



Rhineland Area Food Pantry

Volunteer Connection

October 2020

Guy's Corner

Guy Hansen RAFP Executive Director

RAFP Long Range/Strategic Planning Committee and Pantry Reopening

The Community Board established a Long Range or Strategic Planning Committee at the January, 2020 meeting. This is not the first time that The Board has established such a committee. Past committees dealt with finding, financing and moving to a new location and then evaluating and improving Pantry operation in our new Coon Street location. This committee is to map a course for the future financing and operation of The Pantry. It was stalled by Covid 19, but it activated in June to address replacing our Operational Assistant. Members are Board members Deb Berns, Deb Bowns, Nancy Watry, Linda Gary, John Viste, myself and Pantry Manager, Jane Motowski.

We have met three times and have dealt with relatively short range rather than long range issues including: hiring a new Operations Assistant, the new cooler grant project and Pantry operation under Covid 19 restrictions. The first one has been successfully completed, the second one will be done soon and the third one is a work in progress.

We developed a draft re-opening plan with many steps and potential dates. Steps would include several procedural and structural changes as well as initially sharing the plan with our volunteers for comments. We cannot operate The Pantry without willing volunteers. Nancy Watry sent plan information to the leader of each distribution

group requesting comments. Nancy's report follows.

RE-OPENING PANTRY UPDATE

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit our country earlier this year, the food pantry was forced into closing its doors and change the method in which food was being distributed to those in need in our community. Customers could no longer pick the items that were needed for their household, but the pantry volunteers pre-boxed essential and nutritious items for distribution to each family. The Strategic Planning Committee met in August to discuss the possibility of re-opening the pantry with modifications; limiting number of people in the pantry, sneeze guards, temperature and mask requirement to name a few of the changes. One of the most important components of re-opening was how our volunteer organizations who are critical to our distribution felt about re-opening. Due to their response we will not re-open the pantry at this time, however will continue to plan for a re-opening in the future, whenever that may be. Our focus now will be preparing for distribution outside in the winter months to ensure the safety of our volunteers and customers.

Mask up and stay well.

Guy Hansen, Executive Director

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Rhineland Area Food Pantry Announces a New Staff Member

The Pantry is happy to welcome Courtney Smith as our new Operations Assistant.



Courtney will work with Pantry Manager, Jane Motowski, and our host of volunteers in 'Helping to Build a Hunger Free Community!' She will work in all aspects of pantry operation and administration with an emphasis in technical support, public outreach, and program management.

Courtney moved to the Rhineland area two years ago to be near family and enjoy our Northwoods lifestyle. She is originally from Oregon where she received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology. She has extensive background experience in nonprofits, community outreach, fiscal management and fund raising. She will be able to use these skills to strengthen and expand our mission to achieve food security for everyone in our community. Initially, however, she will become comfortable enough with the Pantry Manager responsibilities so Jane can take a well-deserved vacation.

Courtney follows our first Operations Assistant, Chris Kott, who held the position for almost two years and demonstrated how valuable a second staff person can be.

We are very happy to have a person of Courtney's knowledge and enthusiasm on board. She started

September 15 and has had a positive influence already. Courtney is excited to join the work of RAFP and looks forward to serving our community.

Welcome Courtney!

Did you know that the Rhineland Food Pantry has given out over 231,000 lbs. of fresh food in the Farm to Family/Feeding America boxes during June to September? These boxes are for all in the community - no income limits.

These boxes are part of a federal government program. Some of the boxes contained a letter from the President.

The Pantry cannot and does not support any particular political party.

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Farmer to Family Food Distribution

By Bill Vancos



Farmers to Families Food Box

USDA is partnering with farmers, ranchers, specialty crop producers, food processors and distributors, and non-profit organizations to ensure that all Americans have access to the fresh and wholesome food they need during the COVID-19 national emergency.



