

Summer 2025

THE PANTRY PAGE

Rhineland Area Food Pantry Newsletter

Who Are We Really Feeding?

I am an advocate for children and youth and I'm fortunate to work for an organization that shares that commitment. At RAFP, we understand the profound impact food security has on the health and stability of every household, especially those with children.

Once a longtime supporter suggested that our children's nutrition programs prevent adults from taking responsibility for their families. I believe that when an adult takes the step to seek support in order to care for a child's well-being, they deserve to find a community that stands with them, not one that turns them away. Supporting families in times of need isn't about replacing responsibility; it's about reinforcing it with compassion, dignity, and trust.

I am excited to announce that RAFP is now an official Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) site for the Hodag Food Wagon! The SFSP is funded by the USDA through the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, and helps ensure that children and teens have access to nutritious meals during the summer months. This is the *first and only* RAFP program that receives funding for food *and* for administrative and operational costs. This is a pretty big deal. This level of support makes a significant difference and provides sustainable funding for the Hodag Food Wagon. The Hodag Food Wagon will provide 12,000 meals to kids and teens in just 8 weeks this summer.

Our Hodag Kids Programs do so much more than give people free food. I have watched our organization and community transform through feeding our kids. We have redefined what it means to be food insecure. We refuse to aim only to reduce hunger; we want food security. Our community thrives when households are stable and bellies are full.

It is also about opportunity. Not the opportunity to "save the children," it is our opportunity as adults to set the example and share in the responsibility of making our community what we want it to be. Safe. Healthy. And full of opportunity.

Enjoy this edition of the Pantry Page.

Courtney Smith
RAFP Executive Director



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627 COON STREET
RHINELANDER, WI 54501
715-369-7237**

**OFFICE & DONATION
DROP-OFF HOURS:
MONDAY- FRIDAY
8AM TO 11:30AM**

**DISTRIBUTION HOURS:
MON: 3PM TO 5PM
WED: 4PM TO 6PM
SAT: 9AM TO 11:30AM**

**RHINELANDERAREAFOOD
PANTRY.ORG**

Our Mission:
**We strive to achieve food
security for everyone in our
community through
collaboration, cooperation,
advocacy, resource sharing,
and increased public
awareness.**

**Working Together to
Build a Hunger-Free
Community**

The Rhineland Area Food Pantry is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization and your contribution is tax deductible.

HODAG KIDS: BECAUSE FULL BELLIES MAKE STRONG BODIES, SMART BRAINS & HAPPY HEARTS

Weekend Food For Kids 2024-25

Since 2011, RAFP has offered the Weekend Food For Kids (WFFK) Program in partnership with the School District of Rhinelander. The program gives students the option to receive a free weekend meal bag that includes one breakfast, one lunch, and a few kid-friendly snacks. In the 2024-25 school year, WFFK provided approximately 21,250 meals to children and teens in our community.

We appreciate the continued support of the School District of Rhinelander, whose staff and faculty help connect students to this resource.

We'd also like to thank the following funders:

- CoVantage Cares Foundation - \$2,500 grant
- GFWC Rhinelander Woman's Club - \$1,500 grant



And of course, a heartfelt thank you to the volunteers, donors, and supporters who give their time, resources, and energy to make the Weekend Food For Kids Program a success.

The Hodag Food Wagon: Summer Pop-Ups at the Pantry 2025

This summer marks the exciting launch of the Hodag Food Wagon at the Rhinelander Area Food Pantry (RAFP)! We've transitioned from our previous location at the Rhinelander District Library to RAFP, giving us more space, more resources, and more fun. We're also excited to be a Meals-To-Go site as part of the USDA's Summer Food Service Program. So, what does that mean for kids and teens?

It means that Hodag Food Wagon meal bags are better than ever and packed with food that kids (and their adults!) actually want to eat. Each bag includes 5 breakfasts and 5 lunches, all meeting the USDA's Child Nutrition Guidelines. Think that sounds boring? Don't worry! The Hodag knows what healthy food kids love!

