

FALL 2025

# THE INSIDE SCOOP

## SECOND HARVEST

FOODBANK  
OF SOUTHERN WISCONSIN

### IN THIS EDITION

Agency Q&A

From The President's Desk

Helen's Story

Volunteer Drivers Needed

Hunger Action Month

## AGENCY Q&A: ISLAMIC CENTER OF MADISON

Second Harvest provides food support to thousands of families, seniors, and kids across southwestern Wisconsin through a network of 300 partner agencies and programs. They represent the pipeline through which food makes it onto the tables of those who need it. One of those partner agencies is the Islamic Center of Madison.

We recently sat down with Ibrahim Saeed, the President of the Islamic Center of Madison to understand his organization, some of the challenges they are facing, and how food is an important part of the work they do in the community.

### ***What is the Islamic Center of Madison?***

The Islamic Center of Madison is a religious charitable organization. It's been here since 1979. When we started we were mainly serving Muslim students at the University of Wisconsin, but now we serve anyone in the community. We provide a place for prayers five times per day, a large library filled with information that people can use to research Islam, marriage counseling and ceremonies, and funeral services. We have a school for kids and a Sunday school for everybody where we teach the Arabic language and Islamic teachings.

(continued on pg. 2)





## FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK: **UNEXPECTED**

After 25 years as a food banker, I've learned to expect the unexpected—because both life and our community's needs keep changing. Whether it's a global pandemic, a natural disaster, a large manufacturing plant closure, or changes in state or federal policy that impact those we are here to support, you never know what challenges may lie ahead.

**What is predictable is our commitment to making sure all of our neighbors have enough nutritious food to thrive!** Every challenge our community faces reminds me why we do this work and why our mission is so vital. We don't know what tomorrow may bring, but we do know this: we are built to respond, built to adapt, and built to support those facing hunger in southwestern Wisconsin.

This resilience is only possible because of you. Your continued support fuels our ability to act swiftly and compassionately when the unexpected happens.



**Together, we've built a food bank that grows stronger because of the challenges we've had to overcome.**

No matter what challenges lie ahead, Second Harvest will continue to meet the needs of those facing hunger across southwestern Wisconsin. With your continued belief in our mission, we are ready for whatever comes next.

Thank you for standing with us. Together, we are feeding more than families, children, and seniors, we're feeding possibility.

*(Agency Q&A continued from cover)*

### ***You also have a food program, right?***

Yes, on Wednesdays we start around 11 a.m. and go until 4 or 5 p.m. depending on how much food we have. If there is any food left over we will distribute it to those who come to Friday services. On average we serve 150-200 people per week.

### ***Describe the people who come for food support.***

We serve very diverse communities. From subcontinent people like Indian, Pakistani, and Bengali, to refugees from Syria, Senegal, and Gambia. We also have the general public come who are Hispanic and White as well. There's no one group that's much bigger than the others except the students.

### ***There's a lot of news recently about Immigrants. Has this impacted those that you provide food support to?***

People are scared about what will happen to them.

Refugees and people like me who have been here for 30 or 40 years, people who are new arrivals, they are really worried about what is going to happen to them. Are they going to continue being able to be in this country, going through the process of [becoming] citizens and getting green cards? Most of the people who come to our center from other countries are documented with student visas. What they are worried about is if they go home on break, will they be allowed to come back? So people are worried. Yeah.

### ***So why is it important to provide food as a resource to the folks who come?***

Because I know the situation with many of these people. For example, we have a group of single mothers who can't make ends meet, so they ask for help. We don't have the money to help them, but we can partner with Second Harvest to help them with food. The food we provide really helps make their budget work for them. Whoever comes for food definitely needs food.

### ***What does the food you are able to provide mean to those who receive it?***

They tell me that they would be in really bad shape without this food, so they're happy to get it. That's what keeps me going.





