

“A Mother’s Story”

(Read the whole story at www.bemidjifoodshelf.org.)

“I walked into the Bemidji Food Shelf at first with a little trepidation and fear, but that soon gave way to a feeling of relief and a wave of appreciation. The staff was knowledgeable, non-judgmental, and friendly. The waiting room was spacious, clean, and well-tended. I was not only allowed to make food choices based on my needs, but also on my individual tastes, which gave me a sense of gaining my power back. I was given the chance to see that I was not alone; that when I reached out for help with humility and appreciation there was someone to offer a hand. When I came away from the food shelf with enough wholesome and good food for meals that would last weeks, I felt like I was given a little breathing room. My options were just a little bit more diverse. The worry that stuck to my ribs in those dark hours at night was released. I had a sense that somehow things would work out. Somehow we would be okay. “

Statistics

Through November 2013, families or individuals visited BCFS 9,886 times, representing 34,514 household members, 16,067 of whom were under the age of 18. Over 600,000 pounds of food and personal care items was served. If the current pace holds through the end of the year we will conduct 10,785 interviews, serve 37,652 individual family members, and donate 698,317 pounds. In 2012 we conducted 9,897 interviews, which represented 33,571 family members and 504,461 pounds of food donated. We are serving over 12% more people this year than last. In 2013 we will serve over 10,000 more people than we served just two years ago in 2011. Strong and sustained community support has permitted BCFS to continue to provide high quality emergency food assistance despite unprecedented levels of demand. THANK YOU!



AFFINITY PLUS DOES IT AGAIN...

Affinity Plus Federal Credit Union Bemidji employees continued their support for BCFS with the highest business donations to Stuff a Truck 2013. Megan Poe, Tara Klaers, and Amy Strandell presented a check for \$1,684 and 725 pounds of groceries to Loren Hoyum, BCFS volunteer warehouse manager. Affinity employees have also donated their time and talents as volunteers.

2013 Stuff a Truck

When we set 20,000 pounds as our 2013 Stuff a Truck goal we were confident the community would step up to meet the challenge. The previous high total was 16,560 pounds in 2009. This year the unofficial total is 22,500 pounds, with more donations arriving each day. School children donated 12,231 pounds. BCFS thanks Mike McNiel of Market Place Foods, Mary Campbell of Paul Bunyan Broadcasting, Dennis Doeden of The Bemidji Pioneer, Jim Hodgson of Oak Hills Bible College, and Rick Toward and Carol St. John of Bemidji High School for their fine work. We also thank the thousands of students and teachers, volunteers, and community members who supported Stuff a Truck this year.

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

In honor of the Holiday Season we would like to give thanks to the Bemidji community for food drives, such as: Stuff a Truck, for great coverage by local media, for individual and business donation, and for the hundreds of dedicated volunteers who served the hungry in 2013.

The reality of the hungry in our community is reflected in the growing number of people who are coming to the food shelf. In 2013 about 10% more individuals have been served than in 2012. Demand is up over 80% from just three years ago! We could not continue to provide high quality emergency food assistance without your support.

Increased demand has forced us to become more efficient. If we truly want to provide good nutritious foods and stay within our budget we must buy in bulk. We now place orders in pallet, and even in truck load quantities. We have been repackaging dry beans, pasta, popcorn, rice, flour, sugar and coffee in our clean room, and labeling unlabeled canned corn and beans.

Our new cargo trailer (with invaluable help from the Sentence to Serve program), allows us to receive 8,000 lbs. of food from our food bank each week for less than \$300 per load. Several pallet-size loads of fresh produce have arrived over the past two months. We have been busy, but blessed.

New challenges offer new opportunities. The Food Shelf Garden will be launched this spring. Our garden advisory committee, with Grace Brogan as chair and Lauren Buie as secretary, is asking our clients what they think of the garden and how they might be involved. AmeriCorps teams will be here this spring to help get the garden started. We are looking for more volunteers to help with the garden project.

Another new opportunity is called "Food Rescue," a project that links up restaurants, delis, and school cafeterias with food shelves. Perfectly good food that could be served in food shelves and soup kitchens is often thrown away. We hope to rescue much of this food and are looking for volunteers who want to work on this exciting project.

Many of you have seen our ad for a food shelf manager. Jack would like to focus on writing grants and helping with the garden project. Keep us in your prayers as we seek the right person to join our team as we move forward in 2014

Presidents Letter continued...

Last, but not least, the purpose of this newsletter beyond information and a pre-view of 2014 is to encourage you to join us with your end-of-year gift to the food shelf. Your cash donation is vital to the success of our mission. In 2012 we set up an Endowment Fund through the Northwest Minnesota Foundation for estates and large gifts. Please give us a call if this is a part of your vision and commitment to the community of Bemidji.