Farmers

sell food previously destined for restaurants and bulk purchases to distributors, preventing waste

Distributors

partner with USDA to package family-sized boxes with fresh produce, dairy and meat products, then transport them to non-profits across America

Families

pick up food boxes from local schools, food banks, faith-based organizations and other non-profits

In addition to the regular food distribution for families in need in the Rhinelander area, FCAP and Feeding America have been providing free food for distribution to anyone, regardless of income. Jane Motowski (RAFP General Manager) has a position that she will do whatever possible to never turn down free food, and this certainly was no exception. During the months of June, July, August and September 2020, 231,197 pounds of food was distributed through this program. This was done in addition to the average 50,000 pounds distributed each month for the regular clients of the Food Pantry. So together, the total food distribution during this four month period averaged over 100,000 pounds per month!

Community members lined up in their vehicles along the streets adjacent to the Food Pantry each morning of distribution starting at about 6am. The actual distribution usually started about 8:30 or 9:00, depending on the arrival time of the delivery truck(s). Some days there was a full semi and half another one of food to unload and then place in the back of vehicles as they filed through the parking lot. This would not have been possible without the great volunteers that helped make it happen. The Rhinelander Lions Club especially helped other Pantry Volunteers lift and place the boxes that ranged from 15 to 25 pounds each in the vehicles.

What the future months hold is unclear, but if additional free food is available for distribution, it would be a safe bet that Jane and her volunteers will do whatever is necessary to be able to share that too with our friends and neighbors.

GOOD NEWS

We will have another FOOD GIVEAWAY on **Friday, October 9th**. Distribution will begin about 9:00 AM. At this time we do not know what is in the boxes - it will be a nice surprise for all.

Please wear a mask when coming through the line to protect yourself and our volunteers.

This is being provided through Farm to Families and Feeding America. ANY individual, regardless of income, can come to the Food Pantry entering behind the pantry from Carr Street exiting on to Coon Street. The line will start at our driveway on Carr Street, to Coon Street then turn right on Newell Street and line up on side of the cemetery. We are asking that you don't block driveways - including the cemetery entrance/exits.

If your trunk has room and is open, we will load it. If it has to be placed in the vehicle, you will need to load it yourself. This is a no-contact pickup.



Rhinelander Lions paused for a photo while volunteering at the Rhinelander Area Food Pantry. Pictured from left, Linda Campbell, Mel Hook, Tom O'Rourke, Jeff Katoaka, Rhae Ellen Schnoor, Jill Zwiers, Scott Campbell, Tom Gadzalinski and Brian Jaeger.

Jack Flint photo

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Cooler Project

As you may know our 'grants group' requested and received \$45,000 from The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) to install a cooler capable of storing produce in large gay lords on pallets. To provide room for the cooler inside and still preserve needed storage space for dry goods, we decided to move two existing, smaller refrigeration units outside. The project specifications were to:

- Provide and install one walk-in cooler – 20' long x 10 ½' wide x 9 ½' high with a:
 - 52" wide door on the 10 ½' end
 - 30" wide service door on the 20' side
 - condenser unit outside on an existing pad
- Move the existing 8' x 10' freezer and cooler units from inside the building to outside of the building on a pad and convert the cooler to freezer
- Complete the project by September 30, 2020.

Successful bidders for the project were:

RCAD - cooler and freezers, Gaber Electric - electrical, Portable Welding - outside structure and Roger Watry who volunteered to prepare and organize the concrete pad installation.

Roger (and Bill Vancos and Otto Tulowitzky) had the concrete work done by Sept 10. RCAD and Gaber Electric began the freezer relocation work Sept 21 and the cooler work Oct 5. Unfortunately the outside structure work was delayed until Oct 5. This, in turn, delayed placing the second freezer and painting the steel structure supports.

Trig's has allowed us to store refrigerated food in their cooler during the freezer and cooler work. Our faithful receiving and stocking volunteers have been shuttling refrigerated food to and from Trig's and moving frozen food from freezer to freezer as work progresses.

