

# Feed What Matters

Winter 2023 North Country Food Bank Newsletter

[www.northcountryfoodbank.org](http://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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- Michael Nagy, *Warehouse Associate*

## 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](mailto:scott@northcountryfoodbank.org).



## From the Director's Desk

**Thanks for showing up! Everyone at North Country Food Bank is truly grateful for all those who helped support our neighbors and friends in need during the recent holiday season.**

The giving nature, compassion, and generosity of our supporters amazes and humbles us time and time again. The past year has been unlike any other at the Food Bank, and you stepped up to help make sure our neighbors and friends had access to food during extremely difficult, uncertain, and unpredictable times.



Helping those in need tends to be at the top of everyone's mind during the holidays but can fade from sight a bit once the season of giving has passed. This is the time of year when the harsh reality of winter sets in, and along with it, comes more struggles and hardships for the people we serve each day — especially this year.

Families struggling with hunger often face an even greater challenge during these cold winter months. As we all know too well, this year the winter months are setting up to be exceptionally brutal. Extreme heating bills, skyrocketing grocery bills, and increased gas prices only compound the problem and lead to more stress and worry. These conditions present an impossible challenge for those whose budget is already stretched to the max.

**With your help, North Country is working hard to make sure our neighbors and friends have even more access to food to help fill this gap, especially during these cold winter months. We are fortunate to be able to do the work we do each day — because of you and your support. Again, thank you so much for showing up and for all you do to help us feed what matters! Every dollar counts! Every person who helps makes a difference, and every person we help matters!**

Sincerely,

Susie Novak Boelter  
Executive Director



## Hunger Hero Award

Every year, North Country gives out the Hunger Hero Award. This award is the highest honor bestowed by the Food Bank. It is given to an individual who has had a major, positive, and lasting impact on North Country's ability to distribute food to people in need across our region. This year's Hunger Hero Award was presented to John Leikness. There is nobody more deserving.

**John Leikness began making a difference in Perham and across our entire service area soon after stepping into the director position at The Bridge in Perham more than 12 years ago.** It was easy to see right off the bat that John was going to be a huge, positive influence on the entire hunger fighting community. He possesses strong leadership skills. He is a solution finder, and he was willing to entertain new ideas and find a way to fund them and put them into action. Quite frankly, John is every food bank's dream partner!

John was a food shelf director that really understood why we are all here doing what we do. He understood that the goal is to feed people, not to judge people. He understood that the goal is to make people feel welcomed and cared about, not shamed. Most importantly, he understood the client was the top priority. John's philosophy was that the client had to leave the food shelf feeling better than when they stepped through the door. The atmosphere at The Bridge is a testament to John's values, beliefs, and work ethic.

John's dedication to his work, his innovation, and his compassion are second to none. And, because of this, so many people struggling with hunger in Perham and surrounding communities, as well as people across northwest Minnesota, have not had to go to bed hungry. John retired from his position at The Bridge on October 11, 2022, and as result, The Bridge, the Perham community and surrounding areas, and the Food Bank are losing a giant. We are committed to moving forward with and expanding upon the great work John has started. **John has made a real and lasting difference in the fight against hunger. We could not be more thankful, appreciative, or grateful for his work these past 12 years and wish him nothing but the best in his retirement and the future.**



*Thank You from the  
Bottom of Our Hearts!*



The past year has been full of so many challenges, but thanks to friends like you, we are able to rise to meet every single one of them. You have helped us to fill empty plates with nutritious meals. You have helped us to get food into the hands of children in need, so they can grow and thrive. You have helped us give seniors on fixed incomes more access to food, so they don't have to make difficult decisions on whether to pay for food or gas or medicine. You have helped us respond in uncertain and unpredictable times. **You have made all this work possible! Thank you from the bottom of our hearts!**



## Welcome to the Team!

North Country is excited to introduce you to three new members of our team!



**Megan Polley** is our new CSFP & Volunteer Coordinator. Megan runs the CSFP program, which provides 40-pound boxes of food each month to low-income seniors across the region. She also recruits and works with all volunteer groups at the Food Bank. **Please contact Megan if you are interested in volunteering at [megan@northcountryfoodbank.org](mailto:megan@northcountryfoodbank.org) or 218-399-7361.**

**Justin Lenoir** is our new CDL Driver/Warehouse Associate. Having Justin on the team allows North Country to expand its capacity to distribute food across northwest and west central Minnesota and give communities more opportunities to receive food deliveries. Justin has hit the ground running and is part of the dedicated team distributing food across our entire service area.



**Michael Nagy** recently joined our team as a new Warehouse Associate. He is involved in picking food orders for agency partners, as well as many other inventory and warehouse responsibilities. Michael's work directly impacts the distribution and flow of food out of the warehouse.

Our new team members help complete a staff that is dedicated and fully committed to serving individuals struggling with hunger across the region. **We are fortunate to have them on board and working with us to make sure our family, friends, and neighbors have enough to eat every single day.**

## Expressions of Gratitude

**"I didn't know what we were going to do or how we were going to make it. It has been a rough couple of months for my family," shared a young single mother. "Thank you so much for helping us."**

This young mother stopped by a mobile food distribution for help during the recent holiday season. She was so thankful for the help, that she sent a thank you note. She explained, "I have been having a difficult time paying all my bills and keeping up with the rising costs of everything. I didn't really know where to turn. I saw a flyer for your mobile food distribution and decided to show up. I left with a car full of food, and a huge sense of relief. Thank you, thank you, thank you for everything!"

North Country often receives phone calls or notes from people we have helped. This young mother, along with hundreds of families, children, and seniors often express their gratitude for the support you provide, which allows us to acquire and distribute food throughout northwest and west central Minnesota and Grand Forks, North Dakota.

**Like everyone, we hope things will soon take a turn for the better. But, until then, we are so grateful for generous supporters like you that help us to provide support to this young mother and her children.**



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**35,540 of our neighbors face hunger. A \$1 donation provides 3 meals for a neighbor in need.**



### CONTACT US

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To learn more or to make a donation to North Country Food Bank, visit [www.northcountryfoodbank.org](http://www.northcountryfoodbank.org).

