

“It’s Eye-Opening to See the Need”

How this couple brings hope to their neighbors, thanks to you.

Gary and Connie Hawks used to be ranchers, so they rarely knew what it was like to go hungry. Their farm was their grocery store.

But now, as volunteer managers of the Bon Homme County Food Pantry in Tyndall, they see hunger and food insecurity every week.

This Feeding South Dakota partner pantry is open every Wednesday morning and has evening hours once a month. Week after week, they're looking into the faces of those who know what it feels like to go without.

Connie says she and Gary "always had food, so it's been eye-opening to see the need."

"We realize how fortunate we really are," adds Gary.

The pantry serves about 55 families monthly, including more and more young families. On one recent Wednesday, 17 families came to the pantry.

"People are struggling because of high prices," Connie says. Gary says it doesn't take much to put a person in sudden need — an unexpected car repair, for example.

They stock the pantry with a combination of goods from the food bank and donations from community members — including one woman who regularly donates dozens of eggs and another who gives 36 pounds of butter every two months.

They're also overwhelmed by the gratitude of their pantry guests.

"People say, 'You can't believe how much this helps,'" Connie says. "They say, 'We're so grateful that you're here.'"

And we're so grateful you're here, partnering with Feeding South Dakota to bring help and hope to neighbors.



“People say, ‘You can’t believe how much this helps!’”

— Connie



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 judgment.



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



Focusing on Our Rural Neighbors

Dear Friend,

As South Dakotans, looking out for each other is a way of life. When someone is struggling, the best we can do is be there to offer our help — and that rule extends to even our most distant and hard-to-reach neighbors.

That's my long-winded way of telling you that **improving food access in rural areas is one of our most urgent and pressing issues.** So, with this edition of *Around the Table*, I wanted to spotlight some of the incredible work happening in smaller communities and update you about the effort to tackle rural hunger in our state.

Right now, a family in Sioux Falls has better access to food assistance than a family living near Kyle, Avon, or Holabird. However, as you'll read, these families are just as — if not more — aware of the hardships at the heart of food insecurity.

That's why partner agencies like the Bon Homme County Food Pantry and mobile food distributions in towns like Ipswich play such a pivotal role in the health and well-being of their community. It's also why getting more people on SNAP (more on page 4) can profoundly impact our effort to decrease food insecurity in South Dakota.

So, what does the future of rural hunger relief look like? In a word — hopeful.

Right now, we're considering how Feeding South Dakota can effectively and efficiently distribute food to more rural communities in our state. These are important strategies that I'm confident will lead to a better future for our neighbors facing hunger in rural areas.

I hope you'll be excited and proud of the work we're doing together to tackle rural hunger. **It's an honor to partner with you, and it's a thrill to see your generosity continue to bring nourishment and joy to so many.**

Thank you again for your trust and support.

With gratitude,



Volunteer Spotlight: Lynn Gauer

Mobile Distribution Pantry, Ipswich

“Everybody needs help once in a while.”

Lynn Gauer runs an Ipswich flower shop that goes by the fun name of “Petal Pushers.”

In addition to making lovely arrangements in her day job, Lynn is making even more important arrangements on the side as a volunteer with Feeding South Dakota.

Lynn has been coordinating our Mobile Food Distribution Program in Ipswich for 15 years, ensuring that people facing hunger in her rural community have regular access to nutritious food.

Lynn’s outreach started years ago when the local senior center was located next to her flower shop, and she volunteered to help with our Senior Box Program.

“And then I got a call asking if I would like to volunteer for the Feeding South Dakota food truck,” she recalls. “And I said, yes, no problem.”

Our Mobile Food Distribution Program allows us to go where hunger is, including the most rural parts of our state. The truck stops at the Edmunds County 4-H



Building once a month, serving individuals and families facing hunger — including about 20 seniors per month who receive a Senior Box.

Lynn says she often meets seniors who are in a situation where they have to choose between paying their utility bills or eating.

Folks come from miles around — including Bowdle, Hosmer, Roscoe, and other nearby communities — for the distributions in Ipswich.

The food insecurity rate in Edmunds County is relatively low at 5.7%, compared to some South Dakota counties where it’s higher than 20%. But Lynn says the needs in her community are clear — she sees them every month when folks come to get food.

But she’s also concerned about the people she never sees — people who don’t come to the distribution either because they don’t know about it, or because of their pride.

“Some people are just too proud to come in,” Lynn says.

“You don’t need to be embarrassed,” Lynn says. “Everybody needs help once in a while.”

We’re grateful that you play a key role in providing that help. If you’d like to join Lynn as a Mobile Food Distribution volunteer in a rural community, go to feedingsouthdakota.org/volunteer. Thank you!



Staff Spotlight: Katy Nankivel

Community Outreach Coordinator

Helping People Get SNAP Benefits

SNAP is the most successful program in the U.S. to help lift people out of food insecurity, so it's a vital companion to the work we do at Feeding South Dakota. Here is an interview with Katy Nankivel, who works to help neighbors apply for the benefits.

What work happens within your role?

My work primarily centers around advocating, educating, and assisting people with the application process for SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as “food stamps”). I’m giving information and answering questions. The application process can sometimes be a little daunting. We want to help remove any barriers to ensure eligible people have access to the program.

What type of barriers?

A lot of people aren't sure of eligibility requirements. For example, some people think they can't get SNAP because they don't have children. Many seniors aren't aware that they can get SNAP. And then there's a stigma around getting SNAP. We help to break down that stigma and let people know that if you are eligible for the help, you should definitely be utilizing it.

Who is Feeding South Dakota partnering with on these efforts?

We have about 250 agency partners throughout the state — food pantries, kitchens, shelters, and community service sites. I go out to their locations and meet people where they're at, and bring along the technology needed to complete an online application. I set up a table, and I have on-the-spot assistance right there. I'm able to engage with people in that moment and get that application in.



In Sioux Falls, we've partnered with a couple libraries in town to offer monthly assistance.

What should someone expect if they come and meet with you?

One-on-one interaction. I'm going to sit down with them and make them feel comfortable and respected. I'm going to take the time to make sure they thoroughly understand the process and next steps — like the necessary documents and what to expect in an interview for the benefits.

Why is the SNAP program so important for neighbors facing hunger?

SNAP has a lot of great benefits. Not only is it addressing food insecurity for people who are low income, but it also offers choice. The SNAP card works like a debit card: People get to go to a grocery store and pick what fits into their diet — perhaps (they have) diabetes or some kind of food allergy.

Why is this program so important right now?

There are more and more people facing hunger. If we can expand this work, more people would rather be in a grocery store, picking out their own food, than going through a pantry. Maybe eventually, this could shorten our lines and help more people.

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MEMBER OF
FEEDING
AMERICA

CONTACT US

info@FeedingSouthDakota.org
FeedingSouthDakota.org
605-335-0364