More space also means more summer fun! Each week, Hodag Bites will feature tasty snack demos and games hosted by our favorite FoodWise Nutrition Educators so there's always something delicious and engaging happening. Our beautiful outdoor area now includes tasting garden boxes brimming with fresh veggies and herbs for kids to explore.

To keep minds as active as bodies, the Food For The Mind table offers free books for all reading levels, supporting literacy all summer long. Plus, look out for special pop-up events from community partners like WIC, the Oneida County Health Department, Bowen's Bus Service, and more!

The Hodag Food Wagon is open to all children and teens under 18—no registration or income requirements. It's our way of helping kids stay nourished, engaged, and ready to grow, while also giving parents a little extra help keeping the fridge full. We post regular updates on our Facebook page!



Questions? Contact RAFP during our regular business hours. *Adults can sign up to become a proxy to receive meal bags intended for children.



Front Porch Project funded by the Rhinelander Community Foundation & the Home Depot.

PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: THE COMMODITIES SUPPLEMENTAL FOOD PROGRAM "SENIOR STOCKBOXES"



Supporting Seniors with Nutritious Food: The Vital Role of CSFP at RAFP

RAFP is proud to serve as a distribution site for the USDA's Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), commonly known as the Senior Stockbox Program. This essential federal initiative provides monthly boxes of nutritious food to eligible seniors aged 60 and older who earn \$1,580 or less per month.

Each Stockbox, valued at approximately \$70, includes pantry staples such as shelf-stable milk, canned meats, and low-sodium vegetables, along with a rotating featured item like frozen pork chops. These boxes help ensure that seniors in our community, who make up 33% of our pantry customers, have reliable access to healthy, high-quality food.

RAFP currently distributes between 250 and 300 boxes each month, depending on availability. Unfortunately, demand continues to exceed supply: our waiting list can grow to over 85 seniors who qualify but are not receiving boxes.

The CSFP is one of several USDA food assistance programs funded by the federal government. For rural food pantries like ours, it plays a critical role. Traditional food donation channels no longer provide many staple items at no cost, and essentials like canned meat and shelf-stable milk are now among the most expensive products for RAFP to procure.

While recent passage of the federal budget bill did not reduce CSFP funding, final funding decisions are still in progress through the annual appropriations process. Both the House and Senate Agriculture Subcommittees have, so far, proposed maintaining current funding levels for CSFP, a positive sign.

Looking ahead, it's important to understand that CSFP, along with programs like SNAP, school meals, and TEFAP (The Emergency Food Assistance Program), is governed by the Farm Bill, a comprehensive piece of legislation that shapes U.S. agricultural and nutrition policy. The current Farm Bill is set to expire on September 30, 2025, and reauthorization efforts will be vital to the future of these programs.

As we continue supporting seniors in our community, we also recognize the importance of maintaining strong federal support for food assistance programs. With continued community involvement, we can help ensure that local seniors have access to the nutritious food they need.

USE YOUR VOICE! Join Voices Against Hunger.

Voices Against Hunger is The Hunger Task Force's citizen advocacy group.

The goal of Voices Against Hunger is simple: Advocate together to promote social policies to end future hunger. Joining Voices Against Hunger is a quick, impactful way you can influence effective anti-hunger public policy.

Stay up to date on campaigns that matter to you and learn how to take easy action to advocate for food security in your community.



www.HungerTaskForce.org/VOICES

HELPING TO BUILD A HUNGER-FREE COMMUNITY



Thank You to Our Sponsors: **DAHL AUTOMOTIVE** **thrivent**

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Nicolet **NATIONAL BANK**

Thank You for Celebrating 20 Years of RAFF!

We're grateful to everyone who came together to celebrate the Rhinelander Area Food Pantry's 20th Anniversary in April at The Pines Event Center. Your support helped make this milestone event both meaningful and memorable. Together, we honored two decades of nourishing our community and raised nearly \$15,000 to continue supporting our mission. Thank you for being a valued part of our community and for sharing in this special occasion with us.

