

From the Director

In 2018 BCFS provided area families and individuals with food for approximately 398,600 meals. Nearly 3,000 households visited the Food Shelf 11,234 times, with 70% of households coming only one to four times. In January, BCFS announced it was opening its doors to Federal employees furloughed due to the government shutdown. Although Federal employees are prohibited from accepting donations totaling \$50 or more within a one-year period, they may receive free assistance from an established agency. This announcement prompted the local chapter of National Association of Retired Federal Employees (NARFE) to donate \$250 to the food shelf to aid our work.

When we provide food, we are doing more than just filling bellies. We are also reducing the stress and anxiety that comes with food insecurity. Not knowing where, when or how the next meal will be procured is a major source of stress to those facing financial issues, and elevated levels of stress has negative and sometimes life-long impacts on health.

I am grateful for the opportunity I have been given to serve the Bemidji Community over the past five years, and I wish to thank everyone for supporting me and the work we do together.

---Mary Mitchell, BCFS Executive Director



It Takes a Village

It's March FoodShare time again – the most important campaign of the year for BCFS. Funds raised in March allow us to replenish our depleted reserves and gear up for a busy summer season, when kids are home from school and more meals must be served.

Our northern location presents us with unique challenges that food shelves of similar size in the metro area do not have. Out of 331 food shelves in Minnesota, BCFS is 15th in number of households served. And yet, we don't have the same advantages as similar food shelves in the metro area. With fewer grocery stores to partner with, store donations make up only one-third of the food we distribute, meaning two-thirds of our food is purchased. Transportation costs add a great deal to our overall food budget, as the majority of our food comes from the Twin Cities and Crookston.

Also, this year BCFS saw record visits for February, typically our slowest month of the year. Due to the government shutdown, SNAP ("food stamp") recipients received their February money in January, causing confusion and shortages in February. We did not budget for this unforeseen increase in use and will need extra donations during the 2019 Campaign to help offset this expense.

The Minnesota FoodShare Campaign will run from February 26 to April 8, and all donations of dollars and food received during that time will receive a partial match by the Greater Minneapolis Council of Churches (GMCC). Please spread the word at work, church and other organizations in which you are active. Think of fun and creative ways you can help. Examples are: a bake sale, work team competitions, an office Jeans Day, or a neighborhood food drive. For more information about how you can help, call Mary at 444-6580 x.24.

President's Message

"Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share."

I Timothy 6:18

We are privileged to serve those who come to our Food Shelf. It is our pleasure to serve them and to hear their stories. We are doing good things and helping many in our community. Thanks for your generosity and good deeds!

A few weeks ago we celebrated the work that we have done in 2018. Thanks to our Executive Director Mary Mitchell and her staff for their commitment to our mission. Kudos to our 700 plus volunteers who make our work possible. A number of our clients have told me how kind our volunteers are. Thanks to Bethel Lutheran for hosting the Annual Meeting and to all who helped with food and the countless details that the meeting requires. Please see our Annual Report if you were unable to attend the meeting.

We begin the New Year with the restructuring of our Board of Directors. We have had many discussions about this during the past year. Thanks for all of your comments and suggestions. We now have a new Council of Churches and a new Board. We continue to be a Faith-Based-Ministry providing food to families in our community. Each congregation will continue to provide both volunteers and financial support to our mission.

I also want to thank the many businesses in our community that provide both food and finances to our work. Bemidji is a generous and compassionate place to live!

March is when our Minnesota FoodShare Campaign is conducted. This effort is important because it helps us provide food during the summer months when our donations are down. Each gift is met with a partial match. This is a great way to stretch every gift that is given. Please join with us in giving to this important effort.

Thanks for your ongoing support!

Jim Fretheim, BCFS Board President

Annual Meeting

BCFS celebrated 2018 at its 36th Annual Meeting on a blustery Thursday, February 14th at Bethel Lutheran Church. The BCFS board of directors held a short meeting just before the public event, during which Jim Fretheim was re-elected as Chair and Natalie Radar was re-elected as Treasurer, both for second terms. Approximately fifty volunteers and supporters of the Food Shelf attended the celebration, which started off with a homemade soup luncheon. Following the lunch, various reports summarized the events of 2018. Last year was very dynamic, bringing many new changes to the Food Shelf. Most notably, new By-laws were adopted, creating a new Board and a new Council of Churches.

We have so much to celebrate about 2018 and much to anticipate in 2019. We are grateful to Bethel for again allowing us to meet in this bright and beautiful space and for the help they provide, for the beautiful placemats provided by student artists from Lincoln School, and for the wonderful music provided by Wildfire.



United Way Sponsorship

BCFS is grateful to United Way of Bemidji Area for its ongoing support of our work. In 2018 we hosted several tours organized by UW in conjunction with their Impact Express and L.I.N.C. programs. A total of 54 people toured area nonprofits including the Food Shelf. Here they learned about need for our work and how we address it. In 2018-19, United Way supported us with a grant of \$15,000, allowing us to purchase food and hire a Volunteer Coordinator to support the work of the hundreds of volunteers who provide direct service to food insecure families.

