

“Food Ties Us All Together”

How a neighborhood pantry helps build a community

There’s a part of Rapid City known as The Woods, because it includes the housing developments of Knollwood, Surfwood, and Maplewood. It’s a predominantly lower-income community that has been known for gang activity and violence.

But Community Outreach Specialist Tyler Read of the Rapid City Police Department says that’s been changing for the better in recent times in great part because of ... a food pantry. That’s right: one of Feeding South Dakota’s partner pantries is helping to bring this community together and, incredibly, reduce local crime.

“It’s much more safe now,” Read says.

The pantry, situated in the Knollwood Townhouse complex, is run in part by volunteers from Knollwood Heights United Methodist Church, where Sharla McCaskell is pastor. She says the pantry is a magnet for neighbors facing hunger — and everybody pitches in to help. Moms and grandmas get involved, and nearby families donate what they can. It takes a village.

“It’s a great way to build community without any strings attached,” says Pastor Sharla.

But the biggest draw is the after-school program for kids, who come not just for the activities and to stay off the streets, but to get free snacks. As those kids go home and tell their families about the pantry, the trust factor builds, and more and more neighbors come by.

Read is involved to ensure it’s a safe place, but he is also building relationships with the kids and their families, spreading goodwill along with good food.

“Food ties us all together,” he says. “It builds and strengthens relationships. It’s opening the door to the community so we can make a connection with them.”

Your support helps make these kinds of efforts possible. Thank you!



“It’s a great way to build community without any strings attached.”

— Pastor Sharla



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

You Help Us Reach the Rural and Remote



Dear Friend,

Think back to your first encounter with Feeding South Dakota. Maybe it was an impactful story of a neighbor facing hunger that inspired an act of generosity, or an afternoon volunteering. That initial experience lit a spark in you that still burns brightly today.

Our shared spark fuels a common mission to feed South Dakota — all of it. Because we're not just "Feeding Sioux Falls" or "Feeding Rapid City." We are Feeding South Dakota.

Why am I bringing this up? Unfortunately, because barriers to nutritious food are getting higher in South Dakota. In places like Sioux Falls, that means finding ways to increase food distribution to feed more people. In more rural areas and Native American Reservations, the solution is more complicated.

People facing hunger in hard-to-reach towns are having trouble affording food, and sometimes, their only lifeline is a monthly Feeding South Dakota food distribution.

In the last issue of *Around the Table*, I mentioned an ongoing study to help analyze and improve our response to rural hunger. **Today, we have a**

clearer picture of the path toward achieving rural food security and the challenges ahead.

So, what does effective rural hunger relief look like? Well, it looks a lot like the amazing work of the caring people running the pantries featured on pages 1 and 3. The challenges facing these communities are as varied and unique as the people who call them home, and that means the solutions will be, too.

The next step is simple — we listen! **Right now, we're working with our partners and community leaders to learn about their unique needs and how Feeding South Dakota can help create solutions.** We don't want to just give them food; we want to help identify barriers to food access and collaborate on holistic strategies that will move them toward food sustainability.

Addressing rural hunger is a complex issue, and there will be no easy and fast solutions. **But working together, we can do this ... and by "together," I mean you! We can't do it without you, and I'm so thankful that you're on our team.**

With gratitude,



Volunteer Spotlight: Dave Lone Elk

Pine Ridge Reservation Pantry

Dave Lone Elk has spent most of his life on the Pine Ridge Reservation, home of the Oglala Lakota Nation. He remembers sometimes going without food or fresh water as a child, and now, as an adult, he wants to make sure none of his neighbors experience that kind of hardship.

As a field director with Running Strong, an organization that works to strengthen Native communities, Dave runs a food pantry in Porcupine, at the heart of the reservation.

The pantry used to be open just once a month, but since partnering with Feeding South Dakota, they're open twice a week, and thus able to meet many more of the community's needs. Dave says they serve about 40 families per week.

"People can come at their own convenience now," Dave says.

Before, when the pantry opened only monthly, many would miss their opportunity to get food. "There was always that person who would call the day after and say, 'I missed it,' or 'I didn't have a ride,' or 'I was at a parent-teacher conference for my grandchild,'" he says. "But I'd have to tell them, 'I'm sorry, but we're out.'"



Dave Lone Elk makes sure his neighbors get the food they need.

As a Feeding South Dakota partner, Dave no longer has to apologize for being out of food, as the pantry shelves are regularly well-stocked and replenished.

Dave says his neighbors are a proud folk, but by calling the service a "pantry," it preserves their dignity.

"A lot of us are a little prouder than we should be," he says. "But there's a pantry in every home. You've got food in your fridge, and then there's food in the pantry. It kind of normalizes the feeling that we're all on the same level here."

Dave rarely has to monitor how much food people take when they visit, using something like an honor system.

"I tell people, 'Take what you need,'" he says. "If you don't need it, don't take it.' People are good about that."

Thanks to you, thousands of our Native neighbors are receiving the food they need.



Taking It to the Streets

How you help this unique church meet the needs of homeless and hungry neighbors

Not so long ago, Crystal struggled with a meth addiction and felt so worthless that she contemplated ending it all. Going to church was the last thing on her mind.

So church came to her. And they brought food.

Sioux Falls' Church on the Street, a ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), is a self-described “church without walls” that reaches out “to the people who, for whatever reason, cannot come inside,” according to its mission statement.

They provide outdoor worship services (weather permitting), spiritual and emotional help, and practical help like clothing, free laundry service, and a food pantry that partners with Feeding South Dakota.

The pantry, open three days a week, serves about 1,000 people per month.

Crystal is now clean and working as a volunteer with Church on the Street, helping people who struggle in ways she once did. “I was there,” she says. “Volunteering is my way of giving back. Because they were here for me when I needed them.”

At the pantry, Crystal serves neighbors she knows from her seasons of addiction. “My story helps them to have hope,” she says. “They come in and I say, ‘I used to help you get drugs. Now I’m here to help you get food and clothes.’”

“We just try to show up where people are,” says Chris Matson, pastor of Church on the Street. “We have a heart for folks who are experiencing homelessness and poverty.”



Crystal, a pantry volunteer

Like any congregation, Church on the Street addresses spiritual and emotional needs. But to connect with people on the streets, Matson says they first must meet practical needs, like food and hygiene essentials.

Matson embraces the dual role: “I’m not just the lady who gives you toilet paper,” she laughs. “But I’m your pastor too.”

The ministry formed in 2016 when several local Lutheran churches identified a specific need.

“Church on the Street was designed to fill a niche,” Matson says. “We designed a congregation around what people need instead of coming in and saying, ‘We’re going to do it this way.’ So much of what we do is listening to people and responding.”

Matson says “milk and meat” are the items that people most want when they come to the pantry.

“And we couldn’t do it without Feeding South Dakota,” she says. “Thank you!”

And Feeding South Dakota couldn’t do it without YOU. We’re grateful for your support!



Pastor Chris Matson

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