs," she said.

North Country relies on many successful partnerships with food wholesalers, retailers and others to supply food for distribution in its services area. Some of its partners are Feeding America (f/k/a America's Second Harvest) and United Way. Many people often have the wrong assumption about a food bank. It is not actually a place where people stop and load up with boxes of food. Instead, North Country is more like a wholesaler of donated surplus food. This surplus food would be wasted if not for North Country's services. Food and support come from major food manufacturers and distributors, churches, civic groups, businesses and private individuals. The operation started small 26 years ago, and today distributes food through approximately 155 charitable feeding programs.

Food is a targeted need. For example, North Country's primary target population is low-income, working poor, single parent families and people experiencing homelessness. Many of these people seek assistance from local food shelves, emergency shelters and soup kitchens. Other recipients include low-income individuals in need of supplemental assistance, group homes, senior programs, youth programs, addiction treatment centers and domestic abuse programs.

“Many people in northwest Minnesota do not openly talk about the issue of hunger. And if they are hungry, they tend to try to suffer through it – often believing other people need help more than them. But, North Country is working hard to carry the message that people in our very own communities need help. It is North Country’s belief that nobody should have to go to bed hungry here in northwest Minnesota,” Novak said.

Where there is a need for food assistance, North Country Food Bank has been there in the past, and will be there in the future. North Country’s dedicated staff has worked hard to develop systems and networks designed to do one thing - get food out to where it is needed. In the 26 years the Food Bank has been collecting and distributing food, it has gone from distributing 250,000 pounds of food in 1983 to distributing almost 3 million pounds in the year 2009.

The need is clear. “Our “hunger-fighting” partners are depending upon us to help provide food to those in need – especially during the holiday season. We are committed to making sure that every hungry neighbor has plenty to eat every day. But, we cannot do it without the support of the public and the communities we serve,” Novak said.

“Over the years North Country has grown and changed, and will continue to do so to meet needs in the future. Our most exciting time is still ahead,” Novak said. Hunger is an on-going problem that affects the well-being of our entire community, both today and in the future. To end it for good takes a collective community effort. And, there couldn’t be a more meaningful time than now to take a stand against hunger. Please join North Country in the fight.

For additional information please visit [www.northcountryfoodbank.org](http://www.northcountryfoodbank.org), or call (218) 281-7356.

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