Even with the delay, we anticipate cooler completion by Oct 8 and structure completion by

Oct 15. We, also, anticipate overspending our grant by about \$25,000. Although it has been a major disruption and we overspent our grant, it will be a very beneficial project for The Pantry. Many thanks to all the volunteers for putting in the extra time and effort to accomplish this pantry improvement!

LIGHTS OF THE NORTHWOODS NEEDS OUR HELP



This is the group that puts up Christmas lights and displays in Hodag Park. Viewers donate food and/or money as they drive or walk through the decorations. These donations are distributed to area pantries and other nonprofits with emphasis on the volunteer groups that help during set up and operation. This has resulted in significant food and financial donations to the RAFF. Their set-up procedures will change this year due to Covid 19.

The Lights of the Northwoods organizers are asking volunteer groups to sign up as a group to work with an assigned group leader. The volunteer group selects the day and time, and the number of workers and hours the group can work. LIGHTS provides the technical supervision to complete the assigned tasks.

Set-up options are November 1,7,8, 14 and 15. We have a small group of volunteers signed up for Sunday, November 1. We could use some help to enlarge our group on that day or form another group that day or another scheduled day. It is not difficult, the weather is often (but not always) pleasantly cool and hot beverages and snacks are usually available. It's a nice start to the Christmas Season.

If you can help, please contact Courtney or Jane at 715-369-7237 or

opasst@rhinelanderareafoodpantry.org or Guy at 715-282-5810 or gch@newnorth.net.

Building Improvements Keep Coming: New Automatic Door Openers Installed at Main Entry

By Courtney Smith

Through a generous grant from a partnership between The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) and the State of Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP), the Rhinelander Area Food Pantry was able to purchase and install a new automatic door opening system for the main entry. The COVID-19 Food Security Network Support Grant, part of the Cares Act, was given to support food banks in



adapting to the challenges they have faced as a result of COVID-19. Projects funded included adjustments to meet public health and social distancing guidelines required as organizations continue to provide services to individuals and families in need.

With this update, the automatic doors at the main entry will facilitate moving boxes, carts and pallets of food outside for drive up food distribution several times a week. The automatic doors will provide added infection control by offering a hands-free option to open the door. It is also important to note that the main entry is now ADA Accessible.



WEEKEND FOOD FOR KIDS (WFFK) BACKPACK PROGRAM

The Weekend Food for Kids (WFFK) Backpack Program will begin the 2020-21 school year with a distribution on Thursday, October 1. A total of 98 School District of Rhinelander students are enrolled

in the program, including in-school and virtual students. The numbers are unusually low for the beginning of the year and our hope is that more children will get on board in the coming weeks. Any elementary students/families wishing to join the program should contact their school counselor.

Due to the Covid 19 pandemic, food will be packed in plastic bags instead of backpacks and will be delivered to the elementary schools on Thursdays for the in-school students to take home on Fridays. Bags for the virtual students will be available for pickup from 4 to 6 p.m. on Thursdays at the rear of the Rhinelander High School in the shipping/receiving area, the same location where virtual students pick up breakfast and lunch.

Submitted by Jackie Popko

WFFK Lead Coordinator



REMINDER-----The Rhinelander Café and Pub will continue to donate 20% of their sales to a nonprofit of the customer's request through the end of the year. **Don't forget to tell**

them that you would like your percentage of your food order to go to the RAFF!! Their goal is to raise \$20,000 for Rhinelander nonprofits.

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Over \$75,000 in grants awarded to the Rhinelander Area Food Pantry

By Stephanie Kuski

River News Features Reporter

With Lisa Seifert, Lead grant writer RAFP

While the current pandemic has presented numerous unexpected obstacles for local nonprofits, the Rhinelander Area Food Pantry (RAFP) received several grants this year that will be used to fulfill a variety of purposes, including COVID-19 relief.

