



Your Community Food Shelf For 43 Years



Lakes Area Food Shelf News

April-May 2023



***In A Time Of Record Need...
Your Donations Make Sure
No One Is Turned Away!***

Your Community Spirit Lights Our Way



You Are The Fuel Sustaining Us

Message From Lakes Area Food Shelf Director Kathy Adams



Dear Friends,

There is much happening at Lakes Area Food Shelf – the direct result of the community focus groups, surveys, and one-on-one meetings within our local area as the Board completed our strategic plan! This newsletter is full of great updates on our plan, building expansion project, program developments, and more.

Most importantly, this newsletter is intended to thank each and every one of you for your participation in our largest fundraising campaign each year, “The MN FoodShare Campaign”! Your contributions are greatly appreciated, and we cannot thank you enough for helping us provide food to our friends and neighbors.

The Campaign ran from February 27 through April 9, 2023, and with your help, we raised \$160,422.54 in financial donations and 5,129 lbs of food and non-perishable items! Of that total, our faith community contributed \$69,476.86 and 4,232 lbs of food & non-perishables.

Thanks to Christ Community Church, Grace United Methodist Church, Lutheran Church of the Cross, Our Lady of Lakes, Our Saviour’s Lutheran Church, Pequot Lakes Baptist Church, St. Alice, St. Christopher, and Timberwood Church.

Each of you individually and as members of the faith community are the fuel that has sustained Lakes Area Food Shelf as a critical, valued, impactful resource in our local communities for the past 43 years!

As you have heard, in 2021 we had 4,657 visits to the food shelf. In 2022, that rose to 10,978. In 2023 when compared with this same time period in 2022, we have seen an increase of 40% in the number of visits. Keeping your food shelf operating cost nearly \$400,000 in 2022. Our ability to provide food to as many as 58 families a day – lies solely with you.

Recently, a couple that visits the food shelf stated, “Every time we sit down for a meal, we thank God for the food shelf and the food it provides.”

We couldn’t be more humbled to be the stewards of your generosity. If you haven’t already done so, we hope you will stop in, see what we do and how we do it, and feel the gratitude of those you so generously help.

Blessings,

Kathy Adams

Director



LAKES AREA FOOD SHELF

THANKS YOU



Our Lady of the Lakes Deacon, Rick Paine, representing St. Alice and St. Christopher’s; Pastor Stephen Blenkush, Our Savior’s Lutheran Church, Pequot Lakes; Pastor Drew Bakken of Lutheran Church of the Cross, Nisswa; Tim Moore, LAFS Board Chair; and Pastor Jen Matthees, Grace United Methodist Church, Pequot Lakes, met at LAFS on Thursday, 4/6 for the annual “church challenge” – encouraging all local churches to support the food shelf.

(Photo by Dan Letterman: Echo-Journal)

Want to Help? Please Donate to Lakes Area Food Shelf, PO Box 423, Pequot Lakes, MN, 56472

Our Friends & Neighbors Need The Food Shelf

End of Pandemic Programs and Inflation Drive Increases

No question, the increases of friends and neighbors in need we experienced in 2022 are continuing in 2023.

“The spikes in cost of living in 2022 brought in the so-called ‘working poor,’ people who work two and three jobs, but still can’t afford the high costs of housing, food, and gas,” explained Food Shelf Director Kathy Adams. “The numbers are high and growing.”

In January and February of 2023, LAFS saw 2,167 individual visits vs. 1,299 for the same period in 2022, a growth of 868. Households served in January and February of 2023 were 715, an increase of 269 over 2022 when LAFS served 446 households. Those figures are in line with recently released data from Minnesota Hunger Solutions that shows significant spikes in use of food shelf services. Minnesotans made over 5.5 million visits to food shelves, 1.9 million more visits than 2021, the agency reported. Hunger Solutions is a non-profit organization that has monitored food insecurity in the state since 2001. “Food insecurity” is a bureaucratic term. It is applied to individuals who miss meals because they don’t have or can’t afford food. They are hungry.

The economic pressures aren’t letting up in 2023. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) projects overall food prices will rise 4.2-10.1%; packaged foods are predicted to rise 4.5-11.7%. Some food categories are expected to rise faster: eggs 27.3%, dairy 8%, oils 16.5%, cereals and bakery products 12%. Price pressures leave many Lakes Area residents short of cash and with an awful choice.

“Do I skip a meal so I can pay the rent? Do I skip multiple meals so I can pay for gas? We see these situations daily,” said LAFS Board President Tim Moore. “And, the need is growing. New data from Feeding America puts ‘food insecurity’ – that’s the government’s description for hungry people — in a range of 9% to almost 12% in the Brainerd Lakes region.”

Any one of us could be the real people behind these numbers. One unexpected life event could make us unable to care for themselves. Food insecure people - hungry people - are our Friends and Neighbors, those we see on the street, at the playground, in church. “The hungry” can easily be you or me.