Thank You to Our Luncheon Sponsors:

Bucketheads Bar & Grill, Campfire Coffee & Creamery, Crimson Curry Café, CT's Deli, Fireside Supper Club, The Pizza Ranch, Three Coins, Tilly's, Twin Pines Bar & Grill



Pictured are Guy Hansen, RAFF Board Chair and Frank Loreti, Volunteer Warehouse Manager, Courtney Smith, Executive Director RAFF, Keven Niemi, Kemp, Jason Arrowood Kems, Don Theisen, Trig's.

3,000 Servings of Milk for Hodag Kids!

That's a \$5,000 in-kind donation.

Thank you to Trig's & the Kems Giving Cow Foundation for being food security heroes!

From the KemsCows Facebook post:
"We're proud to give back to our communities.

We participated in a donation of Kems Giving Cow milk from Trig's and Kems. They will use the milk for the Hodag Food Wagon, a free summer meal bag program. This year the USDA Child Nutrition requirements include an 8 oz, serving of milk so this donation will help to fill that need."



Thank you to the Hodag Food Wagon Crew for representing RAFF in the Rhinelander 4th of July Parade!



The WPS Foundation generously supported RAFF with a \$1,000 grant to purchase dairy products and \$1,000 towards replacing the RAFF Greenhouse furnace.

Thank you to Dairy Queen!
Our April Share Night was a delicious success!



Thank you to Culver's, our volunteers, and diners for busy February Share Night!



The 2025 RAFF Spring Challenge helped to raise funds and awareness for food security. Each Spring the RAFF challenges local residents to contribute to the Annual Spring Challenge. Thank you to everyone who met the challenge and helped RAFF receive a \$2,000 match!



The GFWC Rhinelander Woman's Club gave \$1,500 to the Weekend Food For Kids Program from proceeds raised at Santa's Snack Shop at Lights of the Northwoods.

Thank you to our community partners that help to host our weekly shopping hours: the Rhinelander Kiwanis Club, St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Pine Grove Community Church, GFWC Rhinelander Woman's Club, Trinity Lutheran Church, St. Augustine Episcopal Church, Rhinelander Lions Club, Immanuel Lutheran Church, Grace Four Square Church, Franciscans and Friends, Calvary Baptist Church, The Newcomers, United Church of Christ, Aspirus Rhinelander Hospital, and First United Methodist Church.



An average of 150 volunteers give 325 hours each month hosting our shopping hours!

The Empty Cup Fundraiser

Through the creativity and generosity of local and student artists, nearly \$500 was raised for the RAFF Empty Cup Soup & Salsa Fundraisers. A collection of handmade ceramic vessels—each one unique and crafted with care—was donated and sold during our 20th Anniversary Celebration in April and our Open House in June. These beautiful pieces served as more than just functional art; they symbolized the importance of keeping every cup full—in spirit and in need.

A big thank you goes out to Josh Calhoun, Ceramics Instructor at Rhinelander High School, for his unwavering dedication to fostering artistic expression with purpose. To the talented RHS students, thank you for sharing your work!

We also deeply appreciate the support of Nathan Wilson, Fine Art Instructor at Nicolet College, whose enthusiasm helped bring this fundraiser to life. Thank you to the student artists at Nicolet who generously donated their talent, time, and materials.

And thank you to Ray Butkus, Rhinelander resident and retired ceramics instructor, for sharing your talent and generosity with our community. Art can nourish both body and soul!



A special thank you to Teresa Minder and the Rhinelander Northwoods Quilters for keeping our space warm and welcoming.



RAFP IS READY FOR SUMMER PROGRAMS & SERVICES!

Thanks to the support of two generous grants and incredible community partnerships, RAFP is proud to announce the completion of the Front Porch Project! This transformative expansion is already enriching our summer services. First proposed to the Rhinelander Community Foundation, this project became a key component in making space for The Hodag Food Wagon to operate on site.

