

Feed What Matters

Fall 2025 North Country Food Bank Newsletter

www.northcountryfoodbank.org

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Our Mission

North Country Food Bank is working to end hunger across communities through leadership and collaboration.

Supporting this community since 1983.

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From the Director's Desk



Last year was one of the busiest years on record. North Country provided food for over 6.5 million meals across northwest and west central Minnesota, and most of our agency partners still saw visits by hungry neighbors increase anywhere from 20-30%. Unfortunately, this year is no different. Again, we are outpacing last year's record numbers by at least 13%.

In the past few months, I have had the opportunity to hear from many clients, partners, and supporters about the significant impact of North Country's work. The personal stories of those who are so grateful for the help they have received leave a lifelong impact. This is the very reason North Country is here doing the work we do.

The need is great, and our work and programs have never been more crucial. Hunger is not good for our community. Food is a basic need. When people don't have adequate access to good, nutritious food, there are consequences for the community. Children don't have the opportunity to grow and learn. Many of those dealing with hunger issues struggle mentally and physically. Hunger also has a huge negative impact on our economy — especially through lost contributions in the workforce and increased health care costs.

Every successful community has a plan to address hunger, and North Country is a major player on a mission to end hunger across the region. We have all missed a meal here and there because we were too busy to eat, but not knowing when you will get to eat again is a whole different thing. The stress, fear, and worry that go along with trying to figure out how to feed your family are debilitating.

With your help, we intend to rise to the challenge during these difficult times and make sure all our family, friends, and neighbors have access to food when they need it. Your continued support makes all the difference to those struggling with hunger. Every dollar counts. Every person who helps makes a difference and every person we help matters.

Sincerely,

Susie Novak Boelter
Executive Director

Remember North Country Food Bank

Please let us know if you've included North Country Food Bank in your will and estate plans. We would like to add you to our Legacy Society. To learn more about our Legacy Society, contact scott@northcountryfoodbank.org.





Mobile Drop Distribution Day



On a day in July, enough food for 300 families was loaded onto the food bank's truck and driven to a mobile food distribution.

Upon arrival, it was clear that many people needed help that day. Hundreds of cars were lined up, waiting to pick up much-needed food. Kristin Osowski, North Country's Agency Relations & Community Engagement Director, who helps coordinate mobile food distributions, knows how much this program means for so many in rural communities across North Country's service area.

"The mobile food distributions have a huge impact on the communities we serve. Based on the numbers we see, it is obviously an important service, and we are so thankful to be able to provide to communities across the region. People are lined up because they need help and often ask when we are coming back. They are so appreciative of the food and the help it provides!"

As things got underway, volunteers began to load up the cars of those waiting in line. Frozen chicken, potatoes, onions, soup, milk, butter, eggs, cheese, and various other products were placed in the vehicles to excited exclamations of thanks. Everyone was so grateful for everything they received.

Through her role helping to coordinate mobile food distributions for the food bank, Kristin also sees what goes on behind the scenes to make the distribution run smoothly. It takes many dedicated volunteers and significant funding to help make sure food gets directly into the hands of those who need it.



"We have a fantastic group of volunteers who show up at each location to help get everything set up, organized, and distributed, and funders who help cover the costs. We are so appreciative of the help and support across the communities we serve and to everyone who helps make these mobile distributions happen!"

Hannah Douglas, North Country's Food Donor Relationship Manager, has been working at mobile distributions for the last year. She helps go through the line of cars and signs people up as they wait to receive food.

Hannah noticed, **"I see a lot of seniors come through the line. They are often single and living alone — in many cases, their spouse has passed away. Now, they only have one income and are trying to make ends meet. They always tell me how much they need the help, and they want me to know what a big difference the food makes for them. We also see a lot of families with young children who are also struggling. It's so fun to see the kids' eyes light up when they notice we have their favorite cereal or snack!"**

Hunger affects everyone differently. Every neighbor coming to the mobile food distribution has their own unique story to tell. They are working parents who are between paychecks and need food to ensure their kids have enough to eat. They are veterans who live in rural areas and have limited access to transportation. They are seniors who have bills to pay and don't have enough money left for food — and the stories only go on from there.

The reality is that 1 in 9 people in Minnesota struggle with hunger, including 1 in 5 children. Mobile food distributions exist to get food directly into the hands of struggling neighbors. The food, funding, and volunteers make this work! Every single piece of the distribution process is essential in making sure this supplemental food is available and accessible to those who need it.



How Fast Would You Take Action?

If you had the power to help erase hunger in your community, if you could fill empty plates one by one with just a simple action, if you could make a meaningful difference in someone else's life ... **how fast would you take action?**

You have that power! By choosing to take action, we have the chance to come together as a community today and every day to raise enough money to fund an additional 2.5 million meals for families facing hunger by the end of this year. Every single meal matters, and every gift counts. It starts with one small action, one gift, one goal, and you. And it makes a world of difference for our neighbors, family, and friends struggling with hunger.

It's a big challenge. As a community, we can rise to the challenge by taking action. Generosity and determination are our superpowers, and with them, we can make sure our struggling neighbors have access to the food they need to thrive. It all starts with one small decision to take action, to help erase hunger in your community, to fill empty plates one by one, and to make a meaningful difference in someone else's life. There is no telling the reach and positive impact of your decision to join us and take action.

Please visit northcountryfoodbank.org for more information on how to help.

Backpacks help provide a solution to child hunger!

The most essential school supply is food! Children who don't have adequate access to food are at a disadvantage. Kids struggling with hunger also struggle with behavior issues and health issues, to name a few. If you are hungry, nothing else matters. So, hunger must be addressed before learning can begin.

Our BackPack Program supplies children with kid-friendly, nutritious food on weekends when they typically struggle with hunger the most because they don't have access to school breakfast and lunch.

Recently, a teacher at a local school told us about a little girl in her class. The girl's family had fallen on hard times when her dad was in an accident.

The little girl was extremely excited to participate in the backpack program. After she had been receiving the food for a while, she mentioned to the teacher how thankful she was for the food and how much it helped her family.

The teacher asked her what she had done before she received the backpack food. The little girl said, **"When my tummy wouldn't stop growling during class, I would raise my hand and ask to get a drink of water. Then, I would drink water from the water fountain until my belly felt full."**

The story of this little girl is not unlike thousands of other children in northwest and west central Minnesota who don't know when or where they will receive their next meal. In fact, 1 in 5 children in our region struggles with hunger. Children should not have to wonder when they will get to eat their next meal. This is the very reason North Country established the BackPack program.

As summer winds down and the school year begins, our BackPack Program will start providing nearly 15,000 bags of food to hungry children each month in communities throughout northwest and west central Minnesota. The BackPack Program, like all of our programs, depends on the generosity of people like you to successfully feed children in need. So many students just need a little help to boost their chances of success. You can help provide that boost! If you'd like to donate or volunteer your time to provide bags of food for children in our region, contact us today for more information.



Over 40,000 of our neighbors face hunger. A \$1 donation provides 4 meals for a neighbor in need.



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To learn more or to make a donation to North Country Food Bank, visit www.northcountryfoodbank.org.