"We were very successful this year," RAFP volunteer grant writer Lisa Seifert commented. "I want to say we've received over \$75,000 from the grants that we've written this year... So that was really exciting. "

Seifert and her team focused their energies on writing this year's grants for food money and their Weekend Food For Kids Program. The latter is a concerted campaign in partnership with the School District of Rhinelander (SDR) which provides a backpack full of nutritious food for approximately 200 local children to bring home over the weekend. While the fate of SDR schools reopening for in-person classes in the fall is still uncertain, their Weekend Food For Kids Program will continue regardless of the status of schools, although families interested in participating will need to sign up.

Seifert added that more organizations were willing to donate funds this year, most likely in part due to the pandemic.

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) was one of their biggest benefactors this year. TEFAP first provided \$13,000 to purchase needed supplies for the Rhinelander Area Community Garden, to support RAFP's Weekend Food For Kids Program and the general needs of the pantry itself. In addition, TEFAP donated \$45,000 to purchase a much-needed walk-in cooler to store perishable goods at the pantry.

The Marshfield Clinic Health System Foundation also donated \$10,000 to the RAFP specifically for COVID-19 relief and personal protective equipment (PPE). The foundation gave an additional \$1,000 grant to provide special food for their Weekend Food For Kids Program, such as low sugar, sugar free and lactose free options.

Both Wisconsin Public Service (WPS) and The Rhinelander Woman's Club provided grants specifically for COVID-19 relief funding. In the face of empty local grocery store shelves throughout much of the pandemic, RAFP General Manager Jane Motowski has not been able to purchase as much food from their normal food suppliers, such as Trig's, Walmart and Aldi. Because of this, Motowski has had to purchase food from other sources, and sometimes at a higher cost. To help remedy that concern, the WPS grant will help fund the higher cost of food.

CoVantage and Park City Credit Unions each provided money for composters and other gardening supplies for the Rhinelander Area Community Garden, in addition to supplemental funds for pantry operations during the pandemic.

The Rhinelander Community Foundation (RCF) has provided funding to the RAFP annually since the organization's inception in 2018. This year, RCF granted money to the RAFP for customer's special dietary needs.

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Additionally, P.E.O. (a philanthropic organization that benefits women) provided funds to purchase a used six burner commercial stove; Nicolet Bank provided money to meet the general needs of the pantry; Kwik Trip donated gas cards to support clients who may not have the means to get to the pantry without extra gas money; and Erie Insurance donated money to help fund RAFP's Weekend Food For Kids Program.

While these funds add up, Seifert said these grants are supplemental to all other donations. According to their website, RAFP utilizes government commodity food programs and Feeding America to fund their annual food needs (often at no or low cost), and then supplements those funds with local food purchases, local food donations and produce grown in the community garden.

"The majority of our funding comes from our community members and businesses," Seifert said. "We've had a lot of wonderful support from our community... There are some really wonderful people in this community."

"We couldn't do it without our community members," she continued. "All of that is just so very helpful to keep us running."

"The community is very supportive," Motowski echoed. "We wouldn't be here if not for this community." In addition, Seifert said a strategic planning committee has been formed to foresee the future affairs of the RAFP. Although the RAFP has had to alter their system from a choice pantry to a no-contact pick-up service due to COVID-19 concerns, the organization has continued to serve the needs of the community throughout the pandemic.

Since the RAFP relies almost exclusively on volunteers such as Seifert, she said they are always welcoming new faces. For more information about volunteering or donating to the RAFP, call (715) 369-7237 or visit their website at <https://www.rhinelanderareafoodpantry.org>

Help Still Needed

Produce handlers—(Mon, Wed, and especially Fri AM)

Home Delivery drivers

Back-up -- Publicity Chair

Back-up Financial Secretary

Call Jane Motowski, General Manager

715-369-7237



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For more information on volunteering and helping the Rhinelander Area Food Pantry, call Jane Motowski, General Manager at 715-369-7237(rafp@frontiernet.net) or Guy Hansen, Executive Director at 715-282-5810 (gch@newnorth.net)

The Rhinelander Area Food Pantry is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, found on line at <http://ascr.usda.gov/complaintfilingcust.html> or at any USDA office, or call (866)632-9992 to request a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, by fax (202)690-7442 or email at program.intake@usda.gov