



The River

Spring 2017

Quarterly Newsletter of The River Food Pantry

The River Food Pantry
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Want to get email updates from The River? Sign up on our website and be sure to add us to your contact list.

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Our Mission:

To bring a message of mercy and hope to those in need by providing nutritional basics and encouragement; to be a unifying, servant hearted and community building expression of Jesus Christ in Madison.

It's More Than Just Food At The Pantry

By Hannah Becker

For the past 11 years, The River Food Pantry's mission has been to help individuals and families struggling to make ends meet by providing food, clothing, and meals while also connecting with the community and contributing to a greater good.

There are many reasons why a person walks through The River's door. Many need that little assistance of



The River serves over 650 households every week with groceries, clothing and hot meals.

the pantry so they can pay their bills and rent on time. For others, there simply would not be food on the table if it wasn't for The River Food Pantry.

Angela has been shopping at The River on and off for the past five years. "It hasn't always been like this for me," Angela recalls after having her car loaded with bags full of food from the pantry. "Everything changed when I had my son, Thor, and became a stay at home mom."

Angela's husband works long hours as a cab driver but the one source of income just isn't enough for the family to make ends meet on their own.

Angela said she's so thankful for a place like The River because her family is not always able to purchase groceries with their budget. "We

simply do not have enough money," Angela stated. "It's really unfortunate that we have to rely on the pantry for a source of food and clothing but without it, I don't know what we'd do."

Like many families who visit The River, they struggle with a one source income while the other parent stays home to watch the children since the price of daycare is too high.

Not only is The River a place for Angela and her family to receive clothes and groceries, it's an environment that she feels comfortable to open up to. At a young age, Thor was diagnosed with autism, "I can still recall telling the news to Rhonda, The River's Operations Director, when he was first diagnosed," Angela recalls. "She hugged me and reassured me that everything was going to be okay and I just started to cry. She was right though, he's my own little super hero." Angela said Rhonda always asks how Thor is doing now that he's in school.

Angela has also received donated gifts from The River for her family's Christmas. The holiday season can be a very stressful time for parents, especially for many that are already struggling to provide enough food for their family. "Our Christmas last year would not have been the same without getting those gifts," Angela said. "It was beautiful seeing Thor's face light up."

Even though Angela and her family don't have much at the moment, she wanted to give back somehow. "I wrote the woman who bought those gifts a thank you card," Angela recalls. "It's the

least that I could do for what she did for my family!"

Guests who visit The River not only receive fresh, nutritious food and basic necessities, but they also enjoy the simple pleasure of decency, compassion and dignity. The River understands behind every plate and every product, there's a person and a neighbor in need. With the help of volunteers and donors, people like Angela know they have a place for food, clothing, comfort and a place to connect with others in the community.

"I know it's going to get better," Angela shared with a smile. "I'm just glad we have this place to rely on for right now."



Thanks to the many kind and selfless people in the community that gave the Gift of Gobble, 760 families were able to receive a turkey for their Thanksgiving dinner.

We are truly thankful for all the neighbors who are helping neighbors struggling with low income. With the support from monetary donations and volunteers, many families in Dane County had a special meal with their family for the holidays.

Word From The Directors: Andy & Jenny

We are so excited! The River will be 11 years old in March! The growth over the past decade is nothing short of an amazing blessing.

Check out these numbers for 2016: 31,446 household visits, 2,335,082 pounds of food distributed, 158,206 pounds of clothing given away, 27,000 hot meals served, 10,400 mobile lunches given out to children and teens.

Each year we are able to serve more people with more food. Each year we continue to hear and read in the news that more people than ever are food insecure. We understand that 12% of the U.S. population is food insecure. CBS reported that 48% of the U.S. is in poverty or low income. That's almost half of the population.

These are staggering and overwhelming statistics to consider. Even here in Dane County, the poverty statistics are shocking to say the least, 1 in 5 children in our county is food insecure.

We truly love what we do at The River! It's exciting to hear from families every week about how coming to The River makes an enormous difference in their ability to make ends meet. Recently,

“The growth over the past decade is nothing short of an amazing blessing.”

a woman went out of her way to let us know how much she appreciated the assistance. She was a solid middle class, tax paying person until 2008. She was one of those who never, ever saw herself needing to use a food pantry to get by. We are humbled and blessed she feels welcome and encouraged by the help she is able to receive.



It's super exciting to say we have an outstanding staff that is as dedicated to our mission of feeding the hungry as we are. They work very hard so others are able to simply get by. We are so blessed to have a great staff, board members, and volunteers that are committed to helping others.

Did you know The River is completely self-funded? This means we rely on dedicated donors to keep the lights on, and the shelves stocked with nutritious food. Your financial contribution supports a local, grassroots organization, and that means your gift feeds people right here in Dane County. On behalf of everyone here at The River, thank you for your support!

