
BEMIDJI COMMUNITY FOOD SHELF NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2020



S-T-R-E-T-C-H Your Giving During March FoodShare!



Each year during March, Greater Minneapolis Community Connections gives food shelves across Minnesota the opportunity to participate in the Minnesota FoodShare March Campaign. During the Campaign, which this year runs from Sunday, March 1 to Sunday, April 12, BCFS will receive a partial match for all donations of food and funds. In 2019, we served a record 11,600 households and shared a record 925,000 pounds. Thanks to March FoodShare, we received a match of over \$10,000 to help us purchase food during the summer months when usage was up and donations were lower. This is a great opportunity to multiply your donation!

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From the Volunteer Coordinator

Last year, Bemidji Community Food Shelf had the privilege of serving almost one million pounds of food to 11,611 families. Although the numbers are large and impressive, the important thing to remember is that each number represents a person.

Each person who walks through our doors is valuable. It is with all these people that our volunteers shine.

When our customers enter the Food Shelf, they are greeted with a warm smile from our receptionist. Next, they have a chance to sit one-on-one with an interviewer, sharing their experiences. Then they get the opportunity to shop for food, chatting with a volunteer who is dedicated to helping them get the best selection for their family. The shelves are filled with food stocked by faithful volunteers who work behind the scenes, making sure there is an abundance of food to select. Finally, they pack up their groceries and are offered assistance to their car.

Bemidji Community Food Shelf strives to be a warm, welcoming environment where people feel supported and encouraged. That is accomplished by the kindness of our amazing volunteers. They are here to serve their community, but often comment that it is such a fun place to work that they are filled up more than they give! If you would like to join the fun and have a passion for serving others, please contact Debbie Johnson at bcfsvolunteer@gmail.com or call 218-444-6580 ext.28.

Looking Back and Looking Ahead

Where do we get enough bread in this remote place to feed such a crowd?

---Matthew 15:33

Some thirty-three years ago a number of Bemidji churches asked the same question. There were so many in need. Their response was to organize the Bemidji Community Food Shelf. We continue to consider both the question and the ways in which we can answer it. Last year our food shelf volunteers gave over 17,000 hours of their time to help us distribute food. Local stores and business owners have stepped forward to provide food and financial assistance. Each week we see examples of the care and compassion that our community has for our neighbors.

Our Council of Churches is vital to our work. Besides coordinating volunteers, Council members advise the Board and staff. Al Nohner is their Chair and Board Representative.

It has been a privilege for me to work with our Executive Committee and Board. Linda and Jack are completing their time as officers and we thank them for their year of service. I look forward to working with Wayne Haugen and Gloria Collyard, our new Vice President and Secretary.

In **July** our AmeriCorps Team arrived and did an outstanding job of gardening, painting, etc. In **August** an important decision was made to accept the bid of Bemidji Roofing to repair our roof. In **September** Debra Johnson came on board as our new Volunteer Coordinator and is doing a fine job. Welcome! We made our transition to becoming a SuperShelf and were fully certified February 5, 2020. **October** brought the Stuff-a-Truck campaign sponsored by Market Place Food, The Pioneer and KBUN radio. We received over 17,000 pounds of food and over \$6,000. Thanks to all those provided and gave to this effort. The next big event for us was our annual Harvest Ball. On October 3, we filled the Eagle's Club and raised \$15,000 for our Farm Project.

Now we look to spring, a time of new beginnings. Soon our farm will be planted, and we will do all we can to encourage growth. What will come up?

Don't forget that March FoodShare is vital to our work. Please give generously to this important campaign.

~**BCFS President Jim Fretheim**

A Vision For The Farm Project

The Farm Vision Committee has started a strategic planning process to enable the Farm Project be sustainable into the future. Thanks to a three-year ELCA Domestic Hunger grant, the Committee was able to hire a consultant to help with this process. The Committee chose to work with Jason Bergstrand of Fergus Falls. Jason, a licensed social worker, is a manager for PartnerSHIP4Health, coordinating partners in a multi-county area. He founded and manages Lake Region Takes Root Community Garden, which produces more than 15,000 pounds annually and donates to area food shelves and service organizations. Of special interest is his creation of a sustainable volunteer system that maintains the garden year to year. The group will be meeting several times in the coming months. Stay tuned for updates!



Jason Bergstrand



UMN Extension SNAP-Ed Coordinator Deb Dilley and BCFS Director Mary Mitchell hang the official SuperShelf sign!

SuperShelf Certification

On Wednesday, February 5 2020, BCFS was officially certified as a SuperShelf. Dianne Davis Kenning from UMN Extension arrived with her comprehensive checklist and spent about an hour going through the Food Shelf to make sure we are meeting all the requirements. We passed inspection and scored five out of five pineapples! We are so proud of our beautiful store and our new service model, which focuses on abundance, helps all feel welcome, and makes the healthiest choice the easiest choice for our wonderful customers. Many thanks to Dianne, and special thanks to Deb Dilley for all of her hands-on assistance during our transition.



Shelter Our Shelf (SOS)!

We need your help in order to continue to serve our community. Last summer we learned that our roof is in extremely bad condition. We received bids from three area contractors and accepted one for \$77,000. We have been conducting a "quiet campaign" and at the time of this writing, have raised about \$54,000, including a very generous donation from the George W. Nielson Foundation. Now we are asking for your help to provide the balance. Please consider making an extra donation for our new roof. If received during March FoodShare, your donation will count toward our match.

Please put "Roof" in the check memo or on the envelope so we can honor your intentions.

GO AND WHOA SLEIGH RIDE!

The wonderful folks with the Go and Whoa Harness Club are hosting a sleigh ride to benefit the Food Shelf during March FoodShare on Sunday, March 22 from 1-3 p.m.



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.

This is a great opportunity to get up close and personal with big, beautiful draft horses and take lots of great photos.

If there is no snow, wagons will be used, so don't let that stop you from coming out!



1260 Exchange Ave SE
PO Box 3118, Bemidji, MN 56619
218-444-6580
www.bcfsmn.org
Check us out on Facebook!

Hours of Operation:
MWF 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Bemidji Community Food Shelf Contribution Form
March 2020

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: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____ Email* _____

THANK YOU FOR HELPING YOUR NEIGHBORS!

- Please apply this donation to the "Shelter Our Shelf" Roof Replacement**
- 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 to support 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*

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