

Fall 2023

AROUND THE TABLE

News and Notes on Solving Hunger in South Dakota

FEEDING
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“It’s been really hard to make ends meet.”

— Brandi

New Hope for Brandi’s Family

Thanks to you, this young family has hope for a brighter future.

“It’s so wild right now, trying to feed my family, pay my bills, and save a little money,” says Brandi, a mother of two children, 8 and 9.

Brandi, her partner, and children live outside Clark, South Dakota where they have struggled under the weight of rising food costs. Rural communities like Clark face unique challenges that make affording food more difficult including lack of transportation, low-wage jobs, and underemployment.

“I’ve been shopping at a local grocery store, but it feels like the price of food has doubled,” she says. “I mean, coffee creamer costs \$7.00 now! As a young family, the cost of everything is so high. It’s been really hard for us to make ends meet. We’ve had to cut out all the extras and stick with the bare necessities, like rice and beans, to try to stretch our money further.”

Fortunately, Brandi’s children qualify for free school lunches at school, but now she’s found even more support. She just started receiving food from one of Feeding South Dakota’s mobile food distributions.

“This is my first time,” she says. “When I saw how much wonderful food there is, I decided to give it a whirl!”

Thank you for supporting Feeding South Dakota — your compassion and generosity give hope to families like Brandi’s.

Our Mission is to End Hunger in South Dakota.

We envision a state where no one person's health, well-being, or potential is hindered by the availability of nutritious food.

Our Core Values



Serve with Compassion

We ensure every person's dignity is preserved by respecting our differences, displaying empathy, and showing no judgement.



Work with Purpose

We have ownership of our mission when, as a team, we work with consistency and operate with integrity.



Connect with Intention

We grow through a culture of transparency, being receptive to others, and practicing humility.

AROUND THE TABLE

WITH LORI
DYKSTRA, CEO

Thank You Feeding South Dakota Family



Dear Friend,

This edition of *Around the Table* marks a turning point for our mission.

In these pages, you'll see for yourself how the growing and changing challenge of hunger is being felt in the daily lives of South Dakotans. But, you'll also see how your support is helping meet people where they are with the nourishment, support, and respect so many of us need right now.

You'll learn how a school pantry in Pierre is fostering an environment of acceptance and trust to reduce stigma and keep students fueled and healthy. And you'll read why a motorcycle club drives 45 miles to handle the heavy lifting at a local food distribution.

We chose these stories because they're shining examples of the work that inspired our new Core Values.

Think of these Core Values as the guiding principles for our mission. **We envision a state where no one person's health, well-being, or potential is hindered by the availability of nutritious food.** Aligning our actions with our values is how we get there.

I hope these words shed new light on the impact you make through your support of Feeding South Dakota. As we prepare for the holiday season, it's as important as ever to realize the impact we make by working together.

Because you're not only the spark that delivers healthy food across our state, **you're also the spark that sets off a chain reaction of compassionate, purposeful, and intentional acts** that help our neighbors feel more secure, seen, and valued in their community.

With that in mind, thank you again for partnering with us in this life-changing work. One person, one family at a time; together, we will end hunger across our great state.

With gratitude,



Partner Agency Profile:

Governor Grocer Program Supports Food-Insecure Students



Hope Armstrong recalls the day one of her sixth-grade students came to class and told her all he had to eat at home was a jar of peanut butter.



Hope Armstrong and Lou Taylor with Governor Grocer School Pantry.

Hope, now retired as a teacher at Georgia Morse Middle School (GMMS) in Pierre, frequently witnessed the impact that hunger and food insecurity have on students. “A lot of our kids, when they would go home on weekends, their Friday lunch was their final meal, sometimes until Monday morning,” she says. Many

times, they came to class hungry, which affected their ability to focus and learn.

Last year, however, in partnership with Feeding South Dakota Hope and her daughter Harrison, a current teacher at GMMS, started a Governor Grocer food program at the school to support economically disadvantaged students. At first, they began distributing backpacks filled with food for their students. They now operate a food pantry full of shelf-stable foods out of a former classroom.