Staff

- Administrative Assistant**
Michele Withers
- Communications Coordinator**
Hannah Becker
- Development Director**
Amy Lord
- Directors**
Jenny and Andy Czerkas
- Driver & Pantry Assistant**
Bill Littel
- Kitchen Manager**
William Berkan
- Lunch Program Manager**
Julie McCoubrey
- Meal Services Coordinator**
Ineabelle Lugo
- Operations Director**
Rhonda Adams
- Pantry Manager**
Dwayne Jordan
- Warehouse Coordinator**
Jon Clark

Meet Jennifer



Jennifer Zisser first volunteered at The River Food Pantry in early 2015 with fellow TASC co-workers during a public shopping session. “It was truly an amazing experience,” Jennifer said. “I saw really great people doing really great things and I knew I wanted to be a part of it.”

Since then, Jennifer got involved by organizing a volunteer session where TASC employees provided their talent of marketing, leadership, communications, etc. to The River staff.

Jennifer also joined The River Food Pantry Executive Board and not long after, became the Board Chair. “The River’s team, both staff and volunteers, are providing more than just food for the people that come for assistance,” Jennifer explains. “It feels amazing to be a part of this team.”

Third Annual Fun On Ice

We may not have played on ice, but everyone that attended the third annual Fun On Ice sure had fun!

Over 250 people in the community gathered at our family-friendly event held at The East Side Club on Saturday, January 28th. The event brought in roughly \$2,000 to support the pantry.

What does \$2,000 mean at The River Food Pantry?

- \$2,000 can provide 1,000 hot community meals.
- \$2,000 can provide food for 100 families a week.
- \$2,000 can provide 10 days worth of MUNCH lunches.



Hands of Hope

Give monthly and be the hands of hope to our neighbors in need.



Join online at:
riverfoodpantry.org/donate

2016 Highlights at The River Food Pantry

The River's mobile lunch program, MUNCH, was launched in June 2016. MUNCH is now providing packed lunches to children and teens at six north side neighborhoods every Saturday, Sunday and on non-school days. The number of lunches distributed continues to grow.

As of February 2017, roughly 300 lunches are being distributed each day.



The River Food Pantry distributed **2.3** million pounds of food.



The River Food Pantry distributed **\$826,988.45** worth of clothing, furniture and household items.



The River Food Pantry served **26,699** hot community meals. Two meals were added, resulting in five meals served each week.



The River Food Pantry distributed **10,400** packed lunches to children and teens through the new mobile lunch program, MUNCH.

Pantry Needs

Non-Perishable Food:

- Canned Protein (Tuna, Chicken, Spam, etc.)
- Peanut Butter
- Canned or Boxed Pastas
- Canned Fruit
- Canned Veggies
- Cereal
- Hamburger & Tuna Helpers
- Soup
- Pasta
- Canned Pasta Sauces
- Baby Food
- Oatmeal

Personal Items:

- Soap, Lotions, Toilet Paper, Diapers, Vitamins
- Shampoo & Conditioner
- Feminine Hygiene Items

Gently Used Clothing:

- Bedding
- Shoes
- Coats when in season
- Other misc. items needed too

Cash Equivalence

Your contribution to The River Food Pantry goes a long way.

\$10 = Provides \$100 worth of food with The Power of Ten

\$40 = Drives families home with groceries on Friday nights for a month

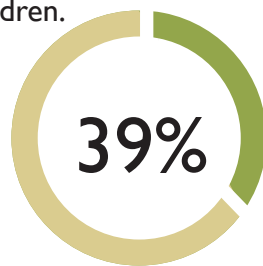
\$100 = Provides food for five families a week

\$200 = Keeps the trucks running to pick up 48,000 pounds of food weekly

\$280 = Provides rent and utilities to The River for one day

97 cents of every dollar goes to providing food and services.

One out of **three** visitors are children.



In 2016, The River received over **40,500** hours of volunteer service

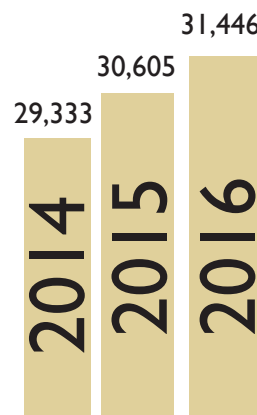
That's the equivalent of over **20** full time jobs

650+ households visits each week

A 2.6% increase over 2015



Households Served



Number of Households Served in Recent Months:

November 2016:

2,730 households

December 2016:

2,477 households

January 2017:

2,373 households

Your support makes this possible.

Thank You!

Shop online & support The River smile.amazon.com



Join the conversation in fighting hunger:





The River Hours

Tuesday & Thursday

Food Pantry & Clothing:
11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Tuesday & Thursday

Food Pantry, Clothing & Dinner:
5:00 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.

Friday

Food Pantry, Clothing & Dinner:
6:00 - 7:00 p.m.
(Doors open at 5:00 p.m.)

The River is an equal opportunity provider.

MUNCH

Saturday

Lunch productions 8:30 a.m. - 11 a.m.

Site distribution 11:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Sunday

Site distribution 11:20 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Donation

Monday & Wednesday

9 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

Tuesday, Thursday & Friday

9 a.m. - 7 p.m.