

Feed What Matters

Fall 2023 North Country Food Bank Newsletter

www.northcountryfoodbank.org

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

Supporting this community since 1983.

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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.



From the Director's Desk



Fall is my absolute favorite time of year! Ever since I was a child, I have loved the crisp mornings and the cool evenings, the craziness of harvest time, and the change of seasons. It somehow always felt like fall was the time of year to wrap things up and get prepared for what's to come next.

This fall, we are definitely getting prepared at North Country. We are preparing for uncertain economic conditions. We are preparing to meet the ever-rising demand for help with food in all communities across northwest Minnesota. And we are preparing to make sure all of our struggling neighbors have access to the food they need when they need it.

This year is proving to be quite challenging. There is uncertainty about the times ahead. Everyone is feeling the effects of rising inflation, rising food prices, and the rising cost of living. It is nearly impossible not to notice how much a trip to the grocery store costs these days. These current economic conditions have a major impact on everyone's life and everyone's wallet. Now, imagine facing these same conditions in the shoes of our many friends and neighbors in need. They were already struggling before these difficult economic times, and now, their everyday balancing act to make ends meet and put food on the table has become nearly impossible.

At a time when food costs are soaring and accessing food is much more difficult than it has been in the past, North Country is prepared to meet the increased need. We have seen a sharp increase in the number of friends and neighbors seeking help during the past several months, both through agency partners and at mobile food distributions, and we know people are relying on us more than ever right now.

The stress, fear, and worry that go along with trying to figure out how to feed your family is all-consuming. This is the very reason North Country is here doing the work we do. 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 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



STORIES FROM THE ROAD

The face of hunger is not what you would expect. It is your young neighbors with young children struggling to make ends meet. It's a senior who has lived in your community her whole life and is now on a fixed budget in these difficult economic times. We sometimes wish you could see the face of hunger through our eyes here at North Country. It may change your perspective, and would most definitely melt your heart. The staff and volunteers at North Country are so fortunate to witness the immense kindness, appreciation, gratefulness, and generosity of those who live in our communities on a regular basis.

Over the past three years, North Country has ramped up its mobile food distributions — usually conducting four - five each month in different communities across the region. During each of these mobile distributions, long lines tend to form with people who are struggling to put food on the table. Everyone at these distributions needs help or is trying to help someone else. They all have compelling stories that touch the hearts of all those involved.

What You are Doing Here is Amazing!

A worker at one of the mobile distributions was managing the line of cars, and stopped to answer a question. A lady in line rolled down her window and mentioned she had never been to a mobile distribution. She said she didn't know exactly how it worked. The worker explained the simple process. After a moment, the lady timidly mentioned that she had two elderly neighbors who weren't able to drive. She asked if it might be possible to pick up food for them, because she knew they really needed it. The worker told her, "Absolutely!" The lady immediately reached her hand out the window, grabbed the worker's hand, and whispered, "Thank you so much. What you are doing here is amazing!"



This is for the Food Bank!

A woman waiting in her car in line for a mobile food distribution flagged down one of the workers and waved \$40 cash out her window saying, "This is for the food bank." The worker explained there was no fee to receive food at the mobile distribution. The woman waiting in line said she knew there was no charge for food. She explained that she wasn't there picking up food for herself. She was picking up food for three elderly neighbors who were homebound, and they insisted on giving her gas money. She said she didn't need the money, and wanted to donate it to the food bank, where she knew it could do so much more. She said, "You have no idea how much this food helps people and means to people."

How You Can Help

DONATE MONEY & ASSETS

\$1 = 4 meals

- Individual Giving
- Corporate Giving
- Planned Giving
- Stocks
- Sponsorships



For more information visit northcountryfoodbank.org/donate

DONATE FOOD

1 meal = 1.2 lbs. (19 oz.) of food.

- Individual Food Donations
- Corporate/Retail Food Donations
- Community Food Drives
- School Food Drives
- Church Food Drives



For more information visit northcountryfoodbank.org/how-to-help

DONATE TIME = VOLUNTEER

Last year, more than 1,100 volunteers provided more than 7,600 hours of service — the equivalent of nearly three full-time employees.



For more information visit northcountryfoodbank.org/volunteer

Food is an Essential School Supply!

Imagine you are seven years old and sitting at your desk in school, learning about math. You haven't had anything to eat since you left school at 3:00 p.m. the previous day. Your tummy is growling. You are trying hard to focus on what the teacher is saying, but all you really care about is lunchtime. **Unfortunately, this is a reality for one in five children in our region.**



Ask any teacher how difficult it is to teach a hungry child. The issue of hunger must be addressed before learning can begin. Children who don't have adequate access to food are at a disadvantage. They struggle with behavior issues and health issues, to name a few. At North Country, making sure our children have the food they need to succeed is one of our top priorities, and our BackPack Program was created to help address this issue.

The BackPack Program provides food for children struggling with hunger over the weekends or long holiday breaks. As summer winds down and the school year begins, programs like our BackPack Program are the most essential school supply for hungry children. So many students just need a little help to boost their chances at 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.

Welcome to the Team! →

North Country is excited to introduce you to a new member of our team! Kristin Osowski began working as our new Agency Relations & Community Engagement Director in June. Kristin works with our 220 agency partners across the region to provide information, ideas, training, and assistance to get more food in the hands of people who need it. Kristin also works across the communities we serve to increase awareness about the services North Country provides, and to establish new partnerships and expand existing partnerships.



You can reach Kristin at kosowski@northcountryfoodbank.org or 218-399-7360.

Stretch Your Food Dollars

North Country Food Bank is excited to partner with Second Harvest Heartland and all of the Minnesota food banks to work on SNAP Outreach. This work will help us to connect families with monthly grocery benefits that will help keep their families fed — especially in these difficult and uncertain times.

With food prices at an all-time high, it can be hard to make ends meet. SNAP is a federal program designed to make groceries more affordable for families. Through our work with Second Harvest Heartland, we will be able to help families struggling with hunger in northwest and west central Minnesota enroll in the program.

Today, more than 42 million Americans participate in SNAP. **For every meal provided by our emergency food system, SNAP provides nine!** SNAP participants receive a special debit card



called an EBT card that's loaded with funds. Each month, they can use it to buy nutritious groceries at local stores, farmer's markets, and even online. The level of benefits depends on the person's household size and income.

SNAP gives those struggling with hunger the power and freedom to purchase the food and ingredients they know and love, to access the nutrition that they need, to better manage their food budget, and to put income toward other necessary expenses. SNAP works alongside food shelves and food banks to ensure kids, seniors, and families have access to the food they need. North Country is excited to be able to participate in SNAP enrollment, because SNAP helps keep America fed and strengthens local communities by helping millions of families afford groceries. It also brings needed business to local grocers, generating \$1.50 for every dollar invested.

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35,540 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.

