

## **MARY MITCHELL/NEW MANAGER**

Hello! I am very excited about my new role as manager of the Bemidji Community Food Shelf. As I step into this position, I am grateful to be surrounded by people with years of involvement and a wealth of knowledge. That is important, as the learning curve is steep, and the shoes I am filling are large indeed.

Although I was born in Wisconsin and have lived in the Twin Cities, I am relocating to Bemidji from Bismarck, North Dakota, where I have lived for most of the past 33 years. During that time, I attended graduate school at BSU. I fell in love with Bemidji and have always hoped to be able to return to the area. While in North Dakota, I worked with various non-profit groups as paid staff, as a volunteer, and as a board member. Most of my experience comes from the 11 years I spent as a community organizer and legislative coordinator with Dakota Resource Council, a statewide, member-based organization.

During my transition and move to Bemidji, I have been working every other week at the food shelf. The most humbling experience and biggest highlight has been meeting the food shelf clients and volunteers. I am so impressed with the enthusiasm and level of commitment of the volunteers, without which the food shelf could not operate.

I am coming on board at a very interesting time in the life of the food shelf. The new building has enabled us to keep more food in stock and serve more people, and the upcoming garden project promises to offer our clients wonderful, fresh produce. In the coming months, I look forward to working with the board of directors in setting long-range goals that will continue to enhance the success of this great organization.



**MARY MITCHELL**



## **BE THE HERO. FIGHT HUNGER. SUPPORT MARCH FOODSHARE**

“If you can’t feed 100 people, then feed just one.” This quote by Mother Teresa captures what March is all about at emergency food assistance programs all across Minnesota. Every March the Greater Minneapolis Council of Churches sponsors a state-wide food and fund drive to support the critical work of feeding hungry people. No matter the size of your contribution, you are helping the Bemidji Community Food Shelf (BCFS) fulfill its mission. Donation of food and cash will help meet the growing demand for food assistance. In 2013 BCFS provided short-term, emergency food to over 37,000 individuals, almost half of whom were children. In January nearly 1,000 families visited BCFS. If January is an indicator of future demand, BCFS will serve over 42,000 people this year. Without your continued support children will go hungry. Parents will skip meals in order to feed their children. Families will buy the cheapest, not the most nutritious food, often going without fresh fruits and vegetables, meat and dairy products.

Support March FoodShare continued on Page 2.

You can contribute in several ways. Clip and send the form on the back of this newsletter to BCFS. Organize a food drive at your work place. Make a contribution at our web site ([www.bemidjifoodshelf.org](http://www.bemidjifoodshelf.org)). Drop your food and/or cash donation off at the food shelf. Volunteer to work at the food shelf. Sort through foods that have been on your pantry shelves for a while. Even if items are past their best-by date they are safe to consume. Use-by or Best-by dates on canned and boxed foods, such as soups, vegetables, condiments, peanut butter, pasta, dry beans, rice, and hot or cold cereals suggest decreased quality, not safety. **See the article in Odds and Ends of this newsletter.** Last year BCFS received almost \$10,000 in matching funds from Minnesota FoodShare for cash donations made between March 1 and April 7. Your cash donations will add up to much more than the amount of your check. Please give generously.

## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Last month we served almost 1,000 families, making it the busiest January in our history. If we keep this pace for the entire year we will serve over 42,000 people in 2014, almost half of whom will be under age 17. There are several reasons that the Bemidji Community Food Shelf is the largest emergency feeding program west and north of Duluth. There are a lot of hungry people in Beltrami County, which according to the last census has a population approaching 50,000 souls. Many of our neighbors are among the poorest people in the state. Over 30% of children in our county live below the poverty level. In many schools across the county most of the students qualify for free or reduced lunch. Finally, Beltrami County does not offer many well-paying jobs. The majority of jobs are in the service sector. Even though a large percentage of our clients work either part or full time, they do not make enough to make ends meet. This winter the propane shortage has been especially difficult for our families, who have been forced to choose between filling their tank, and buying groceries.

Since 1985, with your support, BCFS has succeeded in feeding the hungry, no matter how many came to our door. This year we need your help more than ever. March is the most important month for food shelves in Minnesota. March FoodShare is the largest food and fund drive of the year. With the support of the Greater Minneapolis Council of Churches, almost 300 food shelves will receive matching grants for donations made between March 1 and April 7. Last year BCFS received a matching grant of almost \$10,000. Now is the time to make your donation of food and/or cash. Please help us fulfill our mission: to provide food assistance to Beltrami County or Bemidji Area Schools families and individuals who have short-term emergency food needs.