**Have a Merry Christmas and
a blessed New Year.**

Bill Beyer, President of the Board, BCFS

Garden Plan Takes Shape

The BCFS Garden Advisory Committee met for the first time on November 7th. Grace Brogan volunteered to chair the committee. Lauren Buie, Executive Director of the Developmental Achievement Center, will be secretary. Marcus Grubbs, of the Headwaters Regional Development Commission, volunteered to write an agricultural development grant proposal for consideration by Beltrami County. We have asked for funding for a garden manager position and Bemidji State University interns for the next three years. Another proposal for a deer protection fence has been submitted to Home Depot. At our December meeting we will look at soil sample results, begin work on a budget for 2014, and develop a job description for the garden manager. To learn more about the project see the complete plan on our web site at: www.bemidjifoodshelf.org.

Bemidji Community Food Shelf Mission Statement

The mission of the Bemidji Community Food Shelf is to provide emergency food to families or individuals who have short-term, emergency food needs. Service is provided to residents of Beltrami County after all other possible means have been exhausted to obtain food.

In accordance with Federal Law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, Bemidji Community Food Shelf is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, religion, sex, familial status, sexual orientation, and reprisal.



LARAYNE MARTIN AND
JUNE ROXSTROM...

When local artist, Michael Lemon, donated his oil painting and 100 signed and numbered prints to BCFS he also arranged for Ross Lewis Signs to reproduce an 8' X 10' version for the store. American Glass donated the plexi-glass cover. Mr. Lemon purposely did not give his painting a title. He challenged us to ask our clients to name his painting. Clients responded enthusiastically! Hundreds of titles were submitted. The BCFS board of directors selected Larayne Martin's "Finding Hope," or "Wenji-ombendamang," as the winning title. Ms. Martin is pictured receiving a framed print of the painting from June Roxstrom, BCFS staff member.

Hats off to Carolyn Hegland

Thanks to Carolyn Hegland for leading the Herberger's Community Days coupon booklet sale. Carolyn's efforts resulted in over \$1,000 of donations. Carolyn served as BCFS Coordinator and currently represents Aardahl Lutheran Church on the BCFS Board of Directors.

AmeriCorps Teams on the Way

In cooperation with Headwaters Science Center Executive Director, Susan Joy, BCFS has applied for two AmeriCorps teams for spring, 2014. If successful, we will receive help to develop the garden project from teams of 8-12 young adult volunteers. The first team will arrive in mid-March, the second in late April. Teams will work 20 hours per week for six weeks. Lodging will be provided by Calvary Lutheran Church. We will share AmeriCorps volunteers with the Science Center. We thank Susan Joy for inviting BCFS to participate in this exciting program.

Food Waste a Growing Challenge

As Bill mentioned in the President's Letter, food waste is a big problem in our country. The Society of St. Andrew estimates that up to 40% of food produced in America is wasted. BCFS is reaching out to restaurants, delis, and school cafeterias to develop a "Food Rescue" program. We are working with Hunger Free Minnesota on food safety practices that will allow us to serve food that is prepared for on-site consumption. If you are interested in this project contact Jack Judkins at 218-444-6580 or bcfs@paulbunyan.net.

Annual meeting

The annual meeting, traditionally held on a Thursday in February, has been scheduled at noon on Tuesday, February 18, 2014, at Bethel Lutheran Church. Everyone is welcome to share a soup and bread lunch before the business meeting begins. Come and find out what happened in 2013 as well as what to look forward to in 2014.

Coordinator's Corner

It has been a privilege and a pleasure to serve as BCFS Coordinator for the past two-plus years. I want to thank Bill and the Board for having faith that I could do the job. I thank our volunteers and community members, whose unfailing support made the move to our new location possible and make our day-to-day mission a reality. I look forward to serving BCFS as a grant writer and gardener, and wish my successor all the best. The BCFS community, clients, volunteers, and staff have been a joy to work with.

Year-end Giving

At BCFS we look forward to December. While emergency food assistance is always appreciated by our clients, it is especially important in December and January, when darkness comes early and hard times stand in stark contrast to the barrage of holiday advertisements. We look forward to December not only for the things we give, but also for the generous gifts we receive. Please keep us in your thoughts and prayers as you make your year-end donations. This year, more than ever before, we need your support.



**Bemidji Community Food Shelf (BCFS)
 Newsletter/December 2013**

1260 Industrial Park Drive SE, Bemidji, MN 56601,
 (218) 444-6580
bcfs@paulbunyan.net
www.bemidjifoodshelf.org

Shipping Address

Hours of Operation:
 MWF 10:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. and
 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Every Third Monday

**Bemidji Community Food Shelf
Contribution Form**

www.website.com

Mail completed form and your tax-deductible contribution to:
 BCFS, P.O. Box 3118, Bemidji, MN 56619-3118

Here is my tax-deductible gift of \$ _____ to support the work of the Bemidji Community Food Shelf. (Please make check payable to: BCFS)

Name: _____

Address: _____

- I am interested in volunteering.
- I am interested in becoming a monthly (sustaining) supporter.
 (See www.bemidjifoodshelf.org, and click on an amount; then click on "Donate Now".)
- I am interested in supporting the garden project.
- I wish to receive future newsletters via email.

Email Address: _____

Thank you for your support!