

Summer 2025

# AROUND THE TABLE

News and Notes on Solving Hunger in South Dakota



*The shelves are far from bare at the Food Service Center. American Association of Retired People worker Phoebe Kuecker adds even more canned goods to the already well-stocked supply. (1988) Photo Courtesy of the "Siouxland Heritage Museums."*



*Lori Dykstra has been the CEO of Feeding South Dakota since August 2021.*

## AROUND THE TABLE

With Lori Dykstra, CEO

Dear Friend,

How can we pay it forward to those who once held us up?

In this issue of Around the Table, you'll meet Muriel and Larry, a local couple who've been impacted by your gift and support through our Senior Box Program. You'll be able to read about how our partnership with Monument Health is creating change in the Black Hills region in the fight against hunger and join us in honoring our 50th Anniversary.

Our network of organizational partners, community leaders,

and local supporters like you are our greatest blessing, and we are so grateful for each of you! Addressing hunger is a complex issue, and each demographic we serve comes with their own specific needs. We could not do what we do without you, and I'm thankful every day that you are a part of our team.

Let's honor those who once cared for us—by caring for them now.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Lori Dykstra'.

Lori Dykstra  
President & CEO



## Stitch By Stitch *Muriel's Journey*

Muriel sits in her car at the City Maintenance Garage in Avon, patiently working on her needlework. She's waiting for her monthly Feeding South Dakota food box, a resource that provides nourishment for both her and her husband, Larry. Since his stroke in 2012, Larry lost his sight in both eyes, making daily tasks and mobility difficult.

After the stroke, the couple moved to town, leaving behind their multi-generational family farm. "The farm has so much history—with his grandma and grandpa, and his uncle who lived there," Muriel reflects. The loss of daily chores and tractor rides was a big adjustment for both Muriel and Larry.

But through it all, Muriel and Larry continue to draw strength from one another. This year, they're celebrating 55 years of marriage—a true testament to their enduring love and commitment.

Muriel still finds joy in the simple things, like cooking meals from the food box she receives.

"You have no idea how many meals I can make from this box," she says, a smile spreading across her face. "There are so many meals—I look forward to it so much. Every time I get it, I just can't hardly wait."

She continues, "A dozen eggs may not sound like much, but you can do a lot with that," Muriel says thoughtfully. "And a gallon of milk—well, for us, that goes a long way. I usually freeze a couple of cups to use later." "This has saved us so many times. It's wonderful."

Muriel is a woman of many stories, shaped by experience and resilience. Reflecting on her younger days, she shares, "I always wanted to be a nurse. But God had other plans for me. Now, I am a nurse—caring for my husband."



Monthly food boxes mean more than just sustenance. Thanks to the generosity of friends like you, Muriel and Larry (and many others like them) have not only the food they need, but the reassurance that their community cares.

## Monthly Giving: 605 Meal Makers

Want to make a greater impact in the fight against hunger? Here's your chance!

Every day, families in South Dakota struggle with one of the most fundamental needs: food.

When you join 605 Meal Makers and become a monthly donor, you'll join a group of dedicated supporters of the fight to end hunger! Gifts are charged automatically every month and can be modified any time by contacting our Gifts Processing Coordinator.

A monthly gift of \$50 or more provides 150 meals every month – a great way to help us celebrate our 50th Anniversary!



# Volunteer Spotlight:

## Mary Beth McClellan

### Monument Health Food Pantry

As a nurse with 42 years of experience, Mary Beth McClellan knows the fight against hunger. Working predominantly in the Black Hills region, she's been involved with Monument Health's clinic pantry since it began in 2018. The pantry's success has created a model for Feeding South Dakota Wellness Pantry Programs now located in clinics throughout the state.

The decision to open a pantry at the North Rapid clinic location was in response to community needs. In 2016, nearly 4,000 individuals in the area were food insecure. That's almost double the numbers seen before the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We do live in a food desert in North Rapid," she says. "We have a fairly large Walmart, but if you're walking and the store is 7 or 8 blocks away, it may as well be 8 miles away."

The pantry doesn't just provide food – it promotes healthier living through nutritious options and education, too. Managed by nurses, visitors receive a run down of label reading, an overview of a balanced meal, and access to further resources that provide food and health needs.

Helping their patients understand how diet can help with chronic disease provided a measurable outcome for the Monument Health clinic. A study of diabetic patients found that after one year of diet education, the percentage of patients with high hemoglobin A1C (a fancy term for average blood sugar) dropped from 43% to 20%.

"The food pantry was doing an amazing job at offering different things for food."



As a training hub for resident physicians, the clinic plays a vital role in supporting the future of healthcare. MaryBeth has found that the clinic helps these physicians understand the importance of having food access.

"They have a million things that they're learning and doing, and sometimes nutrition isn't at the top of that," she shared. "It's nice that they get to experience a patient coming in not feeling well, they haven't had food for a day or so, and we send them home with food."

Feeding South Dakota's ability to build strong partnerships with local organizations is made possible by your generous support. Thanks to your compassion, our impact keeps growing.

***Like what you're reading?*** There's more to discover! Check out these and other episodes of our podcast on YouTube.

- ▶ "There's Always Room at the Table": A conversation with Lori Dykstra, CEO
- ▶ "The kids that we serve are really all of our kids": A conversation with Michelle Erpenbach, President of Sioux Falls Thrive

Want to hear more episodes of our  
**50 FACES OF FEEDING SOUTH DAKOTA PODCAST?**  
Scan the QR code to keep listening!





## Take Action This September

We're amplifying our Anniversary for this year's Hunger Action Month. Visit our website to learn how you can be part of this national movement to help end hunger at [feedingsouthdakota.org/ham](https://feedingsouthdakota.org/ham).



## How Can We Repay the Debt We Have to Those Who Once Held Us Up?

Right now, 9,060 seniors over the age of 60 in South Dakota are food insecure. As we age, challenges like chronic health issues, limited mobility, social isolation, transportation barriers, and fixed incomes make it harder to access nutritious food to thrive.

But we can be part of the solution!

Feeding South Dakota is in proud partnership with the South Dakota Department of Education to administer the USDA's Senior Box Program in all 66 counties across the state. Each month, eligible seniors receive a pre-packed box of nutritious, shelf-stable foods designed to supplement key nutrients often missing from their diets.

This program is a lifeline for supporting seniors in their golden years, ensuring they don't have to choose between medicine and meals.

Yet this year, federal funding changes reduced our USDA caseload by 208 boxes—cutting our reach to 2,264 statewide. Looking ahead, disruption continues: President Trump's FY26

Budget proposes ending the Commodity Supplemental Food Program, replacing it with Make America Healthy Again boxes—dismantling a vital safety net for aging Americans.

Fewer boxes mean seniors will not get the critical support for one of life's most basic needs: food. We need help to make up the shortfall, which is where you come in!

Your support helps bridge that gap—putting healthy food on the table for seniors who need it most. Financial gifts are a great way to show you care, but advocacy and raising awareness are crucial ways we can fight hunger.

**Visit [feedingsouthdakota.org/ways-to-give/advocate](https://feedingsouthdakota.org/ways-to-give/advocate) to learn more about how your voice matters!**

Together, we can ensure every South Dakotan, at every age, has access to the nourishment they deserve. Let's honor those who once cared for us by caring for them now!