The Rhinelander Community Foundation joined our vision by awarding the Hodag Food Wagon Expansion & Front Porch Project a \$5,000 grant. These funds supported the purchase of a seasonal pergola for afternoon shade, outreach banners and signage, t-shirts and aprons for our hardworking volunteers, safety equipment and signs for our parking lot, and a beautiful variety of plants to bring our garden beds to life.



A big thank you also goes to The Home Depot for awarding a generous grant of nearly \$7,000 and contributing 18 hours of hands-on volunteer service! Laurie Anderson, Operations Assistant Store Manager, and her team helped us to clean up and refresh our exterior landscaping, complete several indoor improvement projects, purchase soil and tools for the Garden, and complete our green space with six raised garden beds.

We're also incredibly grateful to the RAFP volunteers who joined the work party and jumped in to help. Your energy and commitment made it all possible! Thank you to Nancy and Roger Watry and Debra Peters for everything.

With this expanded and refreshed outdoor space, we're now able to safely welcome pantry shoppers, host our Garden Farmer's Market Table, and offer a vibrant, green environment for all. Kids can watch green beans climb a trellis, nibble on pineapple sage and chocolate mint, and enjoy sun-warmed tomatoes right off the vine.



More than just a garden, the Front Porch Project is a beautiful, welcoming space for our entire community. It is a place where customers, volunteers, and supporters can gather, connect, and grow.

RAFP IS FEATURED ON "IF THESE WOODS COULD TALK"



If These Woods Could Talk: An Oral History of the Northwoods can be viewed on the Rhinelander District Library YouTube page. You can find a link on our FaceBook page.

Celebrating 20 Years of RAFP: Capturing Our Story

In honor of RAFP's 20th Anniversary, we partnered with Matt Persike, Producer of "If These Woods Could Talk" and Library Services Assistant at the Rhinelander District Library, to help preserve our history through an oral storytelling project.

RAFP Champions Frank Loreti, Guy Hansen, and David Moore brought together founders, long-time volunteers, and community members to reflect on our first two decades. Over 20 participants gathered to record nearly five hours of stories, bringing with them photo albums, files, and handwritten notes. This two-part series captures more than just milestones. It's filled with personal memories, laughter, and a shared belief in the power of community. It's a tribute to the people who helped RAFP grow and to the spirit of working together that continues to guide us forward.

Thank you to the following individuals featured in this series:

Larry Rappley, Julie Edwardson, Duane Petzke, Bob Anderle, Dan Stroede, Ginger Chrobak, Guy Hansen, Mick Fiocchi, Konnie Hunter, Lisa Seifert, Jan Sarkauskas, Lynda Lukowski, Jane Motowski, Bill Vancos, Dave Moore, Mike Wiernasz, Frank Loreti, Dee Weirnasz, Carole Hansen, Nancy Eisele, and Linda Krebsbach.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!



**RAFP
VOLUNTEER
PICNIC**

FRIDAY AUGUST 8TH, 2025
NOON - 2 PM
AT PIONEER PARK

We're having burgers & brats.
Bring a chair &
Bring a side dish or dessert to pass

**In the event of bad weather meet at the pantry & we will
have our picnic at the pantry inside the building**

Harvest Hoedown



Saturday, September 27th
11am to 4pm at Pioneer Park



**50/50 Raffle
Drawing
at 3:00pm**

FREE Admission!
**Live Music on the
Harvest Stage!**
Giant Pumpkin Contest!

**Green Bay
Packers Tickets
Raffles Drawing
at 3:00pm**



Learn more about RAFP! Visit www.rhinelanderafoodpantry.org
and follow us Facebook to keep up with the latest at RAFP.

Support Our Mission: A gift of any amount helps us provide nutritious food to neighbors in need.

To donate, visit rhinelanderafoodpantry.org
or mail your donation to RAFP PO Box 1306, Rhineland, WI 54501.

Thank you for your support!