“Each week, anywhere from 35-60 students visit the food pantry, where they can do their own shopping,” Hope says. “We’re feeding them for the weekend, so it’s two breakfasts, lunches, and even suppers for Saturday and Sunday.

“Each week, anywhere from 35-60 students visit the food pantry, where they can do their own shopping.”

— Hope Armstrong,
Governor Grocer Program

In those early days, students would walk in with their heads down, embarrassed or unsure of what their presence might mean. From then on, creating a safe and accepting environment became Hope’s top priority.

Grocery baskets and a checkout process make visiting the pantry feel like a true shopping experience, and no student leaves unseen by the pantry’s proprietor.

“My job is just to hug them and tell them that they are loved. They get a hug, high five, handshake, or a bonk on the head, which is actually just a Filipino blessing on the forehead,” Hope told us. “We don’t know how much of that they actually get at home, so we just want an opportunity to [...] make it so that they want to come every week.”

Something must have worked because now ...

“We have some kids that just hit us like Billy Goats,” Hope says. “They actually knock us over. Which kind of would indicate that we’re on the right track.”

This holiday season, the pantry will also distribute holiday food bags for Thanksgiving and Christmas, including gift certificates for a small turkey or ham, to make the holidays more special.



The Governor Grocer program is supported by local businesses, organizations, and individuals, and it works closely with Feeding South Dakota to ensure food can be purchased at a lower cost — thanks to friends like you.

“Pierre is a really good town with a lot of big-hearted, kind people that have really opened up their time,” Hope says. “They’ve opened up their resources. They’ve opened up their checkbooks.”



Volunteer Spotlight: The Old Order

Members of motorcycle clubs often have a reputation as a dangerous, rough-and-tumble lot. Scott Hagan, president of The Old Order motorcycle club in Stratford, wants to change that.



"We want to promote good motorcyclists by giving back to the community," Scott says.

It started back in 2018, when one of the club members started getting help at a local Feeding South Dakota food distribution. When he witnessed how many senior volunteers at the distribution were unloading huge packages from trucks, he realized it was too much for them to handle. He had to do something, so he came back to the motorcycle club and started recruiting members to volunteer with him — Scott was one of them.

"Most of us have to drive 45 miles to get here. But helping people load food in their cars means a lot," Scott says. "You see so many smiling faces month after month. When you see a mother show up with five little kids in the back of a worn-out van, you know you're doing something great for them."

"We want to promote good motorcyclists by giving back to the community"

— Scott

"Without this food distribution, it would be pretty tough for most of these people," Scott adds. "Even when the weather is bad, they're out here, making sure they get the food they need. It makes a big difference to their monthly budget."

It's quite a thing for our club members to do this. It's a win-win for us and the community."



Your Support Means Joy for Jenny

Ever since the pandemic, Jenny has struggled to make ends meet. She's disabled and relies on a meager fixed income and SNAP benefits to get by.



"It's been terrible because I still have trouble paying my bills," she says. "I have to pick and choose how I eat anymore. I don't buy onions or potatoes or milk anymore, and I only buy bread once a week because my money doesn't go very far."

Then a year ago, Jenny learned about a Feeding South Dakota mobile distribution near her home in Arlington, which she visits once a month. "There are so many things I can get here that I can't afford at the store," she says. "I'm trying to eat more vegetables, so I especially appreciate the fresh vegetables, but I also like the fresh animal protein, and eat more canned vegetables now, too."

Jenny appreciates how every little bit helps, as she has eight grandchildren who like to visit on weekends. "I don't have much, but I have my grandchildren," she says. "It's hard when I have to tell them there's just not enough food. But thanks to what I get from Feeding South Dakota, I can make some cookies or have cereal for them."

Thank you for helping to ensure that people in need, like Jenny, are able to access the food they depend on.

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