

Spring 2023

# AROUND THE TABLE

News and Notes on Solving Hunger in South Dakota

FEEDING  
SOUTH DAKOTA

MEMBER OF  
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AMERICA



***“Times are getting harder, and food is getting more and more expensive.”***

— Marisa

## **“I’m Just so Thankful to Get This Help.”**

**Thanks to You, Marisa is Able to Get the Food She Needs for Her Family.**

“Times are getting harder, and food is getting more and more expensive,” says Marisa, a single mother of two young boys.

Marisa works in human resources for a local school and she also holds down a part-time job to make ends meet. In addition to struggling with rising costs for food, she attends graduate school without any financial support — and she spends nearly \$20 a day on fuel for her car, traveling between her work and daycare for her kids.

“Basically, I earn too much to get any kind of financial help, like WIC or SNAP,” Marisa says. “But I don’t make enough to meet all our needs. I’m caught in the middle. I need some extra help, which is why I come to the Mount Marty Mobile Distribution.”

She appreciates that she can always find food here that her kids will eat — especially rice and beans — and she’s able to serve them a variety of healthy meals they enjoy.

“This is the third time I’ve come to the mobile distribution,” Marisa says. “It has actually helped a ton. It seems like food costs have doubled, and my whole family is lactose intolerant. My boys drink a LOT of lactose-free milk, and all the non-dairy products cost a lot. So, thanks to the food I get here, I can afford to buy a little bit more milk. I am just so thankful to get this help.”





## There Are Many Ways to Give

Choose a way to give that works for you, and know that Feeding South Dakota will work to ensure access to nutritional food for our neighbors facing hunger.

**However you choose to give, you make a difference.**



### Donor Funds

Monthly Giving  
One-Time Gift  
Employer Match  
Planned Giving  
Donate Stock  
Donor Advised  
Corporate Giving



### Food & Fund Drive



### Volunteer

Find out more at  
[feedingsouthdakota.org/donate](https://feedingsouthdakota.org/donate)

## AROUND THE TABLE

WITH LORI DYKSTRA, CEO

## Thank You Feeding South Dakota Family



To our friends and partners,

*Around the Table* isn't a newsletter about Feeding South Dakota — it's about *you*.

**After all, you are Feeding South Dakota.** No matter how you choose to give, your commitment to this mission keeps our wheels spinning and brings food directly to South Dakotans every day.

Last time I said I'd share more ways we're adapting to the growing and evolving challenge of hunger. On that note, I want to talk about something that's top of mind right now — child hunger.

Our Backpack and School Pantry Programs get a lot of attention during the school year, and justifiably so, but what happens over the summer?

The simplest way to find food will always be at our mobile distributions. However, Feeding South Dakota keeps a few child feeding programs over the summer and distributes BackPacks to daycare centers, too!

But that's old news! Hunger is changing, and so are we! So, here's something new:

**Feeding South Dakota and Sanford Health recently opened a new pantry for patients at Sanford Children's Hospital in Sioux Falls.** Now, kids and families showing signs of hunger can find medically appropriate food alongside their regular health care.

The pantry needed to be restocked after just three days! Clearly there was a need — that you helped meet!

That's the idea behind Feeding South Dakota's ongoing feasibility study. We're learning so much about where hunger is being felt, who's experiencing it, and how we can meet them where they are to remove hunger at the source.

It's important for you to know that we're not waiting to use what we learn to improve how we serve our communities. **Your support is creating new solutions to new problems every day.**

There are some big questions out there — and together, we're finding the answers.

With gratitude,





# Partner Agency Profile:

## Volunteers of America Meets Basic Needs Through Mommy's Closet



Volunteers of America (VOA) is just one of nearly 250 agencies that partner with Feeding South Dakota. While much of VOA's work involves HIV Prevention and Health Services, and critical support to veterans, they also offer crucial help for low-income families and people experiencing homelessness through their Mommy's Closet Program.

**“Without our connection to Feeding South Dakota, there would be a lot of people in the community who would go hungry.”**

— Josh Harris, Program Manager  
at Volunteers of America (VOA),  
in Rapid City.

### Mommy's Closet Means Relief

“Mommy's Closet is an important resource for low-income families with children under five years of age,” says Josh, who oversees the Closet. “We provide for basic needs, such as baby formula, diapers, and baby wipes, which Feeding South Dakota supplies to us. They've been a big help.”