Thank you, United Way!



March BrewShare

Mark your calendar to stop by Bemidji Brewing Wednesday, March 13, where from 4-7 p.m. BCFS will receive \$1 for each beverage sold. Stop by our information table to say hi to our staff and volunteers. Together we can toast to a great future!

Farm Update

It was another eventful year on the Food Shelf Farm. During 2018 we built a second, larger, high tunnel and began a multi-year research project in the deep winter greenhouse in partnership with the University of Minnesota. Our 2018 Farm Manager Rachel Schaap resigned at the end of 2018. The high staff turnover we've experienced, along with weed issues and other challenges, led us to form a committee to look at how we can become more sustainable, and to develop a multi-year strategic plan for operating the Farm.

A farm advisory committee has been meeting throughout the winter to plot a new, more sustainable, course for the farm. We are currently seeking a manager for a six-month position that will focus almost entirely on fieldwork and volunteer supervision. We have adopted a "less is more" philosophy for 2019 in hopes of producing more on less, better managed, ground. For the balance of the farm we will concentrate on soil building through cover cropping.

The fourth annual Harvest Ball is scheduled for Thursday, October 3, at the Eagles Club. Previous Harvest Balls have raised over \$25,000, providing vital operating revenue. Please put it on your calendar. If you have a silent auction item and/or want to help with planning please contact me, Jack Judkins, at the Food Shelf Farm office at 219-444-6580 x 23.

Jack Judkins
Acting Farm Manager



Sleigh bells ring, are you listening?

It may not be Christmas, but it is March FoodShare time, and once again the Go and Whoa Harness Club will offer horse-drawn sleigh rides at the Beltrami County Fairgrounds. This delightful event will be March 23 from 1-3 p.m. All proceeds go to support the families we serve and will receive a partial match through the Minnesota March FoodShare Campaign.

For a suggested donation of \$3 or a bag of non-perishable food, drivers and horses will take passengers on a lively ride in a generous loop around the fairgrounds. Hot beverages and food will be available for purchase in the 4-H Building, courtesy of the 4-H Club.

Volunteer Coordinator Amy McLoughlin

Hello from new Volunteer Coordinator! I am Amy McLoughlin and I was hired in January as the new part-time Volunteer Coordinator. Here's a little bit about myself:

I relocated to Bemidji from New York about 4 ½ years ago with my husband and daughter. Previous to coming to BCFS, I managed a store in the mall. I have worked for, and volunteered at, Walt Disney World in Florida. I am scheduled Monday/Wednesday/Friday from 9am-2:30pm I will also have office hours on Thursday from 9am-2:30pm. My main role is to provide assistance, support and recognition for the wonderful volunteers that make this Food Shelf possible; I am looking forward to working with all of the volunteers to keep the same special energy that goes into volunteering here.

My other role is to recruit new volunteers. One of the ways to do that is by being present at community events and by having our own events. We recently had a Volunteer Open House. It was successful and informative, and we now have some new volunteers. If you are considering volunteering at the Food Shelf, I am happy to talk with you. Please call me at 218-444-6580 ext.28 to visit more about volunteer opportunities.

I will be doing some training to learn more about volunteering and volunteer coordination and I am excited to share with you all the great things I will be learning. Without volunteers this community would be at a great loss; you all make this place so successful in all that you do. You as volunteers wear many hats not just in your jobs here, but you are also the faces of BCFS in the community.

I would like the volunteers to know they should not hesitate to come to me with any questions or concerns. Also, if you have any ideas for volunteer events or to make your experience better I would love the feedback. I do not have a door, so my desk is always open!

I want to thank all of the volunteers at the BCFS for being so welcoming and helpful to me as I start this new role. I am very much appreciative and can't thank you enough. You are all awesome.

HR/LOGO

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1260 Exchange Ave SE
 PO Box 3118, Bemidji, MN 56619
 218-444-6580 (o) 218-556-3249 (c)

www.bcfsmn.org

Check us out on Facebook!

Hours of Operation:

MWF 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. and
 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Every 3rd Monday

is ok or enter quote or tagline here.

**Bemidji Community Food Shelf Contribution Form
 March 2019**

INSERT TEXT OR LOGO HERE

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: _____

Thank you for supporting area families!

- _____ Please contact me about volunteering!
- _____ I am interested in giving on line and/or becoming a monthly (sustaining) supporter.
(See www.bcfsmn.org, and click on “Donate”.)
- _____ I would like this donation to go toward the BCFS Farm Project.
- _____ Please contact me with information about making a Legacy Gift to the BCFS.
- _____ I wish to receive future newsletters via email.

Telephone/Cell: _____

Email Address: _____

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