We are fortunate you’ve continued to address these needs with your donations. Know that Lakes Area Food Shelf can really stretch your dollars. Frequently, we’re asked if it is more helpful to donate food or financial contributions. While both are important, picking up \$10 worth of groceries at the store may mean a head of lettuce and a couple cans of soup. By comparison, we often double and even triple the buying power of a \$10 donation, because we order reduced price food from Second Harvest North Central Food Bank and have valuable local partners including Schaefer’s Foods in Nisswa, Pequot Lakes Super Valu, Cub Foods, COSTCO, Target, and Walmart.



LEFT - LAFS Board member, Jean Kraft, her husband, Jim, & granddaughters Lily and Rose drop off food the girls provided for the March Campaign! Thank you, Lily and Rose, for helping others with your kindness!

Thanks also to Pequot Tool and Manufacturing, to Pequot Middle School, and to Lisa Kaneski, owner of Pequot Lakes Dairy Queen for donating 10% of proceeds from DQ Day to LAFS



Need Food? We're Here For You! Call 218-568-8474

Be Sure to Like and Follow us on Facebook and Instagram & visit our web page <https://lakesareafoodshelf.org/>

The Lakes Area Food Shelf Resource Hub

“Hunger Free & Healthy” Fundraising Campaign Underway

In January of 2023, Lakes Area Food Shelf announced a major fundraising campaign to build a Community Resources Hub. The Hub will address the growing need for social services in northern Crow Wing County. The fundraising campaign is called “Hunger Free & Healthy.” Money raised will be used to expand the current food shelf building. Development of the project will come at significant cost.

“LAFS is an essential resource to the communities we serve, and our core program will remain operating as a food shelf,” explained LAFS Director Kathy Adams. “We are trusted. So, individuals and families are comfortable sharing information. Our bond makes us uniquely positioned to identify resources and help them overcome the barriers they face.”

Financing the Hunger Free & Healthy initiative will require extensive fundraising by LAFS, which has already secured grants from three significant partners. The Blandin Foundation has approved a \$90,000 Leadership Boost Grant. The Hunt Family Fund has pledged \$75,000 as a match grant and the match has been met. The Margaret A. Cargill Foundation of the Minneapolis Foundation has donated \$20,000. LAFS will designate money from its Reserve Funds as well. The timeline for the project is still being developed with a goal of breaking ground in 2023.



What Is A Community Resources Hub?

The practice of food shelves as “community resource hubs” is gaining traction nationwide. Advocacy is now defined as delivering healthy, nutrient rich food, and attempting to mitigate the underlying challenges that lead people to visit a food shelf. Community Resource Hubs, integrated within the food shelf, house a network of existing direct service providers from multiple disciplines. The partnership creates navigators who provide help beyond food, all the while protecting individual privacy and advocating without judgment. LAFS is actively seeking partners to staff the hub.

“Lack of food is often an outcome of many pressures facing individuals and families,” said LAFS Board President Tim Moore. “We offer meals and help people work through paying rent or getting healthcare or filling their gas tank.”

What’s The Overall Goal of Hunger Free & Healthy?

Serve people in a time of need, help them become hunger free and attain a healthy life, so they in turn can help others.

The decision to build a Community Resource Hub came from feedback gathered midway through 2022 during LAFS’ first ever Strategic Plan process. The Strategic Plan came together in the midst of record-breaking visits to the food shelf driven by spikes in the cost of living and the expiration of pandemic relief programs.

LAFS Board members heard from individuals who use the food shelf, from a cross section of community and business leaders, and from social service experts. There was consensus to keep food as a primary service and to expand LAFS’ mission through partnerships with existing experts. The LAFS location in Pequot Lakes was cited as a significant asset in taking this approach.

“We discussed the severe shortage of direct service providers located in our area,” said LAFS Director Adams. “Brainerd, 20 miles from Pequot Lakes, is a hub of wonderful service providers. Yet, to someone whose car runs on prayer instead of fuel, or whose bicycle couldn’t travel that distance, those 20 miles might as well be 200 miles.”

“At LAFS, we have a saying. In order to achieve community, we need each other to build one,” said Board Chair Moore. “Our community understands the need. Through the Hunger Free & Healthy campaign, we’ll build a Community Resource Hub that delivers long-term positive impact for us all.”

Individuals or groups wishing to make a tax deductible donation to Hunger Free & Healthy can do so by sending a check to: Hunger Free & Healthy Campaign - Lakes Area Food Shelf - PO Box 423 Pequot Lakes, MN 56472 Or by visiting the food shelf website at <https://lakesareafoodshelf.org/donate>



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Food = Medicine, Striving to Deliver Nutrient Rich Food

In 2022, we launched the Farms-to-Food Shelf Pilot Program with Pine River Area Food Shelf, the Pine River/Backus Community Meal Program, and Brakstad Farms. It's funded through Sourcewell. We partner with local vegetable and fruit farmers/growers to provide friends and neighbors with nutrient-rich fresh produce, which they often cannot afford.