Located in the second largest food desert in Rapid City, VOA also opened a Food Pantry two and a half years ago which not only serves low-income families but individuals and veterans who are hungry and homeless. They offer three types of food boxes or bags: one for individuals, one

for families, and a “non-cooking” box for those who lack access to a kitchen or cooking tools. They distribute 125-150 bags a month, and each bag serves about five or six meals.

“We don't have a kitchen so we can't actually serve meals here,” Josh says. “But the food we provide means a lot to these folks. A guy recently came in off the streets looking rough and hungry. He showered, sat down, and I gave him a bag of food. He devoured it. There was such a look of relief on his face.”

### Serving Up Healthier Food Options and Human Dignity

More and more, the Food Pantry is working to provide healthier food options for their clients. “So many of our people who are homeless are diabetic, or they suffer from high blood pressure, cholesterol, and various inflammation problems,” Josh says.

“So, Feeding South Dakota is helping us supply items like extra-light syrup, Kind Breakfast Bars, low-salt, and gluten-free foods. Besides that, they're sending us more fresh produce which helps — and they even donated a freezer to us, so we can offer more meats and ready-to-eat meals!”

Josh adds that, in the end, the Food Pantry and Mommy's Closet are not just about filling empty stomachs or meeting basic needs. “Simply put,” he says, “what we're doing is showing people human dignity and respect. People come to us needing food, clothing, whatever ... but more than that, they need dignity. And when we show them that dignity, and when we have earned their trust, we can connect them to more services to help them escape their circumstances and reach their potential.”

Whether they serve 30 families or 30,000, all of our Agency Partners know they can count on Feeding South Dakota — and donors like you — to provide the groceries, meals, and emergency food assistance they depend on.



# Staff Spotlight: Patrick Bierle

## A Food Delivery like None Other

It's three days before Christmas, and Patrick Bierle is sitting in the cab of Feeding South Dakota's delivery truck. Like the snow whipping across the windshield, his knuckles are white.

Next to him is Garrett, one of Feeding South Dakota's Ops Associate Drivers. They've just barreled through a snow drift as tall as their truck and burst out the other side unscathed.

*"Let's hope the next one's not bigger,"* he thinks to himself.

Ahead of them is a boundless sea of fresh snow blanketing the 60 miles of winding highway leading to their first drop point. "The winds were so heavy that drifts were forming in front of our eyes," he recalls.

### But There's No Turning Back

In the truck's cargo is the most important delivery Patrick's assembled in his nearly three years as Feeding South Dakota's Western Distribution Center Manager: **8,000 pounds of produce, frozen proteins, and water for people trapped in their homes on the Pine Ridge Reservation.**

Earlier that week a historic winter storm blasted across South Dakota, dropping up to 48 inches of snow in some areas. The calls for help from rural areas started coming in fast.



Snow drifts were preventing access to homes with no running water, no propane, and dwindling food supplies. Even if the roads were passable, the shelves at the nearest grocery store were empty.

The window to provide aid was closing fast. Another major blizzard was on the way that would bring life-threatening cold temperatures and winds.

In the days between the storms the Feeding South Dakota team rushed to put together 13 emergency food deliveries. On this day, the plan was for Patrick and Garrett to knock out two of them in a single run.

In Patrick's words, "they plowed through," and safely delivered all 11,000 pounds of food, driving through six or seven snow drifts along the way.



At each stop Patrick was met with looks of frazzled bewilderment and palpable relief. In Allen, men were waiting to load food directly onto the beds of pickups as fast as Garrett and Patrick could get it off the truck.

As the pickups sped off to reach the snowed-in homes in time, a voice called out to Patrick and Garrett. "You should not be on those roads," they say half-jokingly. "I mean, thank you for coming here, but what are you thinking?"

Patrick says the first and only thing that comes to his mind: **"We have a mission: You needed this food. So, we're here."**

Feeding South Dakota delivered 146,973 pounds of emergency food across the state in response to last December's winter storms. **When hunger rises your support is what provides the resources to meet it — no matter how great the need.**

***"We were going to do it no matter what. That's what we do. And our guys didn't blink. I wouldn't blink if it happens again and [they] wouldn't either."***

— Patrick

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