## GUEST STORY: **HELEN**



For almost three years, Helen has been using food pantries in the Mazomanie area to support elderly relatives. "They have a lot of different health issues and don't come into town. They can't drive anymore, so they just stay where they are. Bringing them food helps supplement what they do get," said Helen. "They get a little bit from Social Security and things, but it's not a huge amount, so it doesn't cover everything. You go to the grocery store and you have \$20 to spend for a month, or \$40 to spend for a month. All of a sudden, you've spent it just getting milk, bread, and the basics. **So this allows them to put their money elsewhere when they have the food being taken care of.**"

Recently, with an injury that limits the hours she can work at her part-time job, her husband being out of work due to reduced availability of construction jobs, and taking care of a special needs cousin who now lives with her, Helen now adds her own family to the list of people getting assistance from pantries. "It's just almost impossible sometimes," said Helen. **"Without it (the food from pantries), I don't know where we would be."**

Helen gets more than just food from Second Harvest partner agency, Heights Unlimited. To her, "It's like families helping families. They're wonderful. They are very down-to-earth people. They don't judge, and they are not going to turn you away."

"You get in this line, and people will sit there, and they're having conversations, and they're talking and telling each other what their days are like and other things," Helen continued. "So you get a real feel for the people. Each one of them has their own little struggles that they're going through. They're dealing with medical bills. They're dealing with how to get from point A to point B."





## DRIVE A DIFFERENCE IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Are you interested in being a driving force for change and delivering nourishing food to neighboring organizations? **Join our Volunteer Driver Team at Second Harvest Foodbank!**

Every week, trucks full of fresh produce, canned goods, and pantry staples make their way to neighboring food pantries—not by magic, but with the help of Volunteer Delivery Drivers and Delivery Support Volunteers.

Our Volunteer Driver Program supports 30 local community partners in getting nutritious food to our neighbors facing food insecurity. But as the demand grows, so does our need for more hands on the wheel and on the ground.

We're looking for compassionate, dependable volunteers to help deliver food to our neighboring food pantries, utilizing our vehicles. Whether you're behind the wheel as a Volunteer Delivery Driver or helping load or unload deliveries as a Delivery Support Volunteer, you'll be playing a direct role in supporting our community's access to healthy, nourishing foods. Volunteers are needed on weekdays, with flexible weekly hours!

Interested in joining the team or know someone who may be interested? **Contact Brie McNett, our Volunteer Services Coordinator at [volunteers@secondharvestsw.org](mailto:volunteers@secondharvestsw.org) or call 608-216-7214 for more information.**

Let's keep the wheels turning for our neighbors and for our community!



## SEPTEMBER IS HUNGER ACTION MONTH!

Each September, the Feeding America nationwide network of food banks joins together for **Hunger Action Month**, the annual campaign designed to inspire people to take action and raise awareness of hunger in the United States.

### Here are two key ways to get involved:

- **Go Orange** on Hunger Action Day, Tuesday, September 9<sup>th</sup>.

Help raise awareness by getting your team to Go Orange! It's simple: wear orange, snap a photo, and submit it to WMTV 15.

Thanks to our generous matching sponsor, the Alliant Energy Foundation, **each of the first 500 photos submitted will help provide up to 10 bags of groceries.**

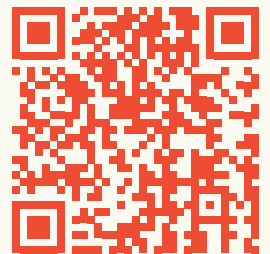
- **Call in to 105.5 Triple M** for our Request-A-Thon on Thursday, September 25<sup>th</sup> | 6 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Get ready to rock, bop, Macarena, and jam out with Jonathan & Kitty during our annual radio fundraiser where you'll be the DJ for the day!

Call 608-204-8000 or go online to [secondharvestsw.org/Request](http://secondharvestsw.org/Request) to make your song request. **All donations up to \$20,000 will be matched by the Alliant Energy Foundation.**

### Ready to take action?

Visit [secondharvestsw.org/GoOrange](http://secondharvestsw.org/GoOrange) for even more ways to get involved!



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