Our Friends and Neighbors tell us, "When we go to the store, I have to scoot my kids past the apples and carrots – the two things they most love – because I just can't afford them. I can't believe you offer such great produce." The quality of the produce is high, and local physicians are referring their low-income patients with diabetes, heart disease, obesity, and other life-threatening conditions to the food shelf.

Recently, we've extended our efforts with "Healthy Choices." It focuses on food as medicine. With guidance from Dr. Jeremiah Eisenschek, a LAFS Board Member, physician and leader at Essentia Health, we are expanding and highlighting our options for low-carb, nutrient dense foods. These foods include eggs, meats, fish, nuts, cheeses, berries, and above-ground veggies are especially valuable for our friends and neighbors with diabetes, obesity, cardiovascular disease, fatty liver, and some forms of cancer. Those with socioeconomic challenges are also much more likely to have such diseases and have a harder time affording such foods.

"The most powerful prescription to countering the destructive outcomes of insulin resistance, the underlying metabolic cause for much of our modern chronic disease, is "real food"— food rich in natural fats and protein and low in carbohydrates. This starts with living a more intentional dietary lifestyle, switching from convenient, processed, and sweet foods, to real, savory, and satisfying foods. By abstaining from sugars and starches, insulin resistance and its related conditions can be reversed while allowing the utilization of stored fat for energy. Health and vitality are restored, and additional suffering and costs saved" Dr. Eisenschek explains. Patients at Essentia Health and other local clinics have found LAFS to be an invaluable resource to support their health goals.

LAFS will be offering more direction from Dr. Eisenschek on our newly redesigned website <https://lakesareafoodshelf.org/> as we commit to helping our friends and neighbors become Hunger Free and Healthy. You can also read an extensive article Dr. Eisenschek published in Lake Country Journal, December-January 2020-2021 issue.



Dr. Jeremiah Eisenschek



LEFT- Jean and Jim Kraft present LAFS Board Chair Tim Moore food and nonfood items from the Lutheran Church of the Cross congregation CENTER and RIGHT - Local churches lined up at Lakes Area Food Shelf loading dock Thursday, 4/6 to drop off food, toiletry items, paper products, and monetary donations to support Lakes Area Food Shelf's March MN FoodShare Campaign.

About Our Newsletter

It's put together entirely by volunteers. Let us know if you have any story ideas or, any questions about your community food shelf!

E-mail: lafs1@tds.net



Donate at <https://lakesareafoodshelf.org/donate>

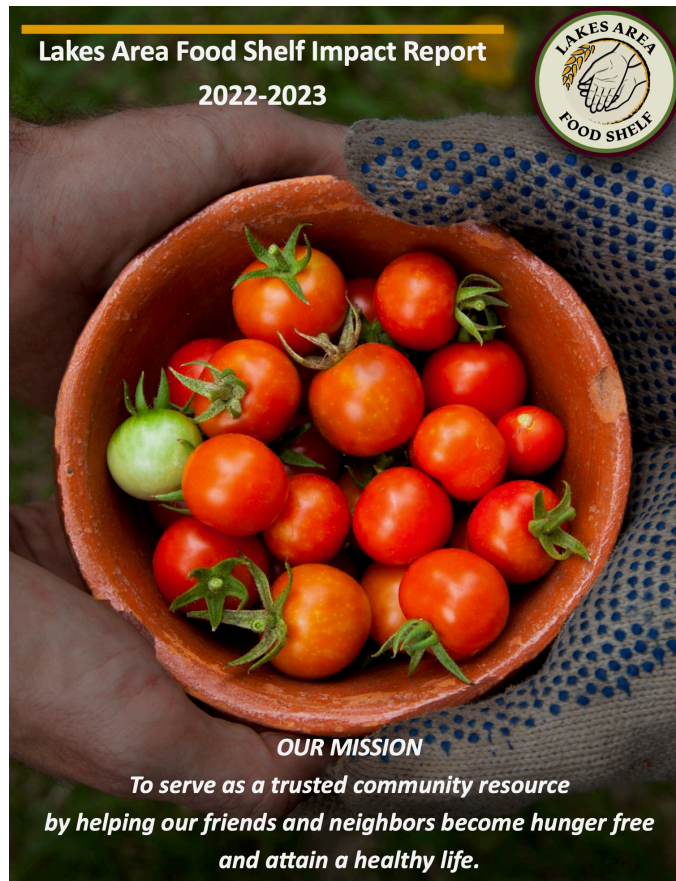
HOW DOES MY DONATION HELP?

Find out by reading our

IMPACT REPORT

Look for it in May

You'll see what a difference
you've made this year!



[Donate Online With This QR CODE](#)

Hold your camera up to it.

A yellow bar should appear.

Tap the bar and go to the donation
page.

RETURN ADDRESS

Lakes Area Food Shelf
P.O. Box 423
Pequot Lakes, MN 56472