"When people were hungry, Jesus didn't say, "Now is that political, or social?" He said, "I feed you." Because the good news to a hungry person is bread." *-Desmond Tutu-*

**Thank you for your continuing support and  
God bless you.**

**Bill Beyer, President of the Board, BCFS**

## ENVISIONING GARDENS

While visions of sugarplums might have danced in the heads of little children on Christmas Eve, visions of vegetables have been dancing in the minds of the Garden Advisory Committee this winter.

The goal of this committee is to provide fresh, tasty, nutritious, locally grown food for food shelf clients. Vegetables, and eventually fruit, can't be more local than to be grown on the land surrounding the food shelf.

Besides providing sustenance, the gardens will be used to educate folks about planting, growing, maintaining, harvesting, processing and enjoying garden crops.

Besides the utility of the garden and its produce, the committee hopes to create a welcoming, nurturing, lovely space good for the spirit as well as the body. The gardens will include raised beds of different heights, crops grown on fences as well as the long rows you might have seen in Grandpa's garden.

A road, paths, water catchment, compost bins, green manure crops to build the soil, and fences for protection from hungry critters all will be a part of the plan to support and enable a healthy, safe growing environment.

As you can see, the vision is big but so are the excitement, commitment, expertise and energy brought to this project by the people who have come to the meetings, contributed ideas and offered to help when robins return and spades can turn the soil once again.

If you would like to contribute in any capacity toward turning this vision into a reality, leave your name and contact information at the food shelf office or email Candy Barthel, Garden Advisory Committee chair, [candybar@paulbunyan.net](mailto:candybar@paulbunyan.net).

## ODDS AND ENDS

### What do the dates on shelf-stable food mean?

Have you ever wondered whether or not it is safe to consume a food item that is past its "Best by" or "Use by" date? Many people throw away perfectly good food because they believe it is no longer safe to eat. The USDA recommends: *"Use-by" dates usually refer to best quality and are not safety dates. Even if the date expires during home storage, a product should be safe, wholesome and of good quality if handled properly.* See <http://www.stilltasty.com/articles/view/5> for more detailed information. Do not throw away good food. Donate items that are past their best by dates by no more than one year to BCFS.

### Bemidji State University students team up with BCFS

Students in Bemidji State's Sustainability Program are teaming up with Goodwill Industries and BCFS to recycle gently used house wares and other miscellaneous goods. In January food shelf families noticed new items on our shelves. Dishes, kitchen utensils, kids' games and toys, picture frames, knick knacks, and other useful goods that would otherwise be discarded, are picked up at Goodwill, delivered to BCFS and displayed on store shelves. All the work is done by students. The project adds more variety to the BCFS shopping experience and has been a big hit with our clients.

### Value Smart Consignments

Looking for a place to donate new or slightly used items? Please put them in a bag or box labeled with our number (3250) and deliver them to Value Smart, 144 Peaceful Meadow Lane, SE (located just past Calvary Lutheran). You can drop off one box per week from Wednesday through Saturday before 4:00 pm. The Food Shelf will receive money for those items donated.



### Our Family Labels

For several years, the BCFS has been participating in a fundraising program through Our Family labels, which are available at Luekens and Market Place Foods. The program, which is called "Labels for Learning," will donate 5 cents for each UPC bar code we collect. This means that for every 500 labels we send in to Our Family, the food shelf earns \$25.00. In 2013, we received over \$2,000 through this great program. You can participate by saving the UPC barcodes from the Our Family products and bringing or sending them to the Bemidji Community Food Shelf.

### Office Max Recycles Empty Printer Cartridges

Office Max gives us store credit of one dollar for each empty printer cartridge we bring in for recycling. Please drop your used cartridges off at the BCFS. What a good way to get rid of your empty cartridges and help us out, too. Thank you!

### Magazines

We like to receive magazines for the waiting room, especially cooking magazines. Please do not bring news and current events magazines, because they are soon outdated. Thank you for your understanding.

### Egg Cartons Not Needed at This Time

Thanks to all of you who brought in empty egg cartons to the BCFS. We now have a new egg supplier who packs them in cartons for us, so we no longer need the extra cartons. Lately, the food shelf warehouse staff is getting *hard-boiled* over the mountain of egg cartons we have in storage. The staff has been *scrambling* to find places to put the cartons we have. Please help us keep them from getting *fried* about this issue by not bringing any more cartons, and the problem will be *over-easy*. Apologies for the bad yolks.

*This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer*

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## **Bemidji Community Food Shelf (BCFS) Newsletter/February 2014**

1260 Industrial Park Drive SE, Bemidji, MN 56601

(218) 444-6580

[bcfs@paulbunyan.net](mailto:bcfs@paulbunyan.net)

[www.bemidjifoodshelf.org](http://www.bemidjifoodshelf.org)

Hours of Operation:

MWF 10:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. and

10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Every Third Monday

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### **Bemidji Community Food Shelf Contribution Form**

[www.website.com](http://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](http://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!