

Feed What Matters

Holiday 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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From the Director's Desk



When I think about the upcoming holiday season, my thoughts always turn to happy times with family and friends. I think about family gatherings filled with food, fun and laughter. I look forward to spending Thanksgiving and Christmas with my loved ones every year, and I am so very grateful and appreciative for everything I have been given in my life.

During these times, my thoughts inevitably turn to the many neighbors, family, and friends I have had the opportunity to meet through my work who are not as fortunate. They are people you know, people you work with, children who go to school with your children, people from your neighborhood and people from your church. They are people I know you would want to help.

This is why North Country works every single day — and especially around the holidays — to make sure our family, friends, neighbors, children, veterans, and senior citizens have enough to eat. We are determined to make a difference. With your help, we can make the holidays a happy time for people to enjoy without the debilitating stress of wondering how they will put their next meal on the table.

This holiday season, there are many ways you can get involved and join us in our work. You can start a holiday fundraiser with your family, friends, or co-workers to help give back in your community. You can volunteer your time. You can donate to North Country today to make an immediate impact. Every \$1 you donate goes a long way to help a family through the holiday season and provide them with healthy holiday meals.

I sincerely thank you for your partnership and support. Together we can change lives and make a difference. Every dollar counts. Every person who helps makes a difference, and every person we help matters!

Happy Holidays!

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.



Record Produce Distribution

At North Country Food Bank, it is our mission to help neighbors in need. It is our belief that this brings out the best in everyone. With the support of communities across northwest and west central Minnesota — our dedicated donors and volunteers — and our more than 220 agency partners, we are actively working to address hunger and health concerns across the region.



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 who 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.**

You have no idea how much this helps!

At a produce distribution this past fall, a worker was beginning to clean up the site when a car pulled up. Two nurses from the local hospital exited the vehicle in their scrubs, and asked if they were still able to get some produce. They explained that they were on their lunch break. The worker told the nurses to help themselves. They were so excited about the corn, cabbage, cucumbers, cantaloupe, and watermelon. As they filled their bags, they began discussing what they could do to make the produce last. They talked about freezing the corn, making soup with the cabbage, and making pickles with the cucumbers. They asked if they might be able to take some produce for fellow coworkers who couldn't get away from the hospital and were thrilled when they were told, "Absolutely!" They began calling their coworkers to find out what they needed and were so appreciative and thankful for everything they received. As they got back in the car, one of the nurses exclaimed, "Thank you so much. You have no idea how much this helps!" It began raining just as they pulled away from the distribution site. They immediately circled the block and stopped back to ask the worker if she needed



an umbrella or sweatshirt. Then, they offered to get her coffee so she could stay warm. The worker was fully prepared for the weather, but was humbled by the thoughtfulness, the generosity, and the sincere appreciation of everyone she encountered that day.

You made my day!

An elderly woman stopped by a produce distribution and was excited to see everything that was available. She began filling her bags with corn, cucumbers, and cabbage. Then, she saw the watermelon. She said excitedly, "I haven't had watermelon for so long." She leaned over in the tote to grab one, but realized it was too big and heavy for her to carry. She looked for a smaller watermelon, but they were all too big for her. A gentleman standing next to her saw her disappointment and immediately jumped in to help. He asked which one she wanted and offered to carry it to her car. The woman was so thankful and smiled from ear to ear as he walked with her to her vehicle. He even took the time to ask her if she would be able to get it into her house. She assured him that her neighbor would help her. As he walked away, she stopped him and said, "You made this old lady's day!"



North Country's commitment to address hunger has led to exponential increases in recent years — in both the amount of food distributed and the quality of the food.

Recently, in a span of 10 days, North Country distributed more than a quarter million pounds of produce across the region and is on pace to distribute more than 1 million pounds of nutritious vegetables and fruits this year. This is exciting and encouraging! North Country is not only distributing more food, but more healthy and nutritious food. There is a strong connection between health and hunger. We are working to create more awareness about this connection and find ways to get more healthy and nutritious food into the hands of people who need it most.





This is All New to Me!

Shelly walked into her local food shelf a bit overwhelmed. She had never been to one before. She didn't know what to do, or how the process worked. She was nervous and scared.

Shelly didn't want to have to visit the food shelf, but the uncertainty of her situation made it necessary. Shelly and her husband both worked full-time. They had three kids at home, and it took a lot of food each week to feed her family. Additionally, the increased prices at the grocery store made it nearly impossible for her to stretch her budget enough to cover her family's food needs and other necessary expenses.

When it was Shelly's turn to sit down and check in with the food shelf volunteer, she nervously blurted out, "This is all new to me. I am just under so much pressure right now. I don't know what to do, and I am worried I won't have enough food to feed my family."

The volunteer reassured Shelly that she was in the right place and was not alone. The current economic situation has forced many people to visit a food shelf for the first time in their lives. With your help, North Country has been able to supply the food needed across the region, so Shelly had somewhere to turn in her time of need. Your support and generosity have made it possible to put food on the table for neighbors like Shelly and so many others. We could not do it without you!



Join Us for a Month of Giving in November!

North Country Food Bank is participating in Give to the Max 2023! Early giving will start November 1st and our campaign will go through November 28th, which is known globally as GivingTuesday. This is a fantastic opportunity to stretch your donation even further with matching funds.

Give to the Max is a statewide fundraising campaign started by GiveMN in 2009 and is one of the biggest giving events of the year in the state of Minnesota. **GivingTuesday** is a global day of generosity and has grown exponentially since it began in 2012. **North Country is combining these two very special days to raise awareness about our mission and make November a month of giving.**

There is a Match to Help Your Donation Stretch Further!

This means that all Give to the Max donations made to North Country will be matched up to a total of \$25,000. This gives us the potential to raise \$50,000, or about 200,000 additional meals, to help feed our friends, families, and neighbors in need! If you would like to help us take full advantage of this generous matching gift, you can donate through GiveMN.org by searching for "North Country Food Bank." Donations can also be made via mail. **If you choose to donate via check, just make sure you write "Give to the Max 2023" on the memo line.**

Please consider making a donation during the month of November to help us reach even more friends and neighbors struggling with hunger! If you have any questions, contact Scott Johnson at scott@northcountryfoodbank.org or 218-399-7367.



On October 19, 2023, North Country celebrated its 40th anniversary! North Country has proudly served communities and agency partners across its 21-county service area in northwest and west central Minnesota since 1983. We are honored and humbled by the support of these communities that have trusted us with the mission of ending hunger across the region. Our work is only possible through the generosity of our loyal supporters. **Because of you, we have provided more than 100 Million nutritious meals to our struggling neighbors, families, and friends across the region in the last 40 years. Together, we have made a positive impact and a real difference in the lives of those facing hunger. Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